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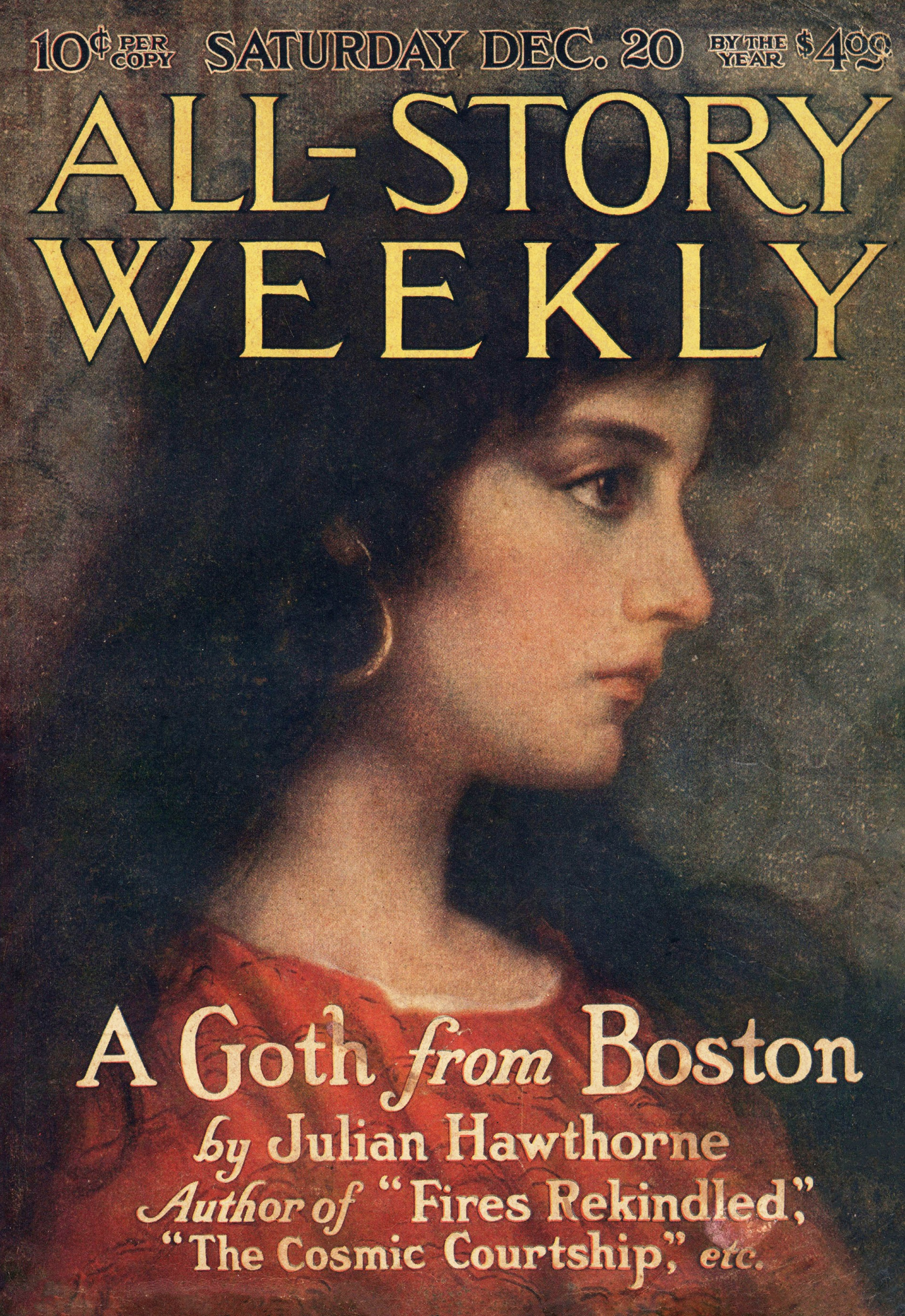
ALL-STORY WEEKLY



A Goth *from* Boston

by Julian Hawthorne

Author of "Fires Rekindled," "The Cosmic Courtship," *etc.*

Which job can you fill?

All these jobs were advertised in a single issue of a Chicago newspaper under "Help Wanted." Which one can **you** fill? There are good jobs like these **with big pay everywhere for men capable of holding them.** Why don't you get one? If you haven't the knowledge necessary to make you capable of holding down the best kind of a job, **make up your mind right now to get it.** There is a set of Home Study Books listed below that will quickly fit you to hold any job you want—spare time only is needed.

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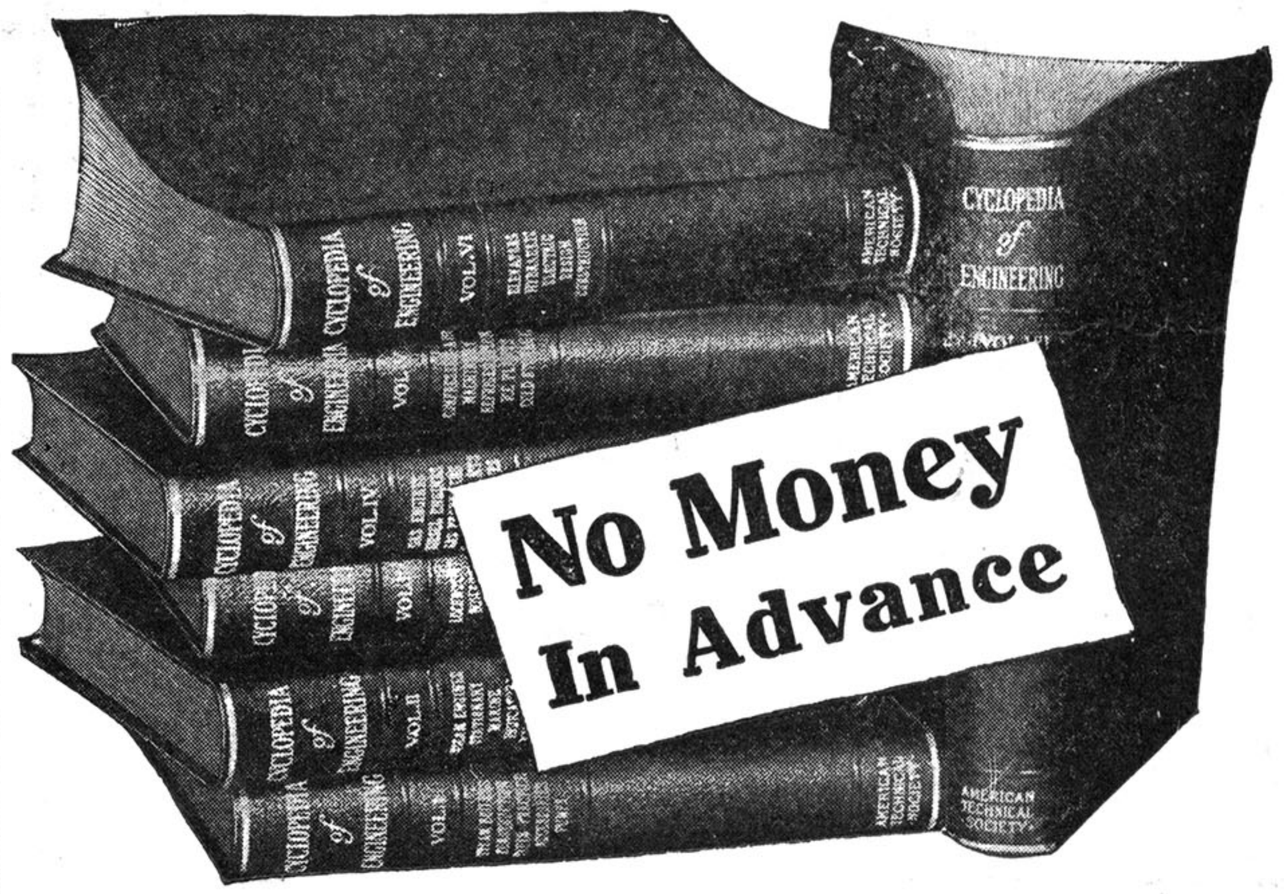

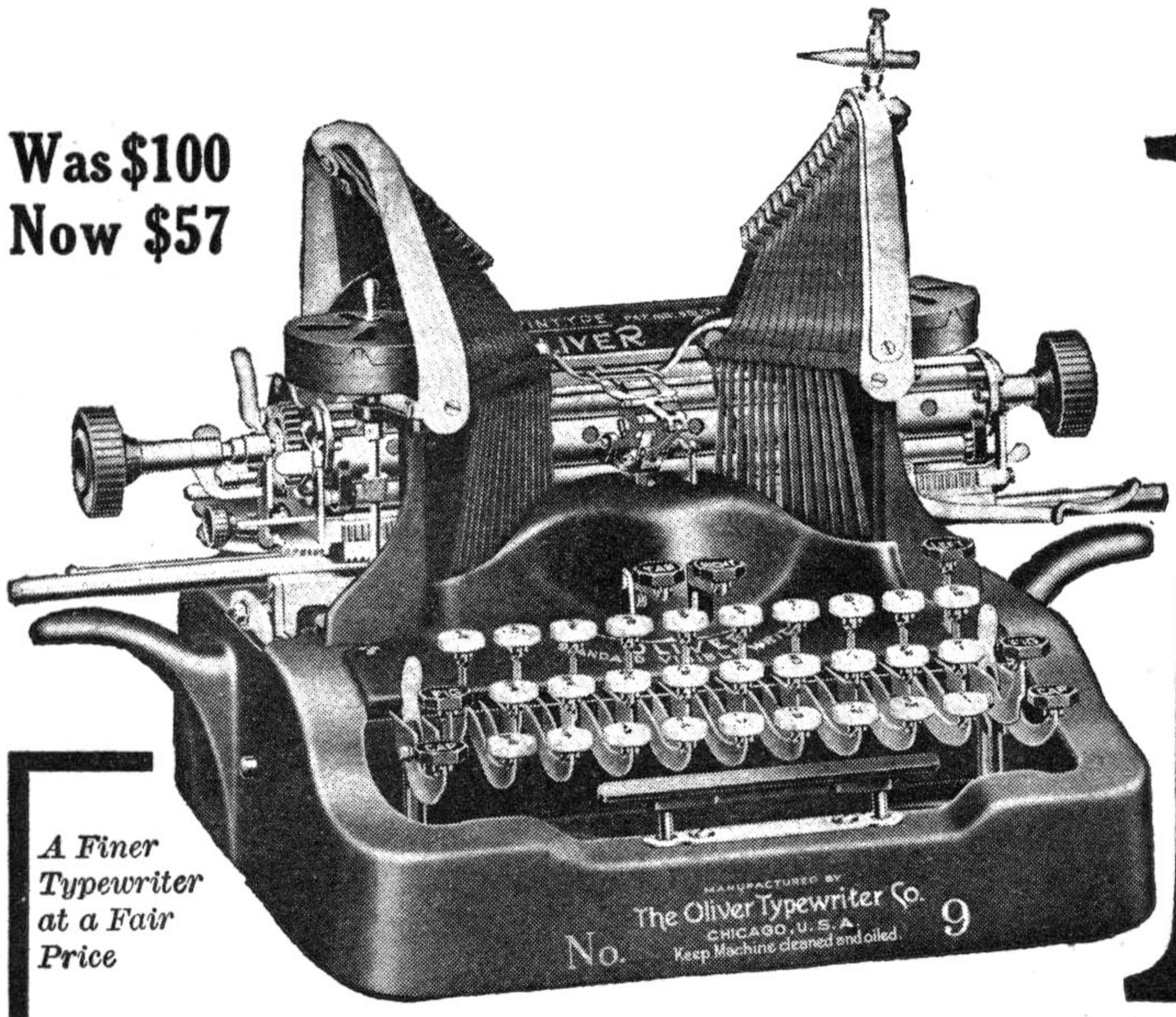

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ALL-STORY WEEKLY

VOLUME CV — NUMBER 1

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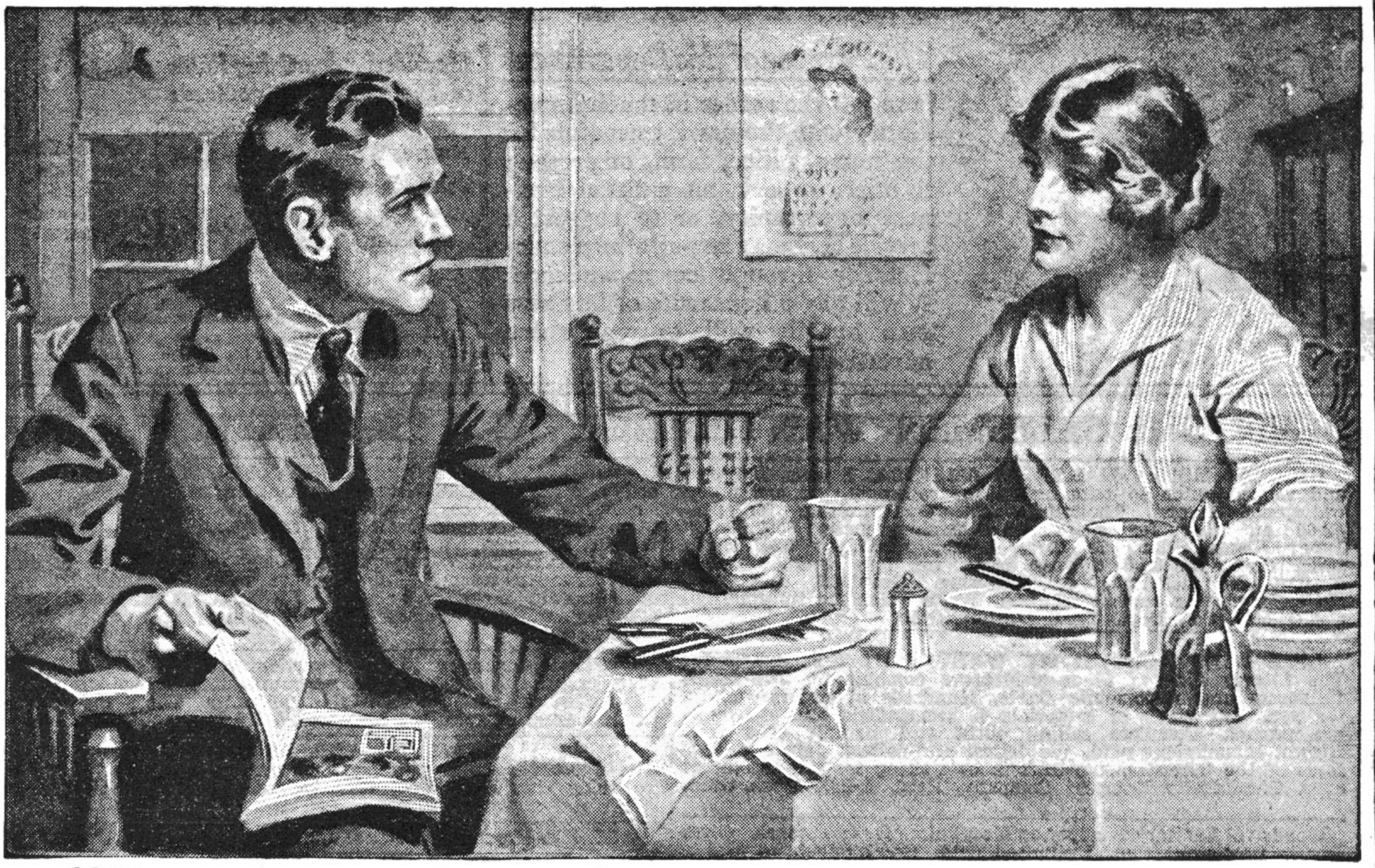

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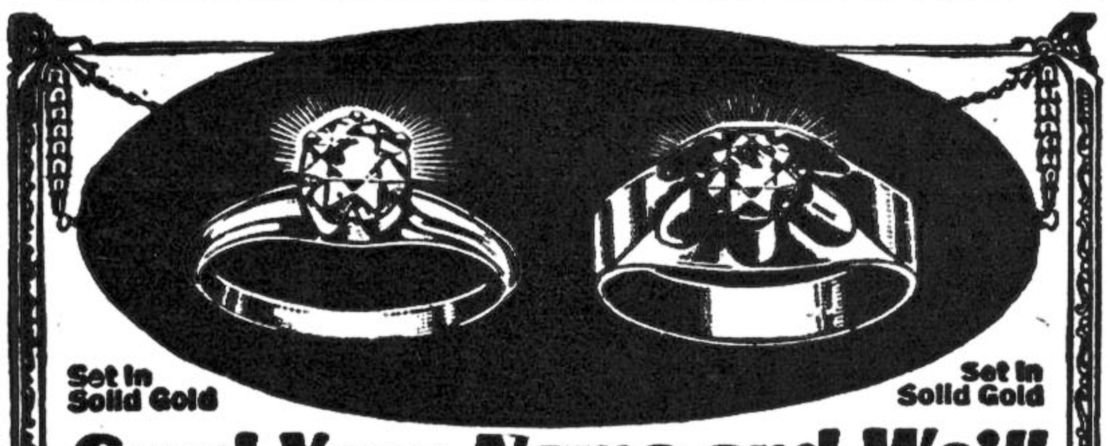

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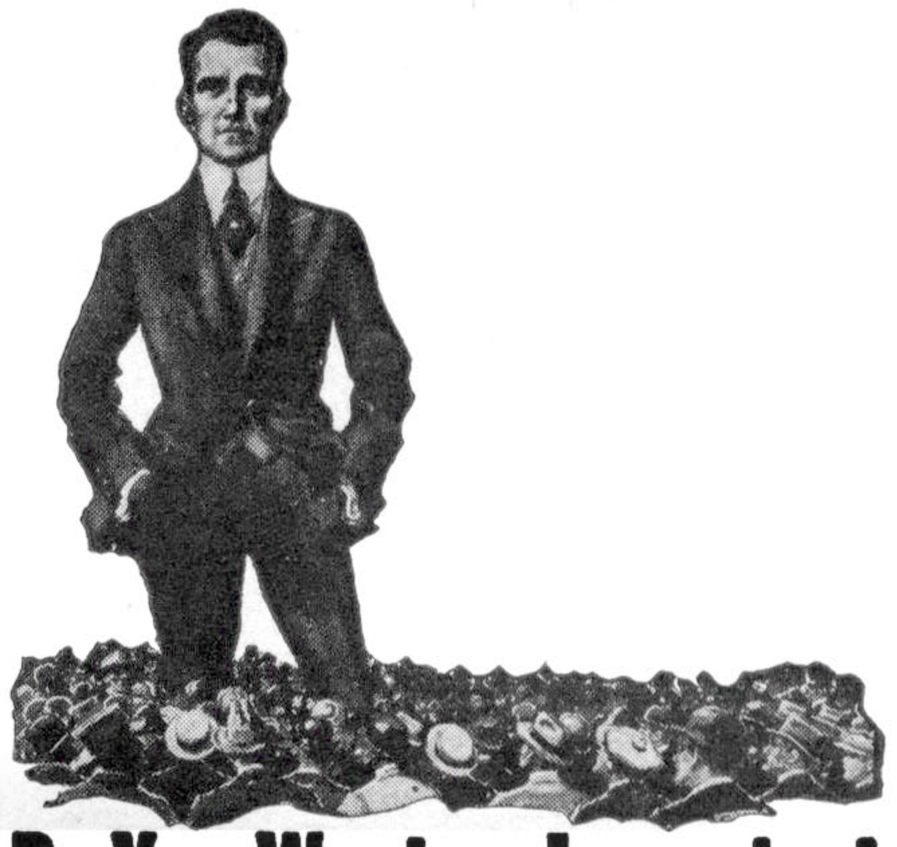

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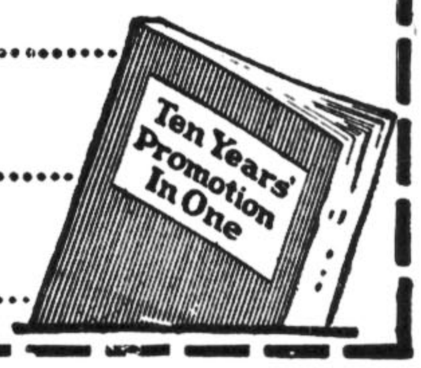

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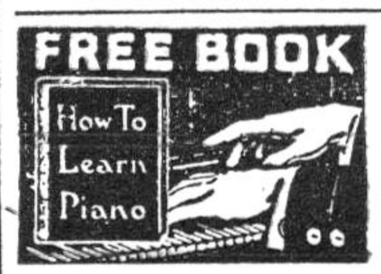

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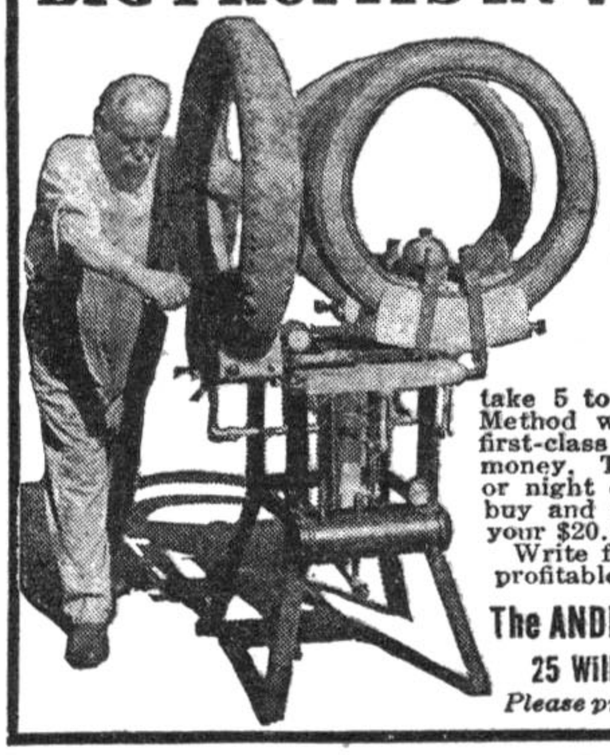

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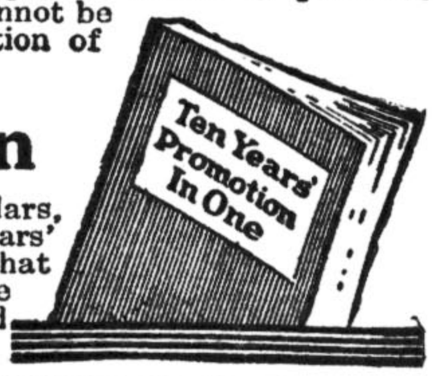

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ALL-STORY WEEKLY

VOL. CV — NUMBER 1

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 20, 1919

A Goth from Boston

by Julian Hawthorne

Author of "Doris Dances," "Absolute Evil," "The Cosmic Courtship," etc.

JULIAN HAWTHORNE and Martha Klemm! Here is a combination to provoke the most jaded fiction appetite. Hawthorne, who is in the tradition of his illustrious father, transcends the commendation accorded lesser lights. Martha Klemm, whom Hawthorne has made his mouthpiece in this tale, again displays her medals and her distinguished talent for engaging narrative is demonstrated anew in a story which feeds the mind and fires the fancy of the reader. ALL-STORY WEEKLY audiences will recall the winsome personality of the woman and the peculiar fascination of the "different" story in which she figured as the chief protagonist: "Absolute Evil" (April 13, 1918).

CHAPTER I.

THE VISION OF VENUS.

THE door was opened to me by the Venus of Milo.

She had recovered her arms; her bright flaxen hair was coiled up on her head; her face was ruddy with health, her eyes sparkled, and she smiled upon me most amiably, disclosing immaculate, white teeth, and—by reason of the shortness of her upper lip—a strip of pink gums above them.

We shall never know whether the Milesian Venus of the Louvre has conspicuous upper gums; but there was no ambiguity about them in this lovely, hearty, sensual face, which indicated the primal creature, free from hectic niceties of moralism, though, under normal conditions, decorous enough. Such persons may, as a rule, follow the animal rather than the angel, but will return after a ramble, none the worse for the airing. Fashions change, seasons circle, ages elapse, but we always find these beings substantially true to type, standing plumb on sturdy legs, an assurance that the essentials of human nature are imperishable.

Venus was clad in a clean print frock, with a white apron and cap, according to the morning housemaid style of the epoch. She stood erect, vigorous, full-bosomed, on the balls of her feet as it were, as if the physical energy in her almost overcame her weight. Fragrance emanated from her—not scents of the toilet table, but the nat-

ural emanation of health and cleanliness and abounding vitality. That print frock seemed to wrong her. Isn't it Emerson who says of beauty that "limbs and flesh enough invest" it? But, of course, the housemaid of a Harvard professor living in an old Colonial mansion in a historic street of Cambridge, must observe the conventionalities.

Had I been an artist, instead of a co-ed on the brink of class day, I would have begged her on the spot to pose for me. This was my first sight of her; for although Professor Selwyn and I were acquaintances of two-years' standing, I had known him hitherto only in the class-room, and had never before called on him in his own home, and I was invading him now only to return a couple of books borrowed from him, and to tell him good-by. I had been his favorite pupil, and, my native habitat being a mansion on Beacon Street, and my environment that of the Boston aristocracy, it was not likely that he and I would meet again.

This is not to intimate that Cabot Selwyn, professor of biology, was not an aristocrat. On the contrary, he was a Boston Brahman of the choicest vintage, the ultimate flower of a long line of Massachusetts clergymen, scholars, statesmen, and, always, patricians. He looked his lineage: physically he was as fine and accurate as a Geneva watch, with a profile like a shell cameo; mentally, he was regarded as a sort of Emerson and Channing in one, with touches of Agassiz and Haeckel for full measure. Above all, he was Cabot Selwyn, and he interpreted the Second Coming of Christ to mean the final supremacy of culture over nature, of which consummation he devoutly, if modestly, looked upon himself as being the pioneer but perfect flower.

All the girls in my class adored him and believed in him; but it was agreed that the professor, though only five and thirty, would never marry. He was too nice, too handsome, too fastidious; the finest of women, added to him, would be an anticlimax. He was fated to remain unmated and unique, pinnacled high, as Shelley would say, in the intense inane of his own polished impeccability. And the pensive smile that decorated his musings seemed to import his own recognition and acceptance of this lofty but pathetic destiny.

He would sometimes say, "I hope to be remembered as an Intellect!" He was of medium height, well proportioned, slender and graceful, always immaculately tailored, with a geranium of a peculiarly lovely pink hue in his buttonhole. When expounding his views from his desk in the class-room he had a habit of resting his right elbow on the arm of his chair, and, so to say, rolling up his argument between his exquisitely manicured thumb and forefinger—a tiny intellectual pellet, to be finally, at the acme of the syllogism, projected at his auditors with a delicate impulse of the wrist. One of his favorite words was "ascertain"; it somehow resembled his profile, and the azure keenness of his look as he bent it upon vacancy.

This portrayal is premature: I am still standing on the professor's doorstep, in the checkered shade of the overbending elm-tree, involuntarily smiling back at Venus as she smiles at me. Since I have gone so far, however, I may as well add that I was the one dissenter from the view of Professor Selwyn entertained by the class. And although, as I have said, his favorite pupil, I didn't believe that culture was or ever could be stronger than nature. I even dared to suspect that underneath his flawless and serene exterior lurked somewhere vestiges of the primal *Homo,* capable, under conspiring circumstances, of asserting itself.

Yes, I could believe that the breath of a woman, warm upon his lips, might transform this shell-cameo into a human creature with appetites and frailties. I didn't acquiesce in his judgment that Shakespeare had blundered in his account of the relations between *Prospero* and *Caliban*—that he ought to have shown the former turning the latter into an accomplished fine gentleman; and when the professor had declared to us girls in class, "That is what a competent biologist of to-day would have done," I muttered to myself, "*Caliban* would have been more likely to make a fellow brute of *Prospero!*" — especially, I

might have added, had *Caliban* been a woman.

Nay, let me complete my avowal: I have already said that I was the professor's favorite pupil; well, it had been borne in on me at times that his favor was due not entirely to my mental, but not a little to my natural endowments. It can do no harm to say, now, that I was held to be the beauty of my year; time has devoured many things since that far-off day, and may be assumed to have consumed the vanities of my youth along with them. If his housemaid was Venus, I was Diana, black-haired, lithe, symmetrical, tall, with eyes that could smoulder and soften, lips that could woo or command, hands that a sculptor would worship, a voice of a hundred subtle intonations. And for all my fine training in the graces and accomplishments of society, I was at heart a rebel, a witch, and a savage. A witch — yes! Wasn't an ancestor of mine hanged for witchcraft on Gallows Hill, Salem, in 1692?—and her blood ran in my veins. Nobody knew this formidable side of me, except myself—and, perhaps, two or three young gentlemen of the period who had attempted, in their innocence, to persuade Martha Klemm to change her name. What they learned they won't soon forget.

Cabot Selwyn had never learned the lesson in question, and had never harbored a misgiving that I was anything more than the handsome, intelligent, reverent young woman who sat at his feet in class and caught so readily the fine points of his gospel. He didn't know that I was sometimes tempted to put to the test my theories of human nature—with him as the medium: to try my spell on him—flirt with him, in short! And why hadn't I done it?

Partly, no doubt, because I had already on my hands Topham Brent, who, having taken his degree of Bachelor of Arts, was now completing his third and last year in the Medical School. Topham, as the world has discovered since then, was a man to reckon with; and he had made up his mind to marry me. I meant never to marry any man, but Topham had come nearer than any other to inducing me to waver in that decision. In fact, I had promised to give him my final answer on class day evening—a day and a half, that is, from the time I am now writing of.

Topham was—and he still is—a persistent person. And although a flirtation is a flirtation, I was not disposed to begin with the professor until I had finished with the famous-to-be physician. Accordingly, in this farewell call at the elm-shaded Colonial mansion, I had no motive ulterior to the innocent ones already stated.

All this while, be it understood, the housemaid and I had been studying each other quite intently, and with mutual approbation. Between blonde and brunette there is a natural alliance. Both of us possessed poise, she as an unadulterated child of nature, I as a woman outwardly sophisticated but inwardly primitive. Neither of us was likely to get in the other's way, and the only thing to prevent a profitable friendship between us was the extreme improbability of our ever seeing each other again.

She was first to speak.

"Did you want to see the master, miss?"

"If he's at home, I want to give him back these books; will you tell him Martha Klemm is here? What is your name, by the way?"

"Oh, I'm Polly King, miss, thank you! If you'll step in I'll call him."

She ushered me into the library and smilingly disappeared.

But the impression of her still stayed with me, pervading the room. What a superb creature! Polly King! She was a queen, at any rate.

I had time to notice that the furniture had been shrouded in linen coverings for the summer, and the pictures turned face to the wall, indicating that the professor was going away for his vacation; and then I heard his light but measured step coming down the stairs, and he stood in the doorway, elegant and unexceptionable in a pearl gray suit, a pink geranium, and a white waistcoat.

"This is a great and an unexpected pleasure!" he said, taking my hand warmly in both of his and bestowing upon me a look of especial gratification. It differed

from the glances of intellectual approval to which he had accustomed me in the class-room, and it awakened in me an interest of curiosity.

Curiosity is my foible: I can never get over wanting to see what will happen!

CHAPTER II.

GREEK AND GOTH.

HE apologized for the condition of the library with a wave of the hand and a deprecating smile, accompanied by a touch of the thumb and forefinger to the ends of his soft brown mustache—a slight, almost boyish gesture of embarrassment. The professional imperturbability of the class-room was absent. He was simply Cabot Selwyn.

"I wish you could have seen my den in its natural state," he said, drawing up a chair for me, and seating himself in another close up to it. "There are some rather good proof engravings"—his eyes traversed the walls—"and some Elzevirs and Caxtons"—he indicated the book-shelves. "I've a notion our tastes might coincide—you're so unusual—so"—he was rolling up his expository pellet, and presently he propelled it at me—"so incomparable!"

He lightened the startling word with a winged laugh. "You know, vacation always makes me feel young again! I'm really not merely a text-book in human shape! I'm so glad you came—and so sorry we're to part—though, I hope, to meet again under less formal circumstances. I've often wished—" He hesitated and paused.

I was surprised. "If I chose, I could bring you to the point!" I said, but not audibly. His advance, however, even more than the thought of Topham to-morrow evening, prompted me to retire. I looked guileless and timid, and said, "I wanted to thank you for your books." Then I yielded to the temptation to add, "But if all text-books were like you!" and sighed.

He leaned forward at that, all sorts of possibilities brightening in his soft hazel eyes, and was taking his breath to utter, it may be, some compromising word, when we were interrupted. In order to justify my persuasion as to his purpose, by the bye, it may be proper to observe that I was looking remarkably well that morning; my color scheme was white and yellow—a wide-brimmed hat lined with yellow, a yellow sash round my white dress, with yellow ribbons appropriately disposed, and yellow silk stockings and low white shoes; to complete this arrangement, a yellow tea-rose in my dense black hair. If you add the eyes, nose, and mouth for which I was famous, you will understand the strength of my position.

But Venus intervened.

A knock at the door heralded the appearance of her lovely head, and, "If you please, sir, the expressman is here, and will I let him take the trunks?"

The professor's delicate complexion was flushed with pink to match his buttonhole.

"Er—I—what—yes, certainly!" He thrust that thumb and forefinger into his waistcoat pocket and drew out some bills. "How much— Here, pay him what he asks! I beg your pardon, Miss Klemm! What's that?"

This question, rather sharply put, was addressed to Venus, who seemed to have something more to say. I was interested to note that my professor could be annoyed, as well as be susceptible to softer influences. No text-book could betray either emotion.

"If you please, sir," Venus was explaining, holding the bills in her outstretched hand, "the trunks has to be paid at the depot, after they're weighed."

Professor Selwyn drew in another breath, which, this time, and had he been any other man, would have issued carrying an expletive. But that was impossible from him. He took back the bills and emitted a dry cackle.

"Very well, Polly—and kindly transact any other business on your own judgment!"

"Yes, sir!" And smiling with broad good nature, and with another revelation of those pink gums, she withdrew and gently closed the door.

The professor took a silk handkerchief from his pocket and wiped from his forehead the drops of moisture elicited by the dialogue.

"Murder sometimes seems more excusable than stupidity," he remarked.

But I was inclined to consider myself Venus's debtor, and I lost no time in availing myself of the opening for escape which she had afforded. She had interrupted what had promised to be a declaration, and it was for me to carry on the good work. Topham Brent deserved a fair chance, and he should have it.

"Your housemaid seemed to me a perfectly charming young woman," I said. "She does credit to your taste. Where did you find her?"

"An animal — a mere animal!" he rejoined, almost resentfully. "A brute accident, consequent upon a divagation from customary procedure."

"What can you mean, professor?" I exclaimed with an arpeggio laugh.

He got up, took a turn to and fro, and sat down again.

"Since she seems fated to—er—interpose, I'll give you the story. I've been spending my summers down at Hampton Beach at Tom King's cottage; he was an old English fisherman from the Yorkshire coast who emigrated here a dozen years ago with his wife and daughter. His wife died; Polly kept house for him, and, as I ascertained, would go with him on his fishing trips to the Banks occasionally. She grew up in that environment; healthy and vitalizing, no doubt, but otherwise deplorable. Her father assured me with pride that she could — as he expressed it — lick any boy of her age on the Beach. And he said to her once, in my hearing, when she had come in rather late to cook dinner, with that grin of hers, in spite of a black eye and a bloody nose, and with a tale of how she had 'walloped' her latest antagonist—'Right-o, Polly, my lass,' he said; 'as long as ye lick 'em, ye're excused; but the first one as licks you ye'll marry him—mind that!—so be he's not married already; and that 'll be a lesson to ye never to mix it up with married men, anyway!' A plain reversion to the Stone Age, you see."

It was wonderful to hear the chaste lips of Cabot Selwyn reproduce the speech of the old Yorkshire mariner—as if from the portals of a Greek temple were to issue a Gothic gargoyle.

"Splendid!" I murmured with enthusiasm. "And so she was never licked?"

"Apparently not. But merely to imagine such a being in—er—in a connubial light, was appalling. I shuddered! Those gums alone— But pardon me!"

I couldn't help laughing. "But of course, professor, you were not in question. You would never think of attempting to lick Polly!"

He started from his chair in real agitation. "My—dear—Miss Klemm!"

"Forgive me! But how, then, did she happen to become your housemaid?"

He sighed. "Oh, as I said, a divagation from the normal. Last summer, on arriving as usual at the Beach, I found that poor Tom had died a month before, and Polly was winding up his affairs and preparing to enter domestic service in Boston. It was really none of my affair; but the situation appealed to me, and I happened to be in need of a housemaid, so I proposed a temporary arrangement, which she accepted, and— But," he resumed in a brighter tone, "the vacation afforded a pretext, and she leaves to-morrow."

"She must be sorry to leave so kind an employer." In fact, the anecdote, all things considered, had raised the professor in my esteem: *Prospero* had voluntarily come to the succor of what he regarded as a female *Caliban* in extremities. But he shook his head; the case must be stated with scientific accuracy.

"No, I fear I cannot lay that flattering unction to my soul," he said with a whimsical grimace. "She gave me warning this morning; some relative abroad, as I gathered, has written her to join him. I knew, then, how *Frankenstein* would have felt had his monster announced the severing of the bond that held them!"

He was getting back his composure, and I had an intuition that he was preparing to revive the subject which the appearance of Polly had put off. I arose.

"I've greatly overstayed my time, pro-

fessor. I had meant only to leave the books, but Polly looked so charming that I had to come in. I must say good-by!"

"Oh, I can't allow it!" he exclaimed earnestly, lifting his hands as if to push me back in my chair. "My desire is that there should be no good-by! Miss Klemm —Martha— there is something I wish to say to you. I'm on the threshold of an important step, and—"

At that moment the Imp of the Perverse entered into me. I faced him at close quarters and smilingly fixed my eyes on his.

"Cabot," I said musically, "this is our parting, but before I go I shall make you a friendly suggestion. Hasn't it occurred to you that Polly would make what you would call an incomparable wife for somebody?"

"Polly! — a wife? — I never imagined. Some gorilla from the African jungle might recognize his affinity; but what—"

"You're no gorilla, Cabot," I said, "and for that reason Polly is the wife for you! No, I'm serious. You deny being a textbook; you're not — yet! But only Polly can save you from becoming one! If she'll have you, marry her, and become a man! Go out West somewhere with her, buy a farm, and raise hogs. If you keep on here, teaching girls what you call biology, ignorant as you are of the first principles of human life, you'll dwindle into a simulacrum; you'll be remembered, not as an Intellect, but as a falsetto little theory. What you need is constant association with Polly and with hogs—they'll put life and pith into you! Call her in here now and ask her; beg her on your knees; you're not fit for such a goddess, but don't take no for an answer. You'll thank me the rest of your life; and I do really like you, and wish you well."

I spoke with grave emphasis, holding his eyes with mine all the while. During the few moments of my harangue he lived through many tumultuous years. In the light of after events I incline to believe that his nature underwent a radical change in the interval, though all he could be conscious of at the time was amazement, horror, indignation, the conviction that I had gone mad. But these were surface emotions. Underneath them I think he felt that I was right, and that destiny, fearful, perhaps deadly, but beneficent, was on his trail. For there was manhood in Professor Selwyn, somewhere, after all!

I didn't wait for him to regain his balance; in truth I was a little startled, myself, at having actually spoken out; one so often thinks of doing it, and so very seldom does it. I thank my witch ancestress for the courage to perform the feat. I held out a cordial hand to him, and he took it, with cold and clammy fingers, but it was as if we were thousands of miles apart, staring across continents and oceans. He seemed unsteady on his feet, and made a few vague sounds, a kind of empty sketch of the conventional formulas of farewell, but he uttered no articulate word. I left him, gazing glassily after me, in his immaculate attire, pink geranium and all; but as I walked down the path to the gate, under the checkered shade of the elm, I was confident that he would never again be quite the same man that he had been hitherto. Meanwhile, so far as I was concerned, he was disposed of: now, for Topham Brent!

CHAPTER III.

MAGIC WHITE AND GOLD.

TOPHAM BRENT, however, much as I would like to dilate upon so attractive and substantial a personage, bears no active part in this narrative, and I must dismiss him with a mere mention.

On the evening of that Class Day, we strolled arm in arm under the trees on the College Green, with Japanese lanterns glowing over our heads, music and laughter and murmur of conversations far and near in our ears, and our minds and hearts, much involved in our own theme. To this day, I don't know why I refused his offer of marriage; I had never liked anybody else so well, and he was the finest sort of a man: broad-shouldered, broad-handed, broad-minded, with a square head and manly features.

I can hear his *basso-profundo* voice, now, as he urged his suit, with arguments which

I couldn't gainsay; and he was, as I've said, very persistent; I believe, after half a lifetime, that he'd marry me to-morrow, if I'd have him. During all that time, we have stayed good friends, which is to his credit, and perhaps a little to mine. But some deep-seated inward monitor prompted me to say, "No!" and I said it. Some women are like that, though few, I think, are quite like me.

"When may I see you again?" he asked, as we stood on my door-step, late that night. "I can never give you up, you know!" I shook my head. "May I call to-morrow evening?" he went on.

"You wouldn't find me at home," said I. After a moment, I added, "I'll tell you my secret, Topham,—nobody else knows it. I'm going away to-morrow: I don't know where, nor how long I shall be gone,—six months, a year, or longer! I'm going alone; I'm free-footed; father and mother are dead, fortunately for them, dear, innocent old souls, never suspecting what an incorrigible outlaw they'd brought into the world; they've left me more money than I can ever spend; out of pious regard for their memory, I've finished my 'education,' as they would call it; now, I'm going to get an education after my own fancy—I'm going to see the world! I've given society and culture a run for their money; now I'm going to try nature! If you were to see me a week hence, you wouldn't know me—wouldn't want to, may be! I may come back—if ever—a naked savage; or I may become a Rani in India, or a Russian princess.

"I'm telling you this, my dear boy, to help you understand that it wouldn't do for me—or for you either—to settle down as the wife of a Boston doctor! I'd ruin your practice and drive you into an asylum. No, you're not to come to see me off, whether I go by sea or land; you're not to seek for me; I'll give you no address. I'm going to vanish, like a soap-bubble, or a necromancer, and leave no trace!"

"I'm something of a necromancer myself—only my magic is white!"

"But you have a conscience, and I haven't—that's the weakness of all white magicians! At any rate, I advise you to attempt nothing. And now, Topham dear, I'm sleepy and I'm going to bed. Good-night—and good-by!" I gave him my hand. "You may kiss me, if you like," I said.

What man could resist such an offer! But Topham did; that is an example of his superiority to most of his sex.

"No, Martha," he said: "I won't accept the freedom of your lips until all other freedoms go with it. Good-night, but not good-by. I shall always be the same." With that, he gave my hand a masculine grip, lifted his hat, and walked away. Oh, yes, Topham was a man!

I had engaged a "stateroom" on the train out of Boston next day; and after I had arranged my belongings, the porter knocked at my door to tell me that luncheon was ready in the car forward. I had taken my reservation from no motive of patrician pride, but to give myself leisure to think my affairs over. I had jumped off into infinite space, as it were, and felt the need of orienting myself. I was wearing the plainest possible traveling-dress—hardly a becoming costume even—and meant to make myself an indistinguishable atom in the general proletarian welter of things. I took a moment's glance into the looking-glass, to see that I wasn't lopsided, and then issued forth to satisfy a healthy animal appetite.

The car next to mine turned out to be a tourist's car, filled with the usual family scenes and smells—the coatless men, the frowzy women, the smeared children, the strange bags of domestic apparatus, the fragments of paper, the food distribution, the frank exposures of the proletariat American to which I had committed myself. Half way down the aisle I was arrested by the sight of a fine-looking young woman with ruddy cheeks, blue eyes and golden hair, who was in the act of unfolding a large paper bundle, evidently containing provender. She looked up as I advanced, and smiled a greeting.

"Why, Polly King!"

"You're a sight for sore eyes, miss, and me that lonely!"

She was seated with her back to the engine, but the opposite seat happened to be vacant for the moment, and I dropped into it.

" Professor Selwyn told me you were going abroad, but I didn't imagine you'd start in this direction!" We were westward-bound, of course.

" It's my uncle, miss; he's in New Zealand, and sent me word he'd made ten thousand pounds sheep-raising, and would I come over and share it with him, not to speak of plenty of likely young fellows to marry me, if I'd have 'em! And sends me a draft for five hundred pounds for the trip. So I ups and tells the master I'm leaving, and here I be! There's a boat from San Francisco to them Sandwich Islands, and there I finds one for Australia. He's to meet me in Melbourne. Where be you going, miss, if it's not a liberty?"

" To Honolulu at any rate, Polly, and perhaps round the world afterward; so we shall be fellow travelers for the present. Polly, I have an idea!" I added. " Of course, you're an independent woman now, and can travel as you please; but if you'll be my companion as far as we go in the same direction, I'll pay your expenses, and thank you into the bargain. Toss that bundle out of the window, and be my guest in the dining-car! Then take the other berth in my stateroom,—I'll arrange it with the conductor. Is it a go?"

" Right-o! and my duty to you, miss!" The beautiful great creature burgeoned with human amenity. " And if you'll come through to New Zealand, I'll warrant my uncle 'll make you at home! A fine man, I remember him, though he'll be getting on in years a bit, by now; and he being a bachelor, he'd always a special fancy for me—a bouncing bairn, as I then was—so he called me—and said I was cut out for a lad! As for my bundle, if it's the same to you,miss, I'll leave it with the poor folks next door, here, that don't seem over well fixed for grub; it'll maybe hold 'em for a day or so."

Having carried out this kindly design upon the pale woman and her dejected husband in the compartment on the other side of the aisle; and " shaken herself out a bit," as she expressed it, to make herself presentable in polite society—though, like King Cophetua's Beggar-Maid, she needed no more than her face and form to make her the peer of any princess—Polly followed me into the dining-car, where we went into executive session on the subject of our trip. I was immensely pleased with my adventure, and she seemed to share my contentment.

We got on together perfectly; it was a delight to the senses to live in such close contact with this splendid, spontaneous being, whose innocent animality was made beautiful by her delicious bodily cleanliness, and who, moreover, was very far from lacking in intelligence and knowledge of practical life. Of book-learning, beyond reading, writing and ciphering, she was confessedly and unrepentently ignorant; but so far as honest, womanly charm of intercourse went, she could have held her own anywhere.

I once asked her whether the professor had ever given her any schooling.

She laughed, with sparkling eyes of amused reminiscence.

" He did tackle me, one time, miss, but books I never could abide, and did nothing but giggle, all the while, and he as solemn as a church. ' Silk purses aren't made of sows' ears,' I told him, at last—which was what my father used to say. I fancy he thought so, too, for he never tried it again."

" ' Sows' ears'!" I repeated, contemplating her as I lay on the couch. At my request, she had let down the great cataract of her golden hair, and brushing it out, between me and the window, so that the light shone through it, and made each fibre of it, crisping with life, sparkle, and shimmer. The sheen of her shoulders shone through the gold, and her arms, as she plied the brush, were such as " Venus of the Louvre " might well have grieved to lose. She was as unconscious as a child of this splendor, and of the pure sensuous pleasure which I was enjoying.

" You're not like a sow's ear, Polly," I said, " and nobody would want to make a silk purse out of you. But you might be an empress, with the world at your feet."

" Me an empress! Oh, my word!" cried Polly, laughing.

" Any man would be glad to marry you, Polly," I went on. " Why didn't you marry Professor Selwyn? He would have fallen in love with you, if you hadn't giggled at him."

"What, him?" returned she, buoyantly. "I'm not for the likes of him, nor he for me neither!"

"It's his special hobby to turn uneducated people into fine ladies and gentlemen."

Polly was amused. "He couldn't give me a licking when I needed it—as, times, I should. I'd a' thought, miss, asking your pardon, you'd be thinking of a man like him yourself!"

"I don't believe he could lick me, either—and there'd be no doubt about my needing it! However, we have missed our chance. He had started for Europe, I suppose, before you left?"

"He went the same day you was calling on him, miss; but where to, I don't know." While braiding her hair, she smiled to herself, and turning round to me, with a glance of sumptuous mischievousness, like a kitten about to swallow a canary, she remarked, "If I'd had him, he'd last about five minutes, miss!"

We reached San Francisco, and drove to a hotel. While I was registering for Polly and myself, I heard her voice behind me:

"Well, I declare, sir! who'd think to see you here?"

I turned, and confronted Cabot Selwyn.

CHAPTER IV.

CALIBAN OR CABOT.

FOR an instant I was irritated at what I suspected was a planned ruse on his part, but the unaffected consternation in his face disabused me of that, and I couldn't help laughing. "This seems too good to be true!" I said, giving my hand with a sort of ironic cordiality.

His life-long training restored his mask promptly. "How delightful to meet you here!" he exclaimed, compelling his features to assume the fitting expression. "Are you alone?"

"Just Polly and I. Where are you bound?"

He hung in the wind a moment. "I was thinking of Japan."

"I have friends in Mexico, and may run down that way."

He brightened. "How nice if you had been going to Japan, too! I suppose I couldn't persuade you?"

I shook my head regretfully. "Are you going to study Shintoism?"

He disclaimed it with a painstaking smile. "I felt I needed a change. Did I tell you I'd resign my chair at the University? I may be absent a year—some years!"

"How adventurous! But what will become of the biological class? None but Ulysses could bend his bow, and none but Cabot Selwyn can fill his chair! But I'm detaining you—this is not a suitable place for conversation."

"No—no!" He took out his watch. Both of us, during this inane dialogue, had been thinking of our last interview, when I called him "Cabot"—doubtless no woman had taken that liberty with him before, and it had wrought a biological change in him—and he was still uncertain on his feet, and was perhaps growing a little reckless, as people sometimes will when far from home ties. "But couldn't we lunch together?" he suggested, clearing his throat: "as soon as it would be convenient for you—say, in an hour?"

Since he had broken away from Boston and Cambridge, he ought to be ready for anything. I turned to Polly. "Mr. Selwyn wants us to lunch with him. What do you say?"

Cabot flushed, but immediately manned himself. It was a triumph of *Noblesse,* for which I gave him credit; but Polly was wonderful!

"I was thinking I'd roam around a bit on my own hook, miss. I like to smell about in a new place—if it's all the same to you and the professor!"

I looked at him. "Can you put up with me alone?"

"I shall be grateful for as much as is allowed me!" he replied, including us both in his bow; and so the compact was made.

While I was upstairs in my room, making myself decent for this unexpected return to society, I told myself that I had all along behaved abominably to poor Cabot, and with no excuse; since the only crime which he had ever committed (so far as I knew or could imagine) was being himself. Indeed,

it was precisely because his conduct had invariably been so unexceptionable, that I had outraged his feelings.

True! But then there was a temperamental incompatibility between us—on my own side at least—presumably not on his, since he had been about to offer me marriage; but a temperamental incompatibility is a thing very hard to get over. I wanted him to abjure culture, and make himself natural—like Topham, say; or like Polly! They were both natural, though of course, Topham had plenty of culture, too. I wanted him to see and confess that *Caliban* was an invaluable human asset, much more valuable than Cabot or any of his breed. But was not this to demand an impossibility? Well, was it? That was the point. Thinking it over, as I put on a fresh ribbon, I couldn't be entirely sure. There could be no question, meanwhile, that I owed the poor man an apology, and I took the elevator to the dining-room resolved to offer him one. I should never see him again, and we might as well part friends.

In this conciliating frame, I met him in the lobby, and he conducted me to a charming little table, secluded among palms, in an alcove out of the main room. He had caused the table to be decorated with fresh flowers, and music was far enough off not to render conversation an athletic exploit. Also, the waiter was nursing a bottle of Cabinet Rhine wine in a straw cradle, and submitted it to Cabot's inspection as if it had been a new baby. It was as nice as could be; I even began to feel some apprehension that my friend might renew his siege to my affections. More likely, it was by way of a graceful acknowledgment of the polite lies we had been telling each other in front of the hotel register, and a demure celebration of our mutual satisfaction in being on the verge of an eternal separation!

After we had adjusted ourselves, he said, "I have a feeling as if I had died, and had come to life again in another world!"

"Then," said I, agreeably, "ascribe my behavior in the former incarnation to original sin, and forget it!"

"If original sin accounts for what you are, or do—the more of it the better!"

"In heaven," I rejoined, "when you've shuffled off your Boston coil, you must make shift with what—if anything—is left you. You have acquired a mummy-case, painted all over with arabesques and polite fictions, in which you masquerade and grimace through the world; but when the end comes, nothing remains but your poor little real self, which you've never used, or acknowledged even! I was uncivil to you in our last interview in Cambridge, and I've apologized for it; but the polite taradiddle you answered with is a worse incivility!"

Here the waiter placed before us raw oysters on the half shell. I squeezed lemon over mine, and I fancied they squirmed a little.

"I think I see what you mean," Cabot said, "but"—

"I haven't finished!" I interrupted.

"May I offer you a drop of this Marcobrunner?"

"To soften my asperities?"

"As my pledge to an incomparable woman!"

I gave him a warning glance, but pushed over my glass: he filled it and his own, and we tasted the cool elixir.

"Call that incomparable if you like!" I said.

He seemed to consider a reply, touching his mustaches with his napkin; but we had finished the oysters before he spoke again.

"You were incomparable to me in Cambridge," he then began, "when I knew you only as a pupil; now that I'm learning to know you as a woman, you are more incomparable—"

The waiter intervened with a platter of fish, tastefully decorated.

"Incomparable bluefish fresh from the Golden Gate!" I cried, but it halted him only a moment; he was wound up to strike.

"Martha—"

"Are you going to tell me there are lamb chops to follow?"

He leaned over the table resolutely. "Will you marry me?"

"I was being nice to you because this was a final colloquy," I said gloomily, "but you drive me back to barbarism! I'm not in the habit of engaging myself to mummy-cases, or to biological germs. Partly in self-

defense, but sincerely, I once showed you a way to salvation; but Polly tells me you disregarded it."

He was hit hard, but he tried to rally.

"A man who could aspire to love you doesn't deserve to be offered Polly!"

"She's as much too good for you as—in a sense—I'm too bad for you— Me?" I laughed compassionately; "You might as wisely wed a pestilence! Meanwhile, won't you please serve that fish before it gets cold?"

His hands trembled and he looked miserable, as he severed a section and handed it over to me—(he must have admonished the waiter, beforehand, to respect our privacy)—but he stood up to his punishment better than I had expected.

"You are not candid after all! I can't believe you're serious—"

"Mr. Selwyn!"

"Not in refusing to marry me—I must believe that—but in your general attitude. You and I have been brought up in the same cultivated and refined *milïeu:* both of us are members of a society not surpassed in culture and civilization by any other in the world; everything about you speaks of your origin and training—your looks, your manner, your movements, the modulations of your voice (the most exquisite and expressive I ever heard); how can I believe that you seriously declare yourself an apostate from all this, and would have me follow in your footsteps? So I'm left to the mortification of concluding that you are assuming this whimsical pose in order to emphasize the personal aversion you feel for myself!"

"I'm glad to disclaim that," I replied, my good humor returning as I put a little salt on my young boiled potatoes; "you haven't reduced me to a predicament so desperate that I am obliged to abjure my birth-right in order to escape you! But you happened to be the first example of the system—the cult—which I feel is decadent and moribund, who has provoked me into avowing my protest against it. No doubt—to my shame I say it—I shall continue to run with the hare, while I hunt with the hounds: when I return from my travels—if I ever do—I shall keep on living in my nice house, and wearing my handsome clothes, and perhaps going to and giving fashionable dinners and receptions, while all the time I am avowing, when the humor takes me, that I despise these things.

"But there will be seasons when I shall vanish, as I'm about to do now, and meet the Black Man in the forest! . . . If we hadn't run into you here, Polly and I would have had our lunch in a sailor's dive down by the docks, and I'd have been sitting on some drunken longshoreman's knee, and drinking rum out of the same mug with him!"

I allowed my face to assume an expression suitable to this picture, and Cabot, staring at me, turned pale. "Am I a wife for you?" I added, laughing. "Come!"—I held up my glass—"Here's to our being better strangers!"

"You are a great actress," he said huskily, recovering himself. "I confess myself wholly lacking in your genius!"

"Polly might have saved you. She's as simple as a tree, or a heifer, she has never been driven to hypocrisy, as I have, by the pressure of hypocritical environment, and therefore doesn't need to even the balance by a spell of demonism now and then. I doubt, though, whether even she could have dissolved your mummy-case, and I can't imagine what you'd be like without it! Perhaps Japan may help you; I'm told the Geisha girls are very potent!— Tell the waiter to take away your bluefish—it's not fit to eat any longer. Are we to have lamb chops?"

"I believe I'd ordered an omelette, but—"

"Excellent!—but I'm afraid I've spoilt your luncheon. My own appetite has been satisfied by the fish. Suppose we order coffee and declare peace!"

"You're sure you care for nothing more? —as you please!" he said, with a melancholy smile. "No, I can't comprehend you. In my view, civilization, culture, social refinement, have subdued the earth and uplifted mankind from the brute. You call it, decadence; and you suggest reversion to Polly—or to demonism, whatever that may be! No, it's beyond me!"

"The earth hasn't been subdued, or man-

kind uplifted; nature retires for a moment, to let us realize our vanity and corruption, but she returns! instinct and impluse are eternal! By and by we get tired of the discrepancy between our public professions and our private propensities, and come back to the primal harmony. But you and I won't argue: time will show. Maroon yourself for a few years on a desert island with *Caliban*, and see what happens!"

"Not with *Caliban*,—with you!" he said, looking up at me.

I dropped a lump of sugar in my coffee. "The only good I can do you is to bid you farewell!"

CHAPTER V.

POLLY AND THE PROPRIETIES.

I WAS dissatisfied with the parting scene between Cabot and myself; it lacked what this generation would call (I believe) "punch". I had neither convinced him nor annihilated him, only perplexed and mortified him, and he probably thought I was play-acting. What would he do?—settle down in Japan, like Lafcadio Hearn, and marry a native?—or return to Cambridge and resume his throne in the classroom?

No matter: he was out of my ken, and Polly and I had other matters in hand. We had ascertained (as Cabot would have said) that our boat didn't sail for several days, and we had leisure, if we wished to run down to Santa Barbara and Los Angeles; the project had this to recommend it, that if by chance Cabot should learn of our departure, he would infer that we had gone to Mexico, according to my intimation. But all of a sudden Polly came in from one of her roamings, and communicated a new idea.

She had made the acquaintance, she said, of a young fellow down at the wharves, the mate of a sailing vessel which was due to clear for Honolulu that night. "A fine, upstanding man he is, too, miss!" He had told her, over a glass of beer, that there was room on the vessel for two passengers (one berth had already been secured by another party); that the Captain was an elderly man and a first-rate seaman; and that if we cared to come aboard before eight o'clock in the evening, we might reach Honolulu in advance of the regular steamer.

"He took me over the boat, miss," said Polly, who was evidently interested in the adventure. "She's a good one,—fine lines, a two-master, square-rigged forward, and fore-and-aft aft, and bright and clean as a bandbox! With the wind off the bow, she could make eight knots, Marlin told me,—Bob Marlin's his name, miss. Two good bunks in our stateroom, and all the grub we want; give us good luck, we'd make port in three to four weeks; and a fine time of year for the trip— barring a hurricane, it might be. Be you sea-sick, miss?"

"Never, Polly! What sort of a person was the other passenger?"

"An aged kind of a man, and seemed ailing like, Marlin said; but he ain't noticed him much, he having bargained with the Captain. Nothing to bother us."

"We'll do it, Polly! It just suits me; and so far as I'm concerned, I'd as lief go around the world in just such a craft. We'll go down and look her over!"

A very neat little vessel the "Aloua"—such was her name—turned out to be. Mr. Marlin justified Polly's description; he was a handsome young giant, with bold features and a steady, courageous blue eye. He took us below and introduced us to the Captain, who was seated at a table in the cabin, with papers before him, which he was studying through a pair of silver-bowed spectacles. His black, straight hair and dark complexion made him look like an Indian, but when he got to his feet and took off his spectacles, I recognized the New England Puritan type. He was tall—quite as tall as Marlin—but lean and sinewy, and his gray eyes, as they measured Polly and me from their wrinkled setting, had the glance of one who had faced a thousand storms.

He shook hands with us seriously and thoroughly.

"Pleased to meet you, ladies! Pleased to have you aboard. You mess at this table with myself and Mr. Marlin. All the

grub you call for, but liquors is extry. We've a good boat, and I look to make a fair trip."

"The longer I'm afloat with you, Captain, the better I shall like it; if you double the Cape and cross the Seven Seas, the more the merrier! You and I are from the same stock I guess; your hair is as black as mine!"

Some of his rigidity dropped away from him.

"Well, now that's hearty! Many's the time I've doubled the Cape—both of 'em—and sailed the Seven Seas too; but never with a lady as like to be a good shipmate as you look to be,—and your sister, too, if this be her!—she seems well set-up, and might take her trick at the wheel, if we run short of hands!" His cheeks wrinkled in a dry, friendly smile. "Mr. Marlin will fix you up," he added; and resuming his spectacles, he reseated himself at his papers. Under guidance of Polly and the mate,—between these two I suspected that a good understanding had already established itself,—I inspected the stateroom, which was unexpectedly roomy. Marlin told us that there were six men in the crew, himself included, and that we were carrying a load of hardware. "Good ballast!" he observed, with a smile.

"I hope Davy Jones doesn't covet it for his locker!" said I.

He laughed, and shrugged his mighty shoulders. "Not with the good luck of you two aboard!" he rejoined; and I felt that I could face chaos with confidence in such company.

Polly and I went back to the hotel to order our traps sent aboard; and we were in our berths and asleep before the ship started,—at least, Polly was asleep, and snoring melodiously through her classic nose; and after listening for awhile to her leisurely rhythms, and feeling the long, smooth plunges of the vessel, as she met the breeze outside the Golden Gate, I too forgot all things and, perhaps, snored too.

At breakfast next morning we were alone at table; the invalid passenger had not yet left his stateroom, according to Joe, the steward, and Captain Gordon, after keeping the deck most of the night, was taking a nap in the chart-room.

But before we had finished Marlin came down the companionway, light-footed and active in spite of his weight and statue, wiping the salt spray from his firm, ruddy face, and bidding us good morning. "A fine breeze, ladies," he observed, as he poured out a cupful of black coffee. "If it comes a bit fresher, we'll do pretty close to nine knots!"

"Have you ever commanded a vessel?" I asked him.

"No: my chance 'll come, I hope. I've been afloat only a matter of five years; I was with a gang of loggers up in Maine till I was twenty. The woods are all right; but I'd a hankering for salt water. I footed it over to Bangor, and worked in the coasting trade for a spell; then I shipped on a four-master for San Francisco. My last three voyages was with Captain Gordon,—China and Australia and those parts."

"Was you ever to New Zealand?" Polly wanted to know,—her elbow on the table and her cheek on her hand, and her eyes perusing his every gesture and expression as he talked.

"Three days, one time, we lay in port there, but I wasn't ashore."

"Fancy that, now!"

"Polly is on her way to meet her uncle there," I explained.

"And the 'Aloua' is the boat I'd like to go in—with you for Captain!" added Polly with the naïveté of her divine prototype.

We all laughed but Marlin was unable to suppress a blush, and he swallowed his hot coffee at a gulp, and bolted for the deck.

"I suppose there'll be a parson at Honolulu," I remarked, "but a sea-captain can read the service at a pinch!"

Polly's splendid rose glowed a little deeper, but she answered, "For the matter of that, miss, if I fancied a man, and he me, and no parson handy we'd maybe not wait for one!"

What would poor Cabot have said to that!

We climbed up on deck, and confronted the blown, wet face of the sparkling Pacific. One of the deck hands, a handsome, graceful youth, with dark, tumbling hair and melting eyes, who looked like a faun from the groves of ancient Italy, and who told

me, shyly, that his name was Tony, was scrubbing the deck. He rigged up a couple of chairs for us on the leeward side, and contrived an awning from a bit of sail to keep the sun off. He kept eying me with covet interest, perhaps suspecting me of being a countrywoman of his own.

Marlin was aft, coaching big, blond Olaf, the Swede, at the wheel. He stood with his hands in the pockets of his reefer, meeting the swell and pitch of the seas with swayings of his well-proportioned body. I had never seen a man more satisfying to eye and mind. A fit man for a girl like Polly, no doubt! Yet she might have preferred Tony, her antitype. But sexual attractions may be based on things deeper than complexion and temperament! Why had I refused Topham Brent!

"Did you ever read 'Robinson Crusoe', Polly?"

"That I did, miss! The poor man, with never a woman to him! 'Tis a woman's footprint I'd have put on the shore for him —not Man Friday's! She'd have stitched his goat-skins for him, and given him—all the creature-comforts, miss!"

"But he had a wife in England, Polly!"

She lifted an independent chin.

"I'm thinking there was wives and husbands in the world before there was lawyers and parsons; and there's no parliaments nor churches on desert islands!"

Porpoises revolved alongside of us, like wheels of Neptune's chariot; flying-fish skimmed before them; gulls soarded watchfull in our wake; the naked sun mounted the empty sky, and the wind, companion of our journey, sang in our ears. I fell silent, bathed in the eternal flow of nature; parsons and professors don't affect us in this way.

"I think I'll step aft a bit," said Polly; "Bob Marlin told me he'd teach me how to box the compass."

"I suspect you know how to box the compass pretty well already," I returned, a little tartly. But after she had gone, I stretched myself out in my chair, and closed my eyes. The sea is a wonderful compensation!

During the next three days and nights there was no change from sunshine, moonlight, and "trades". Captain Gordon was taciturn as usual, but content; Marlin and Polly seemed well advanced on a voyage more captivating than our ostensible one; the crew had an easy time of it, and the steward served excellent meals. The aged invalid still remained secluded in his stateroom, Joe only communicating with him, and reporting him "pretty seasick." Much as I appreciated my solitude, which was invaded at intervals by Polly's incursions, and by unobtrusive attentions from Tony, the Roman faun, I was sometimes tempted to break in upon our unseen companion, and get him up on deck. Elderly men attract me.

On the fourth night we ran into a calm. The unaccustomed stillness finally awoke me, and I lay for a while listening to the soft lapping of the water along the vessel's side, and to Polly, in the berth above me, snoring comfortably on her back. The light gradually increased, and at length it occurred to me that I might see the sunrise in the mid-Pacific,—we had logged about five hundred miles. I got up quietly, slipped a peignoir over my pajamas, for it was quite warm, and went up the companionway.

As I came round the corner of the deckhouse, I saw a figure extended in my chair, wrapped in a long robe that covered it from head to foot. My step on the deck aroused him; he looked round, and I uttered a little yelp of amazement.

It had been incredible in the hotel lobby; here, it was an impossibility.

Cabot Selwyn, again!

CHAPTER VI.

A TASTE OF CLIQUOT.

HE lay speechless before me, and from the expression in his wide-staring eyes, I think he expected me to murder him. But stupefaction does not prompt to tragic deeds. After a long pause, I turned with a sickly laugh, and drew up the other chair, in which I slowly seated myself, facing him.

"If I didn't know you incapable of the crime of being here on purpose, Cabot," I

said, " you might be in danger. But, evidently, we are both in the grasp of a remorseless and unsearchable destiny. Of course, if we hadn't lied to each other, this wouldn't have happened; but human lies are half of destiny's stock-in-trade. I must say, though, that, for a Harvard Professor, you move in a dramatic way your " wonders to perform." Was this the reason for your keeping in hiding? How long have you known Polly and I were on board?"

He started half erect in his chair, his wrappings falling away from his pink silk pajama jacket. " Did you say—Polly?" he faltered.

It was a morsel of satisfaction. " Polly, of course!" said I, malignantly. " Probably, after all, it's the conjunction of you and Polly, not of you and me, that destiny has in view. For the coming month at least, you and she will be inseparable. You will soon discover that your aversion for her is imaginary, and it will be succeeded by mutual attractions as strong. You can consumate your romance in Honolulu. I congratulate you in advance. She'll be up here on deck in a few minutes."

He dropped back, and instinctively drew the covering half over his face. Yet he gave one wild glance at the sea, which lay around us as calm as fate itself, with the sun just peeping above its eastern rim. But suicide was not in his temperament. He relaxed, and lay inert for a time. Then he turned to me in the appeal of one human being in extremity, to another.

" If I could regain my stateroom without being observed, would you consent to keep secret my presence on board? I would stay there till we arrive in Honolulu."

" Yes, I'd do that. How did you happen to select this vessel?"

He was sitting up, and nervously gathering his draperies about him.

" I could have asked you the same question! I meant to slip out of sight. My mention of Japan was a prevarication!"

I began to laugh. " I had no intention of visiting Mexico, either. But since our punishment is acomplished, there's no use wasting time in repentance. And of course you can't hide from Polly: meet her boldly and get it over! As I've told you before, she's the best thing that could happen to you. Your marraige with her is written: she and the mate, Mr. Marlin, are coquetting a little, but a rival is the best stimulus for a lover. As a mere act of friendship, I'd be willing to try to distract his attention, so as to give you an opening. All is fair in love!"

My suggestion was perhaps not so disinterested as it sounded; but, on a long voyage, a little dramatic diversion is agreeable.

Cabot, however, failed to fall in with my plan: he looked more lugubrious than ever.

" Think what an opportunity to prove your theory of the superiority of artificiality over nature!" I urged. " As a champion of culture, you can't back out!"

" Without discussing the strictly human value of the other person concerned," he said, " I must insist that, of all females I've ever met, Polly is the very last that I could regard as a—permanent associate. Her presence affects me like a huge fragment of raw meat. Only a cave bear could digest her. And the dimensions of her mind are in inverse proportion to her—er—chops and sirloins! Her intellect trots around in a circle, like a beetle in a pill-box! Her very good nature is—er—suffocating! I have been far from well during the past few days, but had hoped that this calm would restore me; but your proposition—" He choked, and glanced over the rail.

The Captain passed by, with the stump of a cigar between his teeth.

" Morning, folks! Glad to see you on deck, sir!"

" How long will this calm last, Captain?" I asked him.

He cast a mariner's eye aloft.

" Might get a change to-night: if a blow do come, it'll likely come strong!" He went on aft, the smoke from his cigar drifting across poor Cabot's nostrils. A crisis seemed near.

It was at this juncture that Polly bounced blithely up the companionway. Her hair, braided in two long, golden ropes, hung down her back, with a blue ribbon here and there,—outward signs of the dawning of Marlin-ward emotions. On seeing Cabot, she uttered a loud coo of surprise and admiration.

"Bless my heart, if it ain't the master! We thought you was in Japan!"

"I am not so fortunate!" he replied in a whisper.

"What you want is a good, thick steak, or a brace of mutton chops with melted butter!" she continued, "and some nice fried sausages at the side. Wait a minute, sir,—I'll step below, and me and Joe will have 'em ready for you in no time!" And without waiting for an answer, she dived for the pantry on her terrible mission.

Chops, steaks and sausages for a refined Bostonian who had been seasick for four days! He would have rejected honeydew and milk of paradise. I dislike sick people, and was not foolishly partial to Cabot; but I am capable of magnanimity.

"Don't give up!" I said to him. "The Captain says that 'liquors are extry here,' but I'll fetch a nip of brandy!"

"It might—save the day!" he muttered, with an indescribable glance.

I followed on Polly's heels: the liquor chest had to be unlocked; I got back, I think, none too soon. I poured the fiery liquid into the patient, and although most of it ran out of the corners of his mouth, it seemed to do him good, and he emitted faint sounds of recognition.

"I told Polly she needn't bother about those other things," I said; "you heard what the Captain told us,—there'll be no change before night. I'll be back in half an hour."

I went down to breakfast. One feels a kindness for persons whom one has benefitted. Cabot couldn't help being what he was,—efficacious treatment should have been prenatal. The culture virus had penetrated to his marrow, since, even in seasickness, he could be as nicely behaved as ever. Toward those who are beyond salvation, we should practise mercy.

I found Polly and Marlin already at work on the chops and sausages, and their appetite for one another grew by what it fed on. They spoke little, but helped each other affectionately to tid-bits. The surrounding stillness made every sound distinct,—the Captain's steps as he paced the deck: big Olaf knocking the dottel out of his pipe on the rail. The vessel stood erect and motionless as a house founded on a rock; it seemed as if she could never move again.

When I returned to the deck, Cabot was better; he gave me a solemn look, as one who has survived a critical surgical operation. Marlin, replacing the Captain, paced the deck, casting enamored glances at Polly, who had procured a fishing-line, and was fishing over the rail, but was catching the glances only. Half a mile away on the starboard bow, an indolent school of whales was spouting and sounding, with flappings of their flukes. Gulls swam on the glassy surface near the ship, like tame ducks on the Pond in Boston Common.

I sat down beside Cabot, and my Velasquez Tony immediately appeared to arrange the awning. Cabot presently bestirred himself.

"I'm so mortified," he said, "at the deceit I practised on you! But as soon as I turned my back on Cambridge, a strange influence seized me. I fancy fugitive criminals might experience something like it. I wished no one to know my whereabouts or destination; there was a sort of exhilaration in feeling lost to the world! When we met in the hotel, I had as yet formed no settled plan; afterward, feeling that you were a connecting link between me and the world, I wandered down to the wharves, and happening to see this vessel advertised to sail, I engaged passage on her,—taking a plunge, as it were, into the Unknown and the infinite! But, as you say, destiny—"

"I'm glad you had it in you to feel that impulse," I rejoined. "It looks, now, as if we might have to spend the rest of our lives in this precise spot. The most sensible thing to do is to sleep it out. Let's take a nap!"

I closed my eyes, and I presume he did the like; so there we lay, sleeping side by side like a pair of innocent children! But when I awoke, Cabot was gone.

The heat had become excessive; the sea had an unhealthy glare, many jellyfish were drifting past; the gulls were swooping about and screaming uneasily. The vessel stood as rigidly upright and motionless as ever.

Evening brought no relief; the cabin, at

dinner was stifling; Captain Gordon, after begging my pardon and Polly's, took off his coat and swabbed his neck and face with a red bandanna. Marlin kept his coat on, by reason, I think, of a bit of blue ribbon twisted into his buttonhole, which must have found its way there from Polly's golden braid. Polly champed her food with the artless satisfaction of a collie dog. Cabot had not joined us, but we were not looking for him.

Suddenly, the door of his stateroom opened and out he came. He wore a white flannel tuxedo and trousers, was smooth-shaven, and his hair carefully brushed. The heat seemed not to touch him; he was as cool as an Indian summer afternoon in the Berkshires.

He bowed gracefully to the company, and took his place at the Captain's left hand. After the soup had been removed, he beckoned to Joe, the steward, who nodded mysteriously, and dodged back into the pantry. In a few minutes he emerged again, bearing a bucket of broken ice, from which protruded the golden necks of three champagne bottles.

It was no illusion of fevered fancy, but a reality!

Cabot, bland and courteous as at a club dinner, addressed the Captain.

"I took the liberty, Captain, of bringing aboard a small case of wine, and I shall be honored if you and our friends will join me in a toast to the success of our trip. So far as capable seamanship and agreeable company are concerned, it is a success already!"

With the last word, the cork popped, Joe poured, the glasses foamed,—the play was a little masterpiece! We lifted the bubbling nectar to our lips. In the sultry swelter of that Pacific calm, what could be more grateful than a mouthful of chilled Veuve Cliquot?

The Captain sipped firmly and smacked his lips in approval; Marlin and Polly, who had probably had no previous experience in this form of felicity, did their best. Polly took a large mouthful and her hiccup was one of the loudest I ever heard. Marlin as a brave man tackling the unknown, sipped his with dabbing motions of his head, cautiously but with resolution. The Captain said, "Good liquor, sir: we're obliged to ye!"

I gave Cabot a glance of respect: there is no denying the magic of civilized tact and good breeding; a flower of amity arose between us, and bridged the gulf with its tendrils. A taste of Cliquot at the right moment has an aroma of the Golden Rule.

I like to remember and record these trifles; we were on the brink of different things!

CHAPTER VII.

THE MAN AND HIS MASK.

THE stateroom that night was insufferable of course, and Polly and I would have slept on deck, but for the Captain's orders: if a storm came, it would come suddenly, and the decks must be clear for the working of the ship. So I lay fanning myself in my berth, listening to Polly's rhythm.

In spite of the probability of a break in the weather, the girl had undressed methodically, as if she had been in her bedroom at home, and had put on a long, cotton nightgown of the early Victorian era; and after climbing into her berth (an impressive spectacle!) had instantly fallen asleep. What a being!

I had better prepared myself for the expected emergency; but I couldn't sleep, and was very uncomfortable.

The barometer had been in the neighborhood of 28 when I had turned in, and was falling, but the calm had been flatter than ever. Cabot, continuing to be wonderful, had paced the deck with the Captain till near midnight, the Captain smoking, and the two of them conversing (about what?—I wondered!). Out of the illimitable darkness extending around us rose at intervals, long, unaccountable sighings. I wished the storm would come; anything would be preferable to this stifling suspense!

Forewarned though we were, the break came with astounding suddenness.

The creaking of the planks of her berth overhead had just apprised me that Polly had changed her position, and had inspired

the hope that her snores might abate; but she had begun again at once, on a new and formidable key. Then they were overcome by a new sound: it was like the shriek of a titanic calliope, a scream, sullen, wild, fatal, filling space, undulating in enormous paroxysms, drawing and waxing louder at each moment.

Now it screeched far and near, and I was aware of confused noises on deck, the thudding of bare feet, sharp, hoarse shouts, the rattling of cordage. Polly's drowsy voice then said, "Indeed, then, I'll smack your ears if you try it!" Her dream was apparently autobiographical. But as yet there had been no unusual movement of the vessel.

But the next instant the Aloua received such a buffet as seemed enough to crush her ribs; but she swayed down before it, going over further, further, further yet, till I thought her keel must be entirely uncovered.

The blow was on the port side; our stateroom was to starboard, so instead of being thrown out of my berth, I was rolled against the ship's side, and as I had been holding on with might and main, I was very little bruised. A grunt came from Polly: she had awaked at last!

Incomprehensible moments followed. The vessel must have pivoted for now we seemed to be driving forward in long, staggering lurches.

"That'll be Bob Marlin at the wheel!" I heard Polly say.

"Are you hurt, Polly?"

"Right as rain, Miss!" was the cheerful reply. "Best get our duds on!"

There was a rending noise, like an explosion; at the same moment, a human scream; the ship shuddered and paused, and was then again wrenched forward.

"That'll be the mizzen gone," Polly observed, in a tone of one familiar with such occurrences; "she'll ride easier!"

I was saying to myself, "Who screamed? —Cabot?"

Meanwhile I got my feet into a pair of rubber-soled tennis shoes, which I had had ready to hand, and wriggled into a flannel skirt and sweater. Polly seemed to be dressing herself stubbornly; her toilet was a memorable achievement of acrobatics and main strength; she even laced up her boots. Persons of her cast are not given to short-cuts. Through it all, and in spite of many hard bumps, she was as good-humored as ever.

The performance of the Aloua became more and more preposterous. Remembering our cargo of hardware, I made up my mind that she must founder; but I resolved not to be drowned under hatches. I would have sight of the sea once more before I perished!

As I was about to open the door, there came a discreet knock at it. It sounded so out of keeping with the Last-Judgment pitch to which things were tuned, that it irritated me. I pulled open the door with a jerk.

A figure stood there, holding on by the brass rail; he had on a sailor's reefer, and a shapeless woolen cap was pulled down over his brows. His face was indistinguishable, being in deep shadow.

He wasn't Marlin, neither was he my devoted Tony: nor Joe, the steward. Who, then?

"Well?" I ejaculated.

"I just wanted to ascertain if you were injured. It seems to be a real hurricane. Can I be of any assistance?"

"Cabot!" I cried out. "I thought—there was a scream when the mast fell—I was afraid you'd gone overboard!"

"It was Captain Gordon, I'm sorry to say, and the boy Tony; the cordage of the mast caught them, and swept them away. Mr. Marlin is steering us, and one of the hands, Olaf, I think, is helping him. Our jib, which was partly set, has gone, but the mainsail was close-reefed; but Joe tells me they'll have to chop down the foremast, if the wind doesn't save them the trouble. From what I've been able to ascertain, if we can put on a new jib, to help us steer, and if we don't spring a leak, we have a chance!"

The same Cabot—more himself than ever!

"My word! the poor Captain!" murmured Polly, her head over my shoulder. "Well, Bob commands now,—'tis what he wanted!"

And alas! for my graceful, swarthy Tony! But mourning must be for hereafter.

And here was the apostle of culture and artificiality looking death politely in the eye! He would pass from end to end of this mortal scene covered behind his polished mask, a simulacrum and nothing more! Was the mask, then, finally to prevail over poor old Human Nature and the Devil? If so, this earth would be no place for Martha Klemm!

But the final judgment had not yet been handed down.

"Are the life-boats safe?" demanded Polly, who had finally completed her toilet, and stepped into the doorway, ready for action, calm and self-possessed in spite of the impending danger which threatened all aboard.

As she spoke, a tremendous sea came over the stern and went thundering forward above our heads. As the roar of it swept past, Cabot replied, "Unless that wave took them."

"Did it take Bob Marlin is what I'm going to find out!" rejoined Polly; and she started to go to the companionway, steadying herself by laying hold of the backs of the chairs one after another. Before she had reached the passage, another mountain of water swept us.

"Hurricanes pass," I heard Cabot say in the midst of the tumult, "but Boston remains." He did not intend it as an epigram, I think, but as a consoling article of faith.

I said, "You and I might be of use in the galley, helping Joe feed the men. Shall we make a try for it?"

"You'd get all wet!" he admonished me: "I'll go and ascertain—"

I laughed and we staggered forward together. Somehow, the effect of his companionship on me was to make everything seem unreal,—a make-believe ship hurtling to an imaginary doom in a pretended storm, and we, actors in the melodrama.

We found Joe, short and fat, in a soiled undershirt, concocting a stew, which as the ship leaped and struggled betrayed a tendency to eject itself from the pot volcanically. Hitherto, in the discharge of his functions he had appeared ingratiating and servile; but the imminence of eternity where tips were not had removed his mask and brought the inner Joe to the surface, disclosing his real personality.

"I won't have no folks foolin' round my galley!" was his greeting in a hostile falsetto. "I've been bothered enough already: get out o' here you two!"

Cabot visibly stiffened and advanced upon the other sternly.

"While you remain alive you must be civil, steward!" said he, as if he were reproving a pupil in class. "You have been drinking: give me the keys to the liquor chest."

Joe snarled like an angry cat. "Go to hell and take her—"

Cabot took another step forward; Joe flourished his ladle. Cabot to my amazement shot out a quick blow which aided by a timely lurch of the vessel landed on Joe's nose and sent him down crashing against the china-cupboard. He picked himself up slowly, infirm and bleeding, the fight out of him.

"The keys!" repeated Cabot firmly; and, as Joe handed them over, "Now go wash your face. No emergency can excuse foul language in the presence of a lady."

I was pleased and showed it. "You've promoted us from scullions to chefs," I observed. "Find a bucket and dipper, and we'll serve this mess to the crew," was his rejoinder.

"I'm sorry this happened," he assured me; "I never before in my life struck a man."

We saved most of the stew, though, had its transference been effected on the back of a bucking bronco, it could hardly have been more difficult. But how to get it to the men?

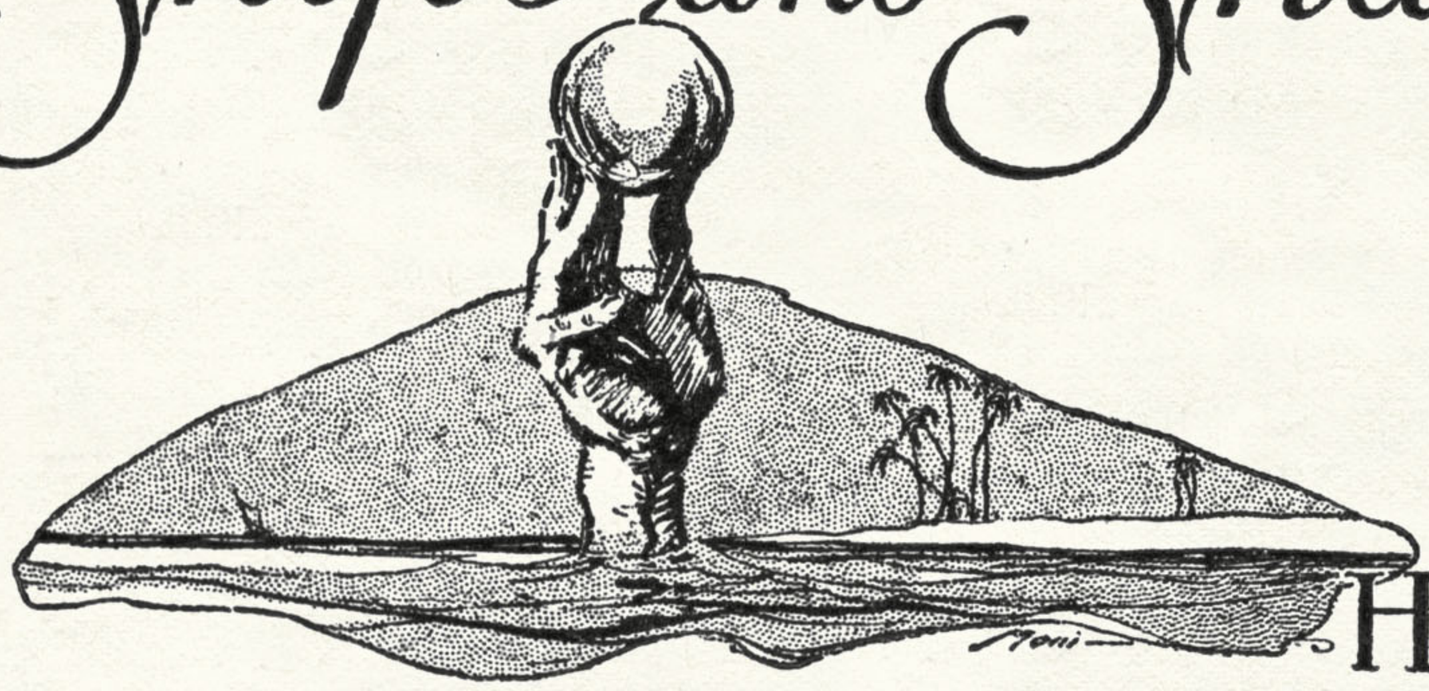
Another cataract poured over the deck.

"They must come, one by one, and get it," I decided. "Can you call them?"

He started for the door, but was swept back by an astounding apparition.

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.

Ships and Sharks



by H. A. Lamb

SKIPPER AMOS BARCLAY placed a solid foot on the first step of the stairs leading to the Elevated. Then he paused to consider. Over his head a train rumbled to a halt. People brushed past his broad figure with the impatience of New Yorkers who seem to be always hoping to catch the train they are going to miss. Still Amos Barclay considered.

Not that he did not know whither he was bound. In the breast-pocket of his blue serge suit—patched and pressed with painstaking care for the trip by Matilda Barclay—was a chart of New York City with the skipper's course picked out. Barclay's broad, roughened face reflected no uneasiness as to his bearings. His small, gray eyes, surrounded by the network of wrinkles that come upon those who look long into distance over the surface of the sea, peered about him reflectively. A blunt forefinger thrust at his stiff, gray-brown beard while he mentally conned over his course.

Due south from the Pennsylvania Station, it was, until abreast the landmark of the City Hall post-office; then south by southeast to his destination. And Barclay, having the guidance of a warm, early summer morning sun, was in no doubt as to which was north and which south.

Rather, he had not counted on the number of steps leading up to the Elevated. His bulky form was all of two hundred pounds, and the rains of fifteen years in the South Pacific had left their trace of gout. While he hesitated, the seaman sighted something which sent him hurrying into the street. This something was the placard at the masthead of a street-car—South Ferry. Here was a craft undoubtedly bound in the direction he wished to go, and the word " ferry " had a welcoming aspect.

Another moment and Skipper Barclay had tendered his nickel and was ensconced in the seat beside the conductor, his worn leather valise between his knees, while the car clanged through the traffic.

Breathing a trifle heavily from the impetus of his plunge for the car, Barclay fumbled in the breast of his coat. He drew out a fragment of paper, clipped from a newspaper on the train. It bore the legend:

BRADDOCK

Jewels Bought and Sold. Highest Prices

The address was Maiden Lane. Barclay had already located Maiden Lane on his chart. He stared at the advertisement mildly, wasting no time in looking out at the sights of the city. Frisco was much the same as New York, and he had come on business. His trip was the fruit of an idea.

This idea had been born of hours of thought when Barclay had been alone on his schooner in the South Pacific. He had had plenty of time to think. The life of a South Seas trader is quieter than many narrators choose to picture it.

Between dickering with islanders for copra and pearl-shell, and hours of selecting arrows and shark's teeth-swords for the

tourist trade, the germ of the idea had grown. Barclay had sought and patiently accumulated pearls, bartering them for California-made clothing, knives, calico, pipes, and tobacco and English currency with the Kanakas. Venturing from the more familiar grounds of the Samoas and the Straits to the New Hebrides and Santa Cruz, Barclay had collected a fair assortment of pearls.

These he had kept for three or four years. It was part of his idea. The other part was that higher prices for his holdings might be had in New York than in Honolulu or Frisco. He was sure of this. He had heard of pearls sold by companion traders at Frisco which fetched double the price later in New York. So Barclay had come where the best prices were to be had.

Much was at stake on his trip. A month ago he had sold his schooner at Honolulu and taken passage to Frisco. Barclay had traded for fifteen years, and Matilda Barclay had asked him to stay ashore. They had a cottage on the coast near Oakland, a married daugther, and a grandson, who was in school.

Barclay hoped to get enough for his pearls added to the money he had for the schooner and certain other savings—to keep him and his wife in the semiluxury of a modern cottage with a phonograph, and to send the grandson to school.

Inquiry of the conductor of the car set the skipper afoot just south of City Hall. He caught the eye of a loitering teamster.

"Where might Maiden Lane be now?" he rumbled.

The man jerked his thumb indefinitely over his shoulder and Barclay passed on through the crowd of lower Broadway at noon. Eventually he came to the building that bore the brass sign: "Braddock—Jeweler."

An elevator took him to an upper floor, and a similar inscription on the ground glass of a door admitted him to the sanctum of the jeweler. Barclay put down his bag, mildly surprised. Instead of the store he anticipated, he saw a boxlike office behind a mahogany railing. At a stenographer's desk a well-dressed young woman was bending over a ledger. A table, a chair, and a row of filing-cabinets completed the furnishing. Barclay took off his felt hat, revealing a wide expanse of bald forehead, reddened by wind and sun.

"Is this Mr. Braddock's?" he asked.

The girl glanced up, noted the suit-case with a slight frown, looked again at the seaman's earnest face, and smiled perfunctorily.

"Yes, it is," she said sharply. "Do you want to see Mr. Braddock? What is the name, please?"

Barclay waited while she disappeared into a partitioned office behind her desk. Over the ground-glass partition Barclay heard a murmured conversation.

"Mr. Braddock will see you," she announced, holding open the door of the inner office.

"Thank ye, miss," said Barclay, and she smiled again, fleetingly, at his hearty tone.

Braddock proved to be a smooth-shaven individual of uncertain age, quietly dressed. He looked up inquiringly from a rolltop desk. Barclay was relieved to find the sanctum contained a glass cabinet, and a heavy safe. He had begun to wonder if this was really a jeweler's shop.

He took the chair that was offered him and scrutinized his companion. Braddock's lean face was strangely lifeless until he smiled, as he did now, cordially.

"What can I do for you—Captain Barclay?"

"I saw your advertisement in the paper," began the seaman. "I've got some pearls to sell—came all the way from Frisco to New York." He fumbled at his breast-pocket and drew out a leather case in which were two chamois bags. One of these he placed on the leaf of the jeweler's desk.

"There's no demand for pearls just now," observed Braddock indifferently. "Too many on the market—"

He broke off, studying the contents of the bag which his visitor spread out carefully. There were a dozen pearls, of varying size, but all undeniably fine specimens.

"H-m. Where did these come from?"

Barclay fingered them slowly. "Some from the Straits, three or four from Malaita, some from Azore, and the two little fellows from Samoa. See that?" He held up a

small, lustrous sphere. "Chief Tahuana sold that to me for trade worth maybe twenty pounds sterling. He was crazy for gin. I wouldn't sell it to him, but he knew he could get it from one of the copra peddlers. Tahuana got his gin, and came aboard again—drunk. He ripped the skin off my collar-bone before we got 'em off the deck. There's no trusting his kind—of that I'm quite positive.

Braddock smiled sceptically.

"Trader's tales—eh? I guess you figure you'll get more for your stuff by the telling of 'em. Stories don't sell pearls in N'York." Bending over the objects in question, he did not see the surprise that flashed into Barclay's gray eyes. After all, South Seas traders were not common in the metropolis, and the captain's speech savored of fiction—if it had not been true.

Barclay placed a heavy hand over his pearls.

"If ye do not believe me, Mr. Braddock," he growled, "we'll not do business. I'm a man of my word. These pearls come from the islands."

The jeweler glanced up quickly at that, and his smile changed.

"No offense, cap'n—no offense, sir. We hear a lot of fake stuff about the South Seas pearl fisheries. I don't doubt your word. Not a bit." He fingered the pearls; then adjusted a jeweler's glass over one eye. "As I said, cap'n, I'm overstocked with these things, but—h-m—let me see. What are you asking for this pair? They aren't quite a match—"

This was familiar ground to Amos Barclay. Fifteen years he had bargained, bought and sold. Only it had been on the deck of his schooner, with the trade ranged before him, and a serviceable revolver slung at his waist. And the men he had bargained with were the shrewd, apparently childlike, but really treacherous islanders—or the human driftwood of Polynesia.

He had met with every trick of false dealing—traded a dozen bundles of arrows for as many sticks of tobacco with a certain chief, while the henchmen of that island potentate had rifled his cabin underneath, *via* the port, accessible to a nigger boy. He had passed over a Portuguese admiral's full-dress uniform—bought at a costumers in San Francisco—to a warrior of Aoba, while the dexterous toes of his client were engaged in drawing valuable knives from the stock of trade between them, and passing the spoil back to his comrades to be divided between them.

And he had paid over the full price of a good pearl to a Kanaka, who put the payment in his lava-lava and forthwith dived over the rail of the schooner with the pearl—until checked in his swim ashore by a few well-chosen shots.

Barclay had learned his lesson many years ago in the hard school of the sea-trader. Now, he thought, he was dealing with a white man, in a white man's city. They would haggle—they did haggle for more than an hour, over prices—but Braddock was a man of his own kind, who paid out good American money. Here was no concealed treachery, or the need of a drawn revolver. It was, Amos Barclay hoped, his last big trade. It was the fruit of his idea.

II.

And Braddock at length paid him a good price—the figure the captain had in mind when he had come to New York. The jeweler took all the pearls Barclay had in his bag. They were worth the price. Both men were satisfied with the deal that had just been closed.

Barclay's idea had worked out well. He had received forty per cent more than he would have got in Frisco. Braddock had met his demands readily.

"I'll take cash, I reckon," he said when the jeweler had mentioned a check. Braddock agreed.

"Wait outside, Captain Barclay," he explained, "and I'll send to the bank for the money. We haven't got forty-six hundred dollars in our safe just now."

Barclay nodded cordially, gathered up his pearls and retired to the outer office, to fall into a pleasant reverie while the woman assistant went out for the cash.

Braddock closed the partition door carefully. Then he retired to a closet behind his desk. He shut the door of the closet and unhooked a telephone.

"Give me Dorgan's café," he told the operator.

Evidently the switchboard operator was familiar with this call, for Braddock got his connection at once.

"Jim Mahoney there?" he asked briskly, and waited. "That you, Jim? This is Braddock—yes. Say, you're the man I want. I got a customer on the hook here—pearls, good ones. I'm handing him forty-six hundred in cash in a half-hour."

Mahoney's voice was sharp.

"What sort of a guy is he?"

"Ripe, and a real boob. A trader—the South Seas. Thinks he knows more 'n all N'York. Wants to retire and stay ashore, now that he has a pile—"

"I get you," laughed the man at the other end of the wire.

"Look here, Jim. Watch yourself. You know I got to keep clear of your little stunt—"

"Oh, don't worry yourself, Brad. You'll get fifty-fifty of what I get out'v—"

"Skipper Amos Barclay. If you get it—"

"Say, do I ever fail?"

"Well, watch yourself."

"You'll get your velvet—"

Mahoney hung up and Braddock returned to his desk, a satisfied gleam in his narrow eyes. Twenty-five minutes later he had paid the cash to Barclay, gripped the seaman's hand and wished him well. Barclay replied with gruff heartiness, took up his valise, and sought the door. Outside in the corridor he noticed a slender individual, in a light, summer suit and straw hat. They went down in the elevator together. At the entrance Barclay paused, wondering whither his way led.

The stranger stopped also and lit a cigarette. "Nice day, cap'n," he observed, flinging away the match. Barclay nodded, slightly curious.

"How d'ye know—"

"What I called you?" The man laughed pleasantly. He had a shrewd, youthful face and a frank manner. "Oh, I ought to know a seaman, cap'n. See a lot'v them. My business is ship construction—at one'v the big Jersey shipyards."

Barclay nodded again, looking about for a street-car that would bear him northward.

They walked out together apparently bound in the same direction.

"I'm going to visit the works now, cap'n," explained his companion. "One'v the biggest in the country. Say, you ought to see the neat little cargo-steamers we built for the Emergency Fleet—and the pair 'v dreadnoughts in the ways now. During the war visitors was barred, but now the plant's a great place for the sightseers." His quick glance swept sideways at the taciturn skipper. "We're ready to launch a sweet four-master right now."

"Didn't know they made 'em any more."

"Oh, we made everything during the war. Say, you ought to see that schooner. She's a beauty. For the coast trade."

Barclay scowled irresolutely. He had intended to spend his time otherwise. Still—

"The dreadnoughts will be the biggest afloat. Two thirty-five thousand-ton craft. Why don't you give 'em the once-over, cap'n—"

"Barclay." The skipper hesitated. He had heard much of the ships under construction in the New York yards. And he would never return to the metropolis. "Where might this place be, young man?"

An hour later the two were within the yard limits of one of the greatest shipbuilding-plants in the country. His companion had not overstated the magnitude of the work. Barclay scrutinized the panorama of steel fabrication keenly, and deeply interested in his tour of inspection.

He saw the new angle and plate shop, watched the seventy-ton traveling-crane in operation, looked into the power-house. The other, who seemed familiar with the place, led him to the ways, where the newly rivetted side of two great battle-ships loomed. Other visitors were there.

Barclay noticed an N. Y. S. C. initialed on the motor-trucks by the spur of railroad-track and his guide told him the name of the plant. Barclay recalled it vaguely.

He left the Jersey shore undeniably impressed with the aspect of the plant they had visited. It was late, and he accepted his companion's invitation to dinner.

"I don't think you know my name," his

host smiled when the waiter had been dismissed. He produced a card, which read:

JAMES B. MAHONEY
New York Shipyard Company
Sales Department

"Mighty fine plant, that, Cap'n Barclay. I ought to know. I sell its stock for a living"—the flicker of a smile passed over the man's alert face unobserved by the seaman—"and it's pretty soft for me, because the stock just about sells itself. It pays thirty per cent a year, and it's so good everybody wants it."

He ordered a steak, well done, and gazed reflectively at Barclay. The skipper had said little. But Mahoney had not forgotten Braddock's tip.

"This shipyard stock is so safe," he said confidentially, "that it's an A1 investment for people who don't want to worry about their money. Thousands get a fine income from it."

Barclay nodded understandingly. He had heard of the great profits the shipyards had been making. And he understood something of investment. He had bought up, in the past, little by little, the shares in his schooner until he was sole owner. He thought of the small schooner, compared with the giants of the sea he had just seen. It must be a fine thing to own even a tiny share of such craft. Even better, to invest in the plant that built them—

Mahoney produced a newspaper and examined it.

"Let's see," he meditated, "N. Y. S. C. is selling at forty-two to-day. Dirt-cheap, and a bargain." He showed the list of stock prices to the skipper and the fleeting smile appeared again as Barclay verified what he had said. "Just think, it pays you thirty dollars on every hundred each year. Any man who has made a pile can profit by it."

Barclay nodded again. Slowly, he computed the income on four thousand dollars, at thirty per cent. It would be more than a thousand dollars a year. It would give Matilda—

"A man who has worked hard to make a pile," resumed Mahoney pleasantly, "has a right to get good money from it. A good living."

"Yes," assented Barclay, "that's true."

The problem had worried him. He had some money — enough, as he had once thought. But Matilda had told him that prices had gone up during his last trip to the South Seas, and his grandson was in school. All these things cost a great deal.

"Look here, young man," he scowled thoughtfully. "Could ye get me some of this here stock—a little?"

No elation showed in Mahoney's keen eyes. Instead he looked grave.

"It 'd be hard to do—and, say, cap'n—I didn't want to try to sell you anything. Business is business and friends are friends —that's my motto. But if you really want some—"

Barclay thought again of the giant ships. No need to tell him what money-makers these were, or how great the demand for more of their kind would be. Mahoney's words were echoing in his mind: "A man who has worked hard has a right—to a good living."

Twelve hundred dollars a year would keep him and his wife comfortably. He had seen the giant shipyard, and the price quoted in the newspaper. His only fear was that there might not be any of the stock to be had.

"I think I might be able to get you a hundred shares—maybe," considered Mahoney. "I like you, Barclay, and I'll do my best. Suppose you meet me at the National Bank to-morrow, at ten?"

III.

Precisely at ten o'clock the next morning Mahoney met Barclay at the marble lobby of one of the oldest banks of the city. Fifteen minutes later he had produced a formal looking stock-certificate, made out in Barclay's name and bearing the title and seal of the New York Shipyard Company.

The seaman read it through carefully, seated at one of the customer's tables in the lobby. He saw that the certificate was correct in form. He was further impressed

with the magnificence of the National Bank corridors. Truly, he thought, this was the place where highest prices were to be had—the city of wealth.

He counted out forty-two hundred dollars to Mahoney, who drew up and handed him a receipt for the amount.

"You got a good thing there, Cap'n Barclay," Mahoney laughed jovially. "Hang onto it. Don't let any swindler make you sell it. Your name's on the books of the company, and they'll send you a check for your thirty per cent each year."

He slapped the burly seaman on the shoulder and leaned closer, confidentially.

"Say, it was hard to get this across to you. But—do I ever fail?"

Once more Captain Amos Barclay stood in the streets of Manhattan, this time with the stock-certificate buttoned where the money had been. He was well content. New York had more than satisfied him. He had got his money, and exchanged it for an investment that would fulfil all his needs. His idea had been put into effect successfully.

At the street corner he hesitated. The desire, common to new purchasers, to look over his property assailed him. He would visit the shipyard again before taking the train to Frisco.

He crossed once more to the Jersey shore, gained admittance to the plant, and seated himself on a convenient pile of lumber where he could watch the hivelike turmoil of the yards, and listen to the staccato of riveting machines. Time passed pleasantly. He wanted to tell Matilda about everything he had seen.

From the lumber-pile he wandered about idly, pausing at the door of the forge-shop. Here an attendant denied him admission to the office.

"I guess I got a right to look in, young man," growled the skipper. "I'm a stockholder in this company."

The man shook his head.

"You get a pass from the manager's office, over there"—he jerked his thumb over his shoulder—"and I'll let you in, all right."

Barclay had set his mind on seeing the forge-shop, and limped over to the office. Here, among a medley of draftsmen and stenographers, a clerk asked his business.

"I'd like a pass to the forge-shop," he explained, "from the manager."

The clerk gave place to a brisk young man, well dressed, who politely inquired his business in the shop. At Barclay's explanation the eye-brows of the young man lifted slightly.

"A stockholder. Why"—he scanned the burly figure—"it isn't usual—"

Barclay drew forth his stock-certificate and exhibited it proudly. His questioner took the paper and scrutinized it, idly at first, then intently.

"Wait here a minute," he announced, vanishing, after handing back the certificate. Presently he returned, with the news that Mr. Henderson, the assistant manager, would see him.

Rather surprised at this formality about a pass, Barclay was led into an inner office.

Henderson swung around in his pivot chair without inviting the seaman to be seated. He was a middle-aged man in shirt sleeves, chewing at an unlighted cigar in a harassed manner.

"Let's see that certificate," he said sharply. Barclay handed him the paper silently, oppressed by a vague uneasiness. Henderson glanced it over, peered at the signatures, looked up at the tall skipper and thrust a lean jaw out ominously. "Where'd you get this?"

Barclay's pulse quickened at the other's tone, but his voice was calm.

"One of your salesmen sold it to me, Mr. Henderson. I have his receipt for my money."

"Got it with you?"

Henderson's scowl deepened as he scanned the receipt. A sudden fear tugged at the skipper's heart.

"Ain't that all right?" he rumbled anxiously. "It's stock in your comp'ny."

"No, it isn't—it's stock in the New York Shipyard Company, whatever that may be. We are the New York Ship *Construction* Company. Likewise, Mr. Barclay, we employ no salesmen. Never have."

Barclay did not grasp the full meaning of this at once.

"But—hold hard, Mr. Henderson—I

bought your stock. The one that's printed in the newspaper tally list—N.Y.S.C."

"This isn't our stock. Our issue is quoted on the Stock Exchange under the initials you mention. Somebody's swindled you. We can't help it if grafters claim to be handling our stock, when they are not doing so."

Henderson handed the papers to the immobile Barclay and swung back to his desk, which was littered with blueprints. A moment passed. Then he felt a heavy hand on his shoulder and found himself listening to the trembling voice of the intruder.

"Just a minute, Mr. Henderson," Barclay's voice broke in on him. "I—I don't seem to get the rights of this. Mahoney, who sold me this, showed me your plant. It looked mighty fine to me. I paid a lot for that there piece of paper—"

With an impatient grunt, the assistant manager surveyed his visitor. At sight of the heavy, patient face, and keen, gray eyes, his manner softened perceptibly. He pushed forward a chair.

"Sit down, Mr.—Cap'n Barclay. I'm sorry you invested your money in this swindle. But we can't keep everybody out of our plant. One or two other cases like this have come to my notice. I'd give something to get my hand on the scoundrel who's pulling off this stunt. It hurts our credit. Can you identify this Mahoney?"

Barclay ruminated, tugging at his whiskers fiercely. Carefully he described to Henderson how he had come to buy the stock.

"And the blighter sold it to me in one of the big banks," he growled; "The National Bank. I thought—"

"Standing room in a bank-lobby is free to all, cap'n," explained the manager concisely. "Mahoney guessed you'd hand over your money quicker inside the gate of a bank, that's all. His kind aren't connected with any national bank. I know the game," he sighed, glancing at his watch. "Braddock probably tipped Mahoney that you had a bundle of coin on you. No one else knew it."

Barclay's broad mouth tightened, but he said nothing.

"Mahoney picked you for a sucker—no offense, cap'n. He showed you our plant and sold you his own stock—printed by one of these fly-by-night gangs. The quotes in the paper were ours—but he twisted the initials to suit his bogus firm, the shipyard company. Probably that stock-certificate is worth ten cents, maybe less. We can't do anything for you."

"I guess you can't." Barclay spoke quietly. He was not the one to whine over a loss. "I'll have the law on that man Braddock."

"Hold on," Henderson checked him. "What can you do? You have no proof Braddock knows Mahoney. If you try to sue him, he'll bring claim against you—defamation of character, most likely. These scoundrels know the Penal Code by heart."

Barclay nodded slowly. The man was right. He had no case against Braddock.

"There's Mahoney," he meditated; "maybe I can get my hands on him."

"It won't do you much good if you do. He's sold you stock in his company. Probably Mahoney owns a worthless acre of land somewheres about—in the Sound, perhaps. Some kind of a plant, with a wood jetty and a carpenter driving nails into a scabby barge that 'll never feel salt-water again. Enough to keep him within the law."

Henderson shrugged his shoulders.

"You have only your word against his, Barclay, that he faked a sale of our stock—and his breed is clever. They know the blue-sky laws."

The seaman pocketed his papers without further speech and turned to the door, his shoulders bent into a slouch. The assistant manager looked after him thoughtfully and keenly.

"Say, Barclay," he called, as the skipper reached the door, "find Mahoney, and get proof that he had you over here, and we'll take over your side of the lawsuit. We—well, we'd like to see him behind the bars just as much as you would. I'd like to help you out; but—I can't waste the company's time and money."

"No, Mr. Henderson, you can't do that. Let it be, let it be."

For half a moment after Barclay had gone, the assistant manager frowned, as if dwelling on an unpleasant thought. He knew that Barclay could not do what he

asked. Then he lit his cigar, swung back to his desk, and plunged into his work.

IV.

FROM the Jersey shore Captain Amos Barclay made his way to his room in a small hotel by the water-front. It was evening when he arrived, but he did not eat any dinner. He seated himself in a battered chair by the window, gazing out over the near-by roofs with puckered brow.

It grew dark, and he did not get up to light the gas. Through the open window he caught the street noises of the metropolis —children playing in the open space by the docks, teams clattering homeward to the stables, the hoarse mutter of a ferry-boat feeling its way through the twilight.

Below him the street-lamps winked into light, throwing a faint gleam on the dingy ceiling over his head. Still Barclay did not stir. Once he turned his head at the distant echo of chimes from the Metropolitan tower.

He had a little money. Enough to get him back to California. But he knew that the men who had swindled him of four thousand dollars were beyond his reach. He recalled his interview with Braddock, the smooth manner of the man, the readiness with which the jeweler had paid the price he asked for the pearls. No one else had known he had the money.

Barclay was not accustomed to feel sorry for himself when he was cheated in a trade. But the four thousand dollars had meant much to him. And he had been robbed by men he had trusted—his own kind. In the South Pacific he might have gone to them, revolver in hand, and gained back the money. Here, the law protected them. And he had left his weapon at home.

He knew that the chances of finding Mahoney were one in a thousand. It would do no good to go to Braddock. And he had no delusions concerning possible help from Henderson.

Even if he should, by a stroke of luck, locate Mahoney, there was no way to get his money back. The man had money, which Barclay lacked, and doubtless friends among the shyster lawyers who would handle his case if the skipper tried to take the theft into court.

Barclay was facing the hopeless problem of many who had fallen victim to the sharpers of the underworld of finance—the men of the back-doors of honest investment. And, before the law, he was helpless. He was an upright man, and Mahoney no better than a thief; but the law of his own land offered him no remedy.

The semi-quiet of night descended on the city, and the noises in the street diminished. Only the distant clatter of surface-cars broke in on his thoughts. Then Barclay drew a long breath and struck a clenched fist on his thigh.

Rising from his chair, he stretched his bulk and undid his collar. Removing his shoes and coat, he lay down on the bed. Almost at once he fell asleep—the sleep of a man whose mind is no longer at fault and who has made a decision by which he intends to abide.

V.

BRADDOCK removed the magnifying-glass from his eye, and thrust the pearls he had been examining into a drawer of his desk. There was something watchful and reluctant in his manner as he turned to the girl in his office door. His sharp eyes stared at her questioningly as if he could read in her indifferent face the answer to a certain question in his mind.

"Captain Amos Barclay?" he repeated.

He stroked a neatly shaven cheek with the fingers of a lean hand. It was the second morning after he had bought those same pearls of the trader. They had been a good bargain. Jim Mahoney had divided up promptly and fairly.

"Well, show him in," he said sharply.

When the seaman loomed in the door, he smiled cordially.

"Glad to see you again, Cap'n Barclay. Anything I can do for you?"

There was a shade of relief in his voice. Certainly the skipper did not look like one who knew that he had been robbed. Of course he had no claim against him—Braddock—but the jeweler was sometimes nervous, by temperament.

"I reckon there is, Mr. Braddock."

Barclay seated himself and nodded cordially at the jeweler. "I reckon there is. You

gave me a good price for those small pearls. I figure I couldn't do better than to come to you with what I've got now. It's sure a fine thing—this. For a while I thought I wouldn't sell it; but I guess Matilda and I need the money."

He produced the leather wallet and tossed the remaining chamois-sack on the desk. And Braddock stared, for the seaman had drawn from the bag a pearl, a black pearl, lustrous and splendid, and as large as a good-sized cherry.

Barclay held it up proudly between thumb and forefinger. Braddock took it silently, switched on a strong light under a green shade, and fixed his glass in his eye.

"Four years ago I got my hands on that," ruminated the skipper. "It came from the Vatu Lavum bed. A Japanese diver brought it up, but the islanders got it from him. They wanted gin, and a renegade skipper out of Maryborough gave 'em the gin for it."

Braddock fondled the pearl, turning it over in his thin, nervous fingers. There was no doubt of its value. Mounted by a Fifth Avenue jeweler in a tiara-like setting, and shown to those who can afford to ask for the best, it would fetch many thousands. It was a splendid thing, a patrician of pearls.

The jeweler had forgotten his early misgivings at Barclay's visit. In his soul, he coveted the black pearl—pictured himself selling it. Nevertheless, he was cautious.

"Yes, I made you a liberal price for the others," he murmured. "But this is different—harder to dispose of. It 'd be hard to match. It's unusual—"

"That's a mighty fine pearl."

"Well, people aren't paying high prices now. This is all right for a curio." He replaced the sphere on its case with a caressing gesture. What price d'you expect to get?

"Twelve thousand dollars."

Barclay spoke calmly. The jeweler stared; then shook his head with a sneer. Twelve thousand! Complete in a royal setting, the black pearl might bring ten thousand in time from the right person. But he, Braddock, could not get much more than half that figure, at the present market. And he did business on a cash basis—for good reasons.

"You don't know what you're saying!" he barked. "You're crazy! *Twelve thousand.* I might give five."

"I said twelve."

Braddock laughed aloud.

"I thought you knew something about the price of pearls. I was wrong. You ain't been drinking, have you, Barclay?"

The seaman picked up the black pearl and replaced it in its bag. In spite of himself, Braddock's lips contracted. He coveted the thing; he yearned to own it—and take the profit he knew he could get from it.

"I'll make you an offer of five and a half," he ventured.

Barclay rose, slipping the wallet into his pocket.

"I might go as high as six thousand—maybe," protested the jeweler. "Look here. You won't get a better price anywhere else in the city—not in these times. I thought you wanted to sell."

"That right—at twelve thousand."

"But—"

"I'll tell you what I got my mind set on." The skipper bent closer to Braddock, a peculiar gleam in his deep-set eyes. "No, I'm not crazy. I want to buy some more of a kind of stock I've invested in. I want twelve thousand dollars to buy that stock."

For a moment the gray eyes peered into the faded blue; then Braddock looked away, biting at his lip.

"I don't know anything about stocks."

"It's a mighty fine thing. It's the New York Shipyard Company, and it pays thirty per cent. I saw their plant."

"Never heard of it before."

"I didn't reckon you'd have heard of it."

"Who sold it to you?"

"A fellow name of Mahoney—a real, friendly kind of fellow."

Braddock plucked irresolutely at his lip, his glance straying to the leather wallet in Barclay's hand. His small eyes were alert, as those of a terrier on the scent of a rat. But he was a careful man.

"How much'v that twelve thousand are you going to put into this stock?"

"Every cent of it."

Barclay spoke with unmistakable conviction, and the jeweler brightened. Mahoney, he thought, had done his work well. Bar-

clay had swallowed hook, line and sinker. He was a sucker of the finest breed, a deep-seas fish, and he was landed.

"I'm going to buy that shipyard stock to-day," continued the skipper, "before it goes up in price. It's a mighty fine thing. Trouble is, I don't know where to run afoul of Mahoney. If I don't find him before afternoon, I'll have to cruise over to the shipyard for the stock. I guess they have it there."

Braddock scowled, feeling that his sucker was about to slip the hook. He knew Mahoney's game of the fake shipping stock. And that if Barclay went to the firm for the stock, he and Mahoney would be left empty-handed.

"I don't know anything about speculation, cap'n," he said, with friendly caution. "Are you sure it's a good stock?"

"Good as gold."

Braddock nodded decisively. He had made up his mind. His active brain had finished its problem of arithmetic. He would pay Barclay the twelve thousand. Mahoney would get it, in return for the worthless stock. They would divide fifty-fifty—probably he, Braddock, could claim a trifle more on the merits of this highly profitable transaction.

At most, the pearl would only cost him the six thousand. And he could get seven or more on Fifth Avenue. He would have the black pearl—perhaps he would keep the splendid thing a while.

He clapped Barclay cordially on the shoulder.

"I'll strain a point for you, cap'n, this time. I'll consult with a jeweler I know. I guess we can meet your figure. It may mean a loss for me—but I'll buy it.

He hurried to the door of the closet.

"You sit here, cap'n. Now, I don't know Mahoney; but them salesmen hang out around the cafés at lunch time. I'll give all the places I know a ring. Maybe I can get him to come here with the stock. That 'll save you a trip over to Jersey. You don't want to carry that bundle of coin around in your pocket."

"I guess that's right," Barclay smiled grimly. "Hope you can get him, Mr. Braddock. I'll wait."

An hour later he was still waiting when Mr. Braddock returned from the bank with the money. A moment more and the fashionably dressed figure of Mahoney pushed through the office door. The salesman went up to Barclay with a cordial smile.

"Glad to see you again, cap'n. They told me at Dorgan's Café you was looking for me, to buy some more of that N. Y. S. C. stock, so I came all prepared."

Braddock frowned warningly and stared at Mahoney blankly. Barclay saw the stare.

"You gentlemen don't know each other, do you?" he muttered. "Mr. Mahoney, meet Mr. Braddock."

The salesman beamed as the two shook hands. Even Braddock smiled sourly. It had been long since they landed a sucker like Barclay. The skipper nodded to the jeweler, who laid the money on the desk. Barclay counted it carefully and arranged it in a pile in front of him.

Braddock took the pearl the skipper gave him, inspected it, and placed it in the safe, closing the door and giving the combination a cautious twirl. He had the black pearl. For a second he surveyed the cash uneasily—it was twice the value of the pearl.

But Mahoney was already drawing up a receipt for the money. And Barclay had the stock-certificate in his hands. The skipper ran his eye over it and laid it on the table.

"This ain't what I want," he said.

Braddock's brain worked quickly. A half-second after the skipper's quiet words, the jeweler's hand darted to the money. Another hand, a heavy, muscled fist was before him.

Barclay thrust the bills into his coat pocket. His broad face was tranquil, but a slow flush was spreading up from the throat.

"But you said—" Braddock's voice thrilled in his excitement.

"I said, Mr. Braddock, I was going to buy stock in the shipyard. So I am—the New York Ship *Construction* Company, that Mr. Mahoney mentioned, and the plant he showed me. Not that—" Barclay crumpled the worthless stock-certificate and tossed it on the floor.

He faced the two, his voice deepening as he spoke.

" Yes I'm going to buy a stock, one that's a good stock—and at the company's office —with half this money. I'll take the other half and give it to Matilda." He stepped toward Braddock, and the jeweler shrank back. " Fifteen year' I've traded with the godless islanders of the seas, and fifteen year' I've met every brand of scoundrels. I thought when I come here to my own kind I'd have a square deal." He laughed shortly. " But it ain't any different here—"

Jim Mahoney's brain was a trifle slower than that of Braddock. But more dangerous. The swindler's hand went softly to his coat pocket.

Barclay had seen it, and knew what it meant. Wheeling swiftly, in spite of his bulk, he caught Mahoney's wrist before the hand could withdraw from the pocket. A jerk with two hundred pounds of bone and sinew behind it and the salesman was flung from his feet and crashed into the desk. He wavered vaguely on his knees, then slumped to the floor quietly, his head propped against the desk.

Then the skipper spoke to Braddock. He spoke quietly; but he had thought of what was going to say, and he had the vocabulary of a seaman to draw from, backed by a knowledge of Malay, Polynesian, and a lime-juicer's choicest language. When he had exhausted this, he returned to good American.

Braddock sat in his desk-chair, fumbling at his quivering cheeks. When Barclay had finished, he mustered his courage.

" I'll get the law on you!" he shrilled. " For unprovoked assault on my friend—"

Barclay laughed and turned toward the door.

" Your friend?" he asked mildly. " No, Mr. Braddock. Mahoney is a stranger. You didn't even know he was a stock-swindler, now, did you?"

And the captain's laughter echoed down the corridor.

(The end.)

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THE MISSING FIRST LINK

W. E. NESOM

LAST evening, waking from a drowse,
I thought of mellow, luscious cheese,
Which made me think of grazing cows,
Which made me think of verdant leas,
Which made me think of balmy spring,
Which made me think of Easter hats,
Which made me think of birds a-wing,
Which made me think of flitting bats,
Which made me think of movie vamps,
Which made me think of woman's lure,
Which made me think of that which stamps
A demoiselle as good and pure,
Which made me think of Dian's charm,
Which made me think of my Elise—
But, in the name of regions warm,
How came I first to think of cheese?

The Red Seal

by Natalie Sumner Lincoln

Author of "The Moving Finger," "The Nameless Man," "I Spy," etc.

PRECEDING CHAPTERS BRIEFLY RETOLD

BARBARA and Helen McIntyre, twin sisters, the daughters of Colonel Chas. McIntyre, of Washington, had appeared in court to give testimony against a burglar whom Helen had locked in a clothes-closet until the arrival of an officer.

The prisoner was overcome by a sudden attack of heart trouble and died in the court-room just as he was recognized as Jimmie Turnbull, in love with Helen McIntyre. Turnbull had entered the colonel's house to win a wager from Barbara, who had boasted of the protection of two police dogs, a gift to her sister from Philip Rochester, a young lawyer who roomed with Jimmie and who disputed with him for Helen's favor. Turnbull was cashier of the Metropolis Trust Company, and while his chief, Benjamin Augustus Clymer, held the young man in high regard, the colonel discouraged Jimmie's attentions to his daughter and favored Rochester's suit. The coroner agreed with the doctor's opinion that Turnbull had died of *angina pectoris,* and no autopsy was necessary.

Harry Kent, junior partner of Rochester, returned from a business trip to find his partner had suddenly disappeared after the Turnbull affair, and had left a new man, John Sylvester, in charge of the office. Barbara McIntyre, to whom he was engaged, insisted he must investigate Jimmie's death because both she and Helen suspected amyl nitrite had more to do with the man's death than *angina pectoris.*

Kent further discovered from Clymer that certain funds belonging to the colonel had been removed from the bank on a forged letter addressed to the dead man. Finally, Kent had gone to Rochester's apartment to begin an investigation, and had there an encounter in the dark with a man who escaped through the bath-room.

Ferguson, the detective from headquarters, working on the case, disclosed to Kent that a handkerchief had been found near the dead man's body redolent of amyl nitrite, a woman's handkerchief marked in the corner with the letter "B."

CHAPTER VI.

STRAIGHT QUESTIONS, CROOKED ANSWERS.

COLONEL McINTYRE, with an angry gesture, threw down the newspaper he had been reading.

"Do you mean to say, Helen, that you decline to go to the supper to-night on account of the death of Jimmie Turnbull?" he asked.

"Yes, father."

McIntyre flushed a dark red; he was not accustomed to scenes with either of his daughters, and here was Helen flouting his authority, and Barbara backing her up.

"It is quite time this pretense is dropped," he remarked stiffly. "You were not engaged to Jimmie. Wait"—as she attempted to interrupt him. "You told me the night of the burglary that he was 'nothing to you.'"

"I was mistaken." Helen's voice shook, she was very near to tears. "When I saw Jimmie lying there, dead"—she faltered, and her shoulders drooped forlornly—"the world stopped for me."

"Hysterical nonsense!" McIntyre was careful to avoid Barbara's eyes; her indignant snort had been indicative of her feelings. "Keep to your room, Helen, until you regain some common sense. It is as well our friends should not see you in your present frame of mind."

Helen regarded her father under lowered lids. "Very well," she said submissively and walked toward the door; on reaching it she paused and spoke over her shoulder: "Don't try me too far, father."

McIntyre stared for a full minute at the doorway through which Helen took her departure.

"Well, in the—" He pulled himself up

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

short in the middle of the ejaculation and turned to Barabara. "Go and get dressed," he directed. "We must leave here in twenty minutes."

"I am not going," she announced.

"Not going!" McIntyre frowned, then laughed abruptly. "Now, don't tell me you were engaged to Jimmie Turnbull, also."

"I think you are horrid!" Barbara's small foot came down with a vigorous stamp.

"Well, perhaps I am," her father admitted rather wearily. "Don't keep us waiting, Babs; the car will be here in less than twenty minutes."

"But, father, I prefer to stay at home."

"And I prefer to have you accompany us," retorted McIntyre. "Come, Barbara, we cannot be discourteous to Mrs. Brewster; she is our guest, and this supper is for her entertainment."

"Well, take her." Barbara was openly rebellious.

"Barbara!" His tone caused her to look at him in wonder; instead of the stern rebuke she expected, his voice was almost wheedling. "I cannot very well take Mrs. Brewster to a café at this hour without causing gossip."

"Oh, fiddle-sticks!" exclaimed Barbara. "I don't have to play chaperon for you two. Every one knows she is visiting us; what's there improper in your taking her out to supper? Why"—regarding him critically—"she's young enough to be your daughter!"

"Go to your room!" There was nothing wheedling about McIntyre at that instant; he was thoroughly incensed.

As Barbara sped out, happy in having gained her way, she announced, as a parting shot: "If you can be nasty to Helen, father, I can be nasty, too."

Colonel McIntyre brought his fist down with such force on a smoking table that he scattered its contents over the floor. When he rose from picking up the débris he found Mrs. Brewster at his elbow.

"Can I help?" she asked.

"No, thanks, everything is back in place." He pulled forward a chair for her. "If agreeable to you I will telephone Ben Clymer that we will stop for him and take him with us to the Café St. Marks; or would you prefer some other man?"

"Oh, no." She threw her evening wrap across the sofa and sat down. "Are the girls ready?"

"They—they are indisposed, and won't be able to go to-night."

"What! Both girls?"

"Yes, both"—firmly, not, however, meeting her eyes.

"Hadn't I better stay with them?" she asked. "Have you telephoned for Dr. Stone?"

"There is no necessity for giving up our little spree," he declared cheerily. "The girls don't need a physician. They"—with meaning—"need a mother's care." He picked up her coronation scarf from the floor where it had slipped and laid it across her bare shoulders; the action was almost a caress. She made a lovely picture as she sat in the high-backed carved chair in her chic evening gown; and as her soft, dark eyes met his ardent look McIntyre felt the hot blood surge to his temples, and with quickened pulse he went to the telephone stand and gave Central a number.

Back in her chair Mrs. Brewster sat thoughtfully watching him. She had been an unobserved witness of the scene with Barbara, having entered the library in time to hear the girl's last remarks. It was not the first inkling that she had had of their disapproval of Colonel McIntyre's attentions to her, but it had hurt.

The widow had become acquainted with the twins when traveling in Europe just before the outbreak of the World War, and had made the hasty trip back to this country in their company. Colonel McIntyre had planned to bring the twins, then at school in Paris, home himself, but business had kept him in the West, and he had cabled to a spinster cousin to chaperon them on the trip across the Atlantic Ocean. He did reach New York in time to see them disembark, and thus had missed meeting Mrs. Brewster, then in her first year of widowhood.

The friendship between the twins and Mrs. Brewster had been kept up through much correspondence, and the widow had

finally promised to come to Washington for their début, visiting her cousins, Dr. and Mrs. Stone. The meeting had but cemented the friendship between them, and at the twins' urgent request, seconded with warmth by Colonel McIntyre, she had promised to spend the month of April at the McIntyre home.

The visit was nearly over. Mrs. Brewster sighed faintly. There were two courses open to her: immediate departure, or to continue to ignore the twins' strangely antagonistic behavior — the first course did not suit Mrs. Brewster's plans.

Barbara, who had left the library through one of its seven doors, had failed to see Mrs. Brewster by the slightest margin; she was intent only on being with Helen. The affection between the twins was very close; but while their facial resemblance was remarkable, their natures were totally dissimilar. Helen, the elder by twenty minutes, was studious, shy, and too much given to introspection; Barbara, on the contrary, was whimsical and practical by turns, with a great capacity for enjoyment. The twins had made their début jointly on their eighteenth birthday, and while both were popular, Barbara had received the greater amount of attention.

Barbara tiptoed into the suite of rooms which the girls occupied over the library, expecting to find Helen lying on the lounge. Instead, she found her writing busily at her desk. She tossed down her pen as her sister entered, and taking up a blotter, carefully laid it across the page she had been writing.

"Thank Heaven, I don't have to go to that supper party!" Barbara announced, throwing herself full length on the lounge.

"So father gave it up," commented Helen. "I am glad."

"Gave up nothing!" retorted her sister. "He and Margaret Brewster are going."

"What!" Helen was on her feet. "You let them go out alone together?"

"They can't be alone if they are together," answered Barbara practically. "Don't be silly, Helen."

Helen did not answer at once; she had grown singularly pale. Walking over to the window, she glanced into the street. "The car hasn't come!" she exclaimed and consulted her wrist watch. "Hurry, Babs, you have just time to dress and go with them."

"B-b-but I said I wouldn't go," stuttered Barbara, completely taken by surprise.

"No matter; tell father you have changed your mind." Helen held out her hand. "Come, to please me," and there was a world of wistful appeal in her hazel eyes which Barbara was unable to resist.

It was not until Barbara had completed her hasty toilet and a frantic dash downstairs in time to spring into the waiting limousine after Margaret Brewster that she realized she had put on one of Helen's evening gowns and not her own.

Benjamin Clymer was standing in the vestibule of the Saratoga, where he made his home, when the McIntyre limousine drew up, and he did not keep them waiting, as Colonel McIntyre had predicted he would, on the drive to Clymer's apartment-house.

"The clerk gave me your message when I came in, McIntyre," he explained as the car drove off. "I called up your residence, and Grimes said you were on the way here."

Barbara, tucked away in her corner of the limousine, listened to Mrs. Brewster's animated chatter with utter lack of interest; she wished most heartily that she had not been overpersuaded by her sister, but had remained at home. That her father had accepted her lame explanation and her presence in the party with unaffected pleasure had been plain. Mrs. Brewster, after a quiet inquiry regarding her health, had been less enthusiastic in her welcome. Barbara was just stifling a yawn when the limousine stopped at the Café St. Marks.

Inside the café all was light and gaiety, and Barbara brightened perceptibly as the attentive head waiter ushered them to the table Colonel McIntyre had had reserved earlier in the evening.

"It's a novel idea turning the old church into a café," Barbara remarked to Benjamin Clymer. "A sort of casting bread upon the waters of famished Washington. I wonder if they ever turn water into wine?"

"No such luck," groaned Clymer dismally, looking with distaste at the sparkling grape juice being poured into the erstwhile champagne goblet by his plate. "The café is crowded to-night."

Colonel McIntyre, who had loitered behind to speak to several friends at an adjacent table, took the unoccupied seat by Mrs. Brewster, and was soon in animated conversation with the widow and Clymer; Barbara, her healthy appetite asserting itself, devoted her entire attention to the delicious delicacies placed before her. The arrival of the after-the-theater crowd awoke her from her abstraction, and she accepted Clymer's invitation to dance with alacrity. When they returned to the table she discovered that Margaret Brewster and her father had also joined the dancers.

Barbara watched them while keeping up a disjointed conversation with Clymer, whose absent-minded remarks finally drew Barbara's attention, and she wondered what had come over the generally entertaining banker. It was on the tip of her tongue to ask him the reason for his distrait manner when her thoughts were diverted by his next remark.

"Your father and Mrs. Brewster make a fine couple," he said. "Colonel McIntyre is the most distinguished looking man in the café, and Mrs. Brewster is a regular beauty."

Instead of replying, Barbara turned in her seat and scanned her father as he and Mrs. Brewster passed them in the dance. Colonel McIntyre did not look his age of forty-seven years. His hair, prematurely gray, had a most attractive wave to it, and his erect and finely proportioned figure showed to advantage in his well cut dress suit. Barbara's heart swelled with pride—her dear and handsome father! Then she transferred her regard to Margaret Brewster; she had been such a satisfactory friend—who, oh, why did she wish to become her stepmother? The twins, with the unerring instinct of womanhood, had decided ten days before that *Weller's* warning to his son was timely—Mrs. Brewster was a most dangerous widow.

"How is your sister?" inquired Clymer, breaking the silence which had lasted nearly five minutes. He was never quite certain which twin he was talking to, and generally solved the problem by familiarizing himself with their mode of dress. The plan had not always worked, as the twins had a bewildering habit of exchanging clothes, to the enjoyment of Barbara's mischief-loving soul and the mystification of their numerous admirers.

"She is rather blue and depressed," answered Barbara. "We are both feeling the reaction from the shock of Jimmie Turnbull's tragic death. You must forgive me if I am a bore; I am not good company to-night."

The arrival of the head waiter at their table interrupted Clymer's reply.

"This gentleman desires to speak to you a moment, Miss McIntyre," he said, and indicated a young man in a sack suit standing just back of him.

"I'm Parker of the *Post*," the reporter introduced himself with a bow which included Clymer. "May I sit down?" laying his hand on the back of Mrs. Brewster's vacant chair.

"Surely; and won't you have an ice?" Barbara's hospitable instincts were aroused. "Here, waiter—"

"No, thanks; I haven't time," protested Parker, slipping into the chair. "I just came from your house, Miss McIntyre; the butler said I might find you here, and as it was rather important I took the liberty of introducing myself. We plan to run a story, featuring the dangers of masquerading in society, and of course it hinges on the death of Mr. Turnbull. I'm sorry," he apologized as he saw Barbara wince. "I realize the topic is one to make you feel badly; but I promise to ask only a few questions." His smile was very engaging, and Barbara's resentment receded somewhat.

"What are they?" she asked.

"Did you recognize Mr. Turnbull in his make-up as a burglar when you confronted him in the police court?" Parker drew out copy paper and a pencil, and waited for her reply. There was a pause.

"I did not recognize Mr. Turnbull in court," she stated finally. "His death was a frightful shock."

"Sure. It was to everybody," agreed Parker. "How about your sister, Miss Barbara—did she recognize him?"

"No," faintly.

Parker showed his disappointment; he was not eliciting much information. Abruptly he turned to Clymer, whose prominent position in the financial world made him a familiar figure to all Washingtonians.

"Weren't you present in the police court on Tuesday morning, also?" Parker asked.

"Yes." Clymer modified the curt monosyllable by adding: "I helped Dr. Stone carry Turnbull out of the prisoners' cage and into the anteroom."

"And did you recognize your cashier?" demanded Parker. At the question Barbara set down her goblet of water without care for its perishable quality and looked with quick intentness at the banker.

"I recognized Mr. Turnbull when his wig was removed," answered Clymer, raising his head in time to catch Barbara's eyes gazing steadfastly at him. With a faint flush she turned her attention to the reporter.

"Mr. Turnbull's make-up must have been superfine," Parker remarked. "Just one more question. Can you tell me if Mr. Philip Rochester recognized his roommate when he was defending him in court?"

"No, I cannot." And observing Parker's blank expression, Barbara added: "Why don't you ask Mr. Rochester?"

"Because I can't locate him; he seems to have vanished off the face of the globe." The reporter rose. "You can't tell me where he's gone, I suppose?"

"I haven't the faintest idea," answered Barbara truthfully. "I was at his office this—" She stopped abruptly on finding that Mrs. Brewster was standing just behind her. Had the widow by chance overheard her remark? If so, her father would probably learn of her visit to the office of Rochester and Kent that morning.

"Do I understand that Philip Rochester is out of town?" inquired Mrs. Brewster. "Why, I had an appointment with him to-morrow."

"He's gone, and left no address that I can find," explained Parker. "Thank you, Miss McIntyre; good evening," and the busy reporter hurried away.

There was a curious expression in Mrs. Brewster's eyes, but she dropped her gaze on her finger-bowl too quickly for Clymer to analyze its meaning.

"What can have taken Mr. Rochester out of town?" she asked. The question was not addressed to any one in particular, but Colonel McIntyre answered it, as he did most of the widow's remarks.

"Dry Washington," he explained. "It isn't the first trip Philip has made to Baltimore, eh, Clymer?"

"No, and it won't be his last," was the banker's response. "What's the matter, Miss McIntyre?" as Barbara pushed back her chair.

"I feel a little faint," she stammered. "The air here is—is stifling. If you don't mind, father, I'll take the car and drive home."

"I'll come with you," announced Mrs. Brewster, rising hurriedly; and, as she turned solicitously to aid Barbara, she caught Colonel McIntyre's admiring glance and his whispered thanks.

Outside the café Clymer discovered that the McIntyre limousine was not to be found; and, cautioning Barbara and the widow to remain where they were, he went back into the café in search of Colonel McIntyre, who had stayed behind to pay his bill.

A sudden exodus from the café as other diners came out to get their cars separated Barbara from Mrs. Brewster just as the former caught sight of her father's limousine coming around McPherson Square. Not waiting to see what had become of her companion, Barbara started up the sidewalk, intent on catching their chauffeur's attention. As she stood by the curb a figure brushed by her and a paper was deftly slipped into her hand.

Barbara wheeled about abruptly. She stood alone, except some yards away several elaborately dressed women and their companions were indulging in noisy talk as they hurried along. At that moment the McIntyre limousine stopped at the curb and the chauffeur opened the door.

"Take me home, Harris," she ordered. "And then come back for Mrs. Brewster and father. I don't feel very well, so please hurry."

"Very good, miss," and, touching his cap, the chauffeur swung his car up Fifteenth Street.

The limousine had turned into Massachusetts Avenue before Barbara switched on the electric lamp in the limousine and opened the note so mysteriously given to her. She read feverishly the few lines it contained:

DEAR HELEN:
The coroner will call an inquest. Secrete letter "B."

The note was unsigned, but it was in the handwriting of Philip Rochester.

CHAPTER VII.

THE RED SEAL.

THE gloomy morning, with leaden skies, reflected Harry Kent's state of mind. He could not fix his attention on the business letters which Sylvester placed before him; instead, his thoughts reverted to the scene in Rochester's and Turnbull's apartments the night before, the elusive visitor he had found there on his arrival, his interview with Detective Ferguson, and above all the handkerchief saturated with amyl nitrite and bearing the small embroidered letter "B"—the initial, insignificant in size but fraught with dire possibilities if, as Ferguson hinted, Turnbull had been put to death by an overdose of the drug. "B"—Barbara; Barbara—"B." His mind rang the changes. Pshaw! Other names than Barbara began with "B."

"Shall I transcribe your notes, Mr. Kent?" asked Sylvester; and Kent, awakened from his reverie, discovered that he had scrawled the name Barbara and big "B" on the writing-pad. He tore off the sheet and crumpled it into a small ball.

"No, my notes are unimportant—Kent unlocked his desk and took some manuscript from one of the drawers. "Make four copies of this brief, then call up the printer and ask how soon he will complete the work on hand. Has Mr. Clymer telephoned?"

"Not this morning." Sylvester rose, papers in hand. "There has been a Mr. Parker, of the *Post,* who telephones regularly once an hour to ask for Mr. Rochester's address and when he is expected at the office." He paused and looked inquiringly at Kent. "What shall I say the next time he calls?"

"Switch him on my phone. That is all now, Sylvester. I must be in court by noon, so have the brief copied by eleven o'clock."

"Yes, sir," and Sylvester departed, only to return a second later. "Miss McIntyre to see you," he said, and stood aside to allow the girl to enter.

It was the first time Kent had seen Helen since the tragedy of Tuesday, and as he advanced to greet her he noted with concern her air of distress and the troubled look in her eyes. Her composed manner was obviously only maintained by the exertion of self-control, for the hand she offered him was unsteady.

"You are so kind," she murmured as he placed a chair for her. "Babs told me you have promised your aid, and so I have come"—she pressed one hand to her side as if she found breathing difficult, and Kent, reaching for his pitcher of ice-water which stood near at hand, filled a tumbler and gave it to her.

"Take a little," he coaxed as she moved as if to refuse the glass. "Why didn't you telephone, and I would have called on you? In fact, I planned to run in on you this afternoon."

"It is wiser to have our talk here," she replied. Setting down the empty glass, she gazed about the office, and her face brightened at sight of a safe standing in one corner. "Is that yours, or Philip's?" she asked, pointing to it.

"The safe? Oh, it's for our joint use, owned by the firm, you know," explained Kent, somewhat puzzled by her eagerness.

"Do you keep your private papers there, as well as the firm's?"

"Oh, yes; Philip has retained one section and I the other." Kent walked over and threw open the massive door, which he

had unlocked on entering the office and left ajar. "Would you like to see the arrangements of the compartments?"

Without answering, Helen crossed the room and stood by his side.

"Which is Philip's section?" she asked.

"This," and Kent touched the side of the safe.

Helen turned around and inspected the office; the outer door through which she had entered was closed, as were also the private door leading directly into the outside corridor, and the one opening into the closet.

Convinced that they were really alone, she took from her leather hand-bag a white envelope and handed it to Kent.

"Please put this in Philip's compartment," she said, and as he hesitated she added pleadingly: "Please do it, Harry, and ask no questions."

Kent looked at her wonderingly; she girl was obviously laboring under intense excitement of some sort, which might at any moment break into hysteria. Bottling up his curiosity, he stooped down in front of the safe.

"Certainly I will put the envelope away for you," he said cheerily. "Wait, though; I must find if Philip left the key of the compartment on his bunch." He took from his pocket the keys he had found so useful the night before, and selected one that resembled the key to his own compartment, and inserted it in the lock.

To his surprise he discovered the compartment was already unlocked. Without comment he pulled open the inside drawer and started to lay the white envelope on top of the papers already there; then he hesitated.

"The envelope is unaddressed, Helen," he remarked, as he glanced at it and extended it toward her.

She waved it back.

"It is sealed with red wax," she stated. "That is all that is necessary for identification."

Kent turned over the envelope—the flap was held down securely with a large red seal which bore the one letter "B." He dropped the envelope inside the compartment, as if it burned his fingers, locked the compartment, and closed the door of the safe.

"Let us talk," he suggested, and led the way back to their chairs. "Helen," he began, after she was seated, "there is nothing I will not do for your sister Barbara." His manner grew earnest. "I—" He flushed; baring his feelings to another, no matter how sympathetic that other was, was foreign to his reserved nature. "I love her beyond words to express. I tell you this to—to—gain your trust."

"You already have it, Harry!" Impulsively Helen extended her hand, and he held it in a firm clasp for a second. "Babs and I have come at once to you in our trouble."

"Yes, but you have only hinted what that trouble was," he reminded her gently. "I cannot really aid you until you give me your full confidence."

Helen looked away from him and out of the window. The relief which had lighted her face a moment before had vanished. It was some minutes before she answered.

"Babs told you that I suspected Jimmie did not die from *angina pectoris*." She spoke with an obvious effort.

"Yes."

She waited a second before continuing her remarks. "I have asked the coroner to make an investigation." She paused again, then added with more animation: "He is the one to tell us if a crime has been committed."

"He can tell if death has been accelerated by a weapon or a drug," responded Kent. He was weighing his words carefully, so that she might understand him fully. "But to constitute a crime, it has to be proved, first, that the act has been committed; and, second, that a guilty mind or malice prompted it. Can you furnish a clue to establish either of the last-mentioned facts in connection with Jimmie's death?"

Kent wondered if she had heard him, she was so long in replying; and he was about to repeat his question when she addressed him.

"Have you heard from Coroner Penfield?"

"No. I tried several times to get him on the telephone, but without success," re-

plied Kent; his disappointment at not receiving an answer to his question showed in his manner. "I went to Penfield's house last night, but he had been called away on a case, and, although I waited until nearly ten o'clock, he had not returned when I left. Have you had word from him?"

"Not—not directly." She had been nervously twisting her handkerchief about in her fingers; suddenly she turned and looked full at Kent, her eyes burning feverishly. "I would give all I possess, my hope of future happiness, even, if I could *prove* that Jimmie died from *angina pectoris*."

Kent looked at her in mingled sympathy and doubt. What did her words imply—further tragedy?

"Jimmie might not have died from *angina pectoris*," he said, "and still not have been poisoned."

"You mean—"

"Suicide." Slowly Helen took in his meaning, but she volunteered no remark, and Kent, after a pause, added: "While I have not seen Coroner Penfield, I did hear last night what killed Jimmie." Helen straightened up, one hand pressed to her heart. "It was a lethal dose of amyl nitrite."

"Amyl nitrite," she repeated. "Yes, I have heard that it is given for heart trouble. How"—she looked at him queerly—"how is it administered?"

"By crushing a capsule in a handkerchief and inhaling its fumes." He was watching her closely. "The handkerchief Jimmie was seen to use just before he died was found to contain two or more broken capsules."

Helen sat immovable for over a minute, then she bowed her head and burst into dry, tearless sobs which racked her body. Kent laid a tender hand on her shoulder, then, concluding it was better for her to have her cry out, he wandered aimlessly about the office waiting for her to regain her composure.

He stopped before one of the windows facing south and stared moodily. The theater opposite had surely never staged a more complicated mystery than the one he had set himself to unravel. What consolation could he offer Helen? If he encouraged her belief in his theory that Jimmie committed suicide, he would have to establish a motive for suicide; and that motive might prove to be the theft of Colonel McIntyre's valuable securities. Threatened with exposure as a thief and forger, Jimmie had committed suicide, so would run the verdict; the fact of his suicide was proof of his guilt of the crime Colonel McIntyre virtually charged him with, and *vice versa*.

What had been discovered to point to murder? The finding of a handkerchief saturated with amyl nitrite, which had not belonged to the dead man. Proof—bah! It was ridiculous! What more likely than that Jimmie, while in the McIntyre house before his arrest as a burglar, had picked up one of Barbara's handkerchiefs, stuffed it inside his pocket, and when threatened with exposure, on being held for the grand jury, had in desperation crushed the amyl nitrite capsules in Barbara's handkerchief and killed himself.

Kent drew a long, long sigh of relief. His faith in Jimmie's honesty was shaken at last by the cumulative evidence; and he was convinced that he had found the solution to the problem, but how to impart it to the weeping girl? To prove her lover a thief, forger, and suicide was indeed a task he shrank from.

A ring at the telephone caused Kent to move hastily to the instrument; when he hung up the receiver Helen was adjusting her veil before a mirror over the mantel.

"Colonel McIntyre is in the next room," he said, keeping his voice lowered.

"My father!" Helen's eyes were hard and dry. "Does he know that I am here?"

"I don't know. Sylvester simply said he had called to see me and is waiting in the outer office." Observing her indecision, Kent opened the door leading directly into the corridor. "You can leave this way without encountering Colonel McIntyre."

Helen hurried through the door and paused in the corridor to whisper feverishly in Kent's ear. "Promise me you will be faithful to Barbara, whatever develops."

"I will!" Kent's pledge rang out clearly, and Helen, with a lighter heart, turned

to walk away, when a telegraph-boy appeared around the corner of the corridor and thrust a yellow envelope at Kent, who stood half inside his office watching Helen.

"Sign here," the boy said, indicating the line on the receipt slip, and getting it back, departed.

Motioning to Helen to wait, Kent tore open the telegram. It was from Cleveland and dated the night before. The message ran:

> Called to Cleveland. Address City Club, Rochester.

Without comment Kent held out the telegram so that Helen could read it.

"What!" she exclaimed. "Philip in Cleveland last night. I—I—don't understand." And, looking at her, Kent was astonished at the flash of terror which shone for an instant in her eyes. Before he had time to question her she bolted around the corridor.

Kent remained staring ahead for an instant then returned thoughtfully to his office, and within a second Sylvester received a telephonic message to show Colonel McIntyre into Kent's office. Not only Colonel McIntyre followed the clerk into the room, but Benjamin Clymer.

"Any further developments, Kent?" inquired the banker. "No, we can't sit down; just dropped in to see you a minute."

"There is nothing new," Kent had made instant decision; such information regarding the death of Turnbull as he had gleaned from Ferguson and the events of the night before should be confided to Cylmer alone, and not in the presence of Colonel McIntyre.

"Did you search Turnbull's apartment last night as you spoke of doing?" asked McIntyre.

"I did, and found no trace of your securities, colonel."

McIntyre lifted his eyebrows as he smiled sarcastically. "Can I see Rochester?" he asked.

"He is in Cleveland; I don't know just when he will be back."

"Indeed? Too bad you haven't the benefit of his advice," remarked McIntyre insolently. "At Clymer's request, Kent, I have allowed you until Saturday night to find the securities and either clear Turnbull's name or admit his guilt; there remain two more days and a half before I take the affair in my own hands and make it public."

"I hope to establish Turnbull's innocence before that time," retorted Kent coolly. Inwardly his spirits sank; had not every effort on his part brought but further proof of Jimmie's guilt? That McIntyre would make no attempt to hush up the scandal was obvious.

"Keep me informed of your progress," McIntyre's manner was domineering and Kent felt the blood mount to his temples, but he was determined not to lose his temper whatever the provocation; McIntyre was Barbara's father.

Clymer, aware that the atmosphere was getting strained, diplomatically intervened.

"Dine with me to-night, Kent," he said. "Perhaps you will then have some news that will throw light on the present whereabouts of the securities. I found, on making inquiries, that they have not been offered for sale in the usual channels. Come, McIntyre, I have a directors' meeting in twenty minutes."

McIntyre, who had been swinging his walking-stick from one hand to the other in marked impatience, turned to Kent, his manner more conciliatory.

"Pleasant quarters you have," he remarked. "Does Rochester share this room with you?"

"No, colonel, his is across the anteroom, where you waited a few minutes ago," explained Kent as he accompanied his visitors to the door. "This is my office."

"Ah, yes, I thought as much on seeing only one desk." McIntyre's manner grew more cordial. "Does Rochester's furniture duplicate yours, safe and all?"

"Safe—no, he has none; that is the firm's safe." Kent was becoming restless under so many personal questions. "Good-by, Mr. Clymer."

"Don't forget to-night at eight," the banker reminded him before stepping into the corridor. "We'll dine at the Club de Vingt. Come along, McIntyre."

Sylvester stopped Kent on his way back

to his office and handed him the neatly typewritten copies of his brief, and with a word of thanks the lawyer went over to his desk, and, gathering such papers as he required at the court-house, he thrust them and the brief into his leather bag, but instead of hurrying on his way, he stood still to consider the events of the morning.

Helen McIntyre, during their interview, had not responded to his appeal for her confidence, nor vouchsafed any reason for her belief that Jimmie Turnbull had been the victim of foul play. And Colonel McIntyre had given him only until Saturday night to solve the problem! Kent's overwrought feelings found vent in an emphatic oath.

"Excuse me," exclaimed Sylvester mildly from the doorway. "I knocked and understood you to say come in."

"Well, what is it?" Kent's nerves were getting a bit raw; a glance at his watch showed him he had a slender margin only in which to reach the court-house in time for his appointment. Not even waiting for the clerk's reply he snatched up his brief-case and made for the private door leading into the corridor. But he was destined not to get away without another interruption.

As Sylvester was hastily explaining, "Two gentlemen to see you, Mr. Kent," the clerk was thrust aside and Detective Ferguson entered, accompanied by a deputy marshal.

"Sorry to detain you, Mr. Kent," exclaimed the detective. "I came to tell you that Coroner Penfield has just called an inquest for this afternoon to inquire into Jimmie Turnbull's death. Where's your partner, Mr. Rochester?" looking around inquiringly.

"In Cleveland. Won't I do?" replied Kent, his appointment forgotten in the news that Ferguson had just given him.

"No, we didn't come for legal advice," Ferguson smiled, then grew serious. "What's Mr. Rochester's address?"

Kent walked over to his desk and picked up the telegram. "The City Club, Cleveland," he stated.

"Thanks." Ferguson jotted down the address in his note-book. "Jones, here," placing his hand on his companion, "came to serve Mr. Rochester with a subpoena; he's wanted at the Turnbull inquest as a material witness."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE INQUEST.

CORONER PENFIELD adjusted his eye-glasses and scanned the spectators gathered for the Turnbull inquest. The room was crowded with both men and women, the latter predominating, and the coroner decided that, while some had come from a personal interest in the dead man, the majority had been attracted by morbid curiosity. There was a stir among the spectators as an inner door opened and the jury, led by the morgue-master, filed into the room and took their places. Coroner Penfield rose and addressed the foreman.

"Have you viewed the body?" he inquired.

"Yes, doctor," and the man sat down.

Coroner Penfield then concisely stated the reason for the inquest and summoned Officer O'Ryan to the witness-stand. The policeman stood, cap in hand, while being sworn by the morgue-master, and then took his place on the platform in the chair reserved for the witnesses.

His answers to Coroner Penfield's questions relative to his name, residence in Washington, and length of service in the city police force were given with brevity.

"Where were you on Tuesday morning at about five o'clock?" asked Penfield, first consulting some memoranda on his desk.

"On my way home," explained O'Ryan. "My relief had just come."

"Does your beat take in the McIntyre residence?"

"It does, sir."

"Did you observe any one loitering in the vicinity of the residence prior to five o'clock, Tuesday morning?"

"No, sir. It was only when the lady called to me that I was attracted to the house."

"Did she state what was the matter?"

"Yes, sir. She said that she had locked

a burglar in a closet, and to come and get him, and I did so," and O'Ryan expanded his chest with an air of satisfaction as he glanced about the morgue.

"Did the burglar resist arrest?"

"No, sir; he came very peaceably and not a word out of him."

"Had you any idea that the burglar was not what he seemed?".

"Devil an idea, begging your pardon"—O'Ryan remembered hastily where he was. "The burglar looked the part he was masquerading, and his make-up was perfect," ended O'Ryan with relish. "Never gave me a hint he was a gentleman and a bank-cashier in disguise."

Kent, who had arrived at the morgue a few minutes before the policeman commenced his testimony, smiled in spite of himself. He was feeling exceedingly low-spirited, and had come to the inquest with inward foreboding as to its result. On what developed there, he was convinced, hung Jimmie Turnbull's good name. After his interview with Detective Ferguson that morning, he had wired Philip Rochester that Jimmie Turnbull had died suddenly on Tuesday and to return to Washington at once. He had requested an immediate reply, and had fully expected to find a telegram at his office when he stopped there on his way to the morgue, but none had come.

"Whom else did you see in the McIntyre house?" the coroner asked O'Ryan.

"No one, sir, except the burglar and Miss McIntyre."

"Did you find any doors or windows unlocked?"

"No, sir; I never looked to see."

"Why not?"

"Because the young lady said that she had been over the house and everything was then fastened." O'Ryan looked anxiously at the coroner. Would he make him derelict in his duty? It would seriously affect his standing on the force. "I took Miss McIntyre's word for the house, for I had the burglar, safe, under arrest."

"How did Miss McIntyre appear?"

"Appear? Sure, she looked very sweet in her blue wrapper and her hair down her back," answered O'Ryan with emphasis.

"She was not fully dressed then?"

"No, sir."

"Was Miss McIntyre composed in manner or did she appear frightened?" asked Penfield. It was one of the questions which Kent had expected, and he waited with intense interest for the policeman's reply.

"She was very pale and—and breathless, like." O'Ryan flapped his arms about vaguely in his endeavor to demonstrate his meaning. "She kept begging me to hurry and get the burglar out of the house, and after telling her that she would have to appear in the police-court first thing that morning, I went off with the prisoner."

"Were there lights in the house?"

"Only dim ones in the halls and two bulbs turned on in the library; it's a big room, though, and they hardly made any light at all," explained O'Ryan; he was particular as to details. "I used handcuffs on the prisoner, thinking maybe he'd give me the slip in the dim light, but there was no fight or flight in him."

"Did he talk to you on the way to the station-house?"

"No, sir; and at the station he was just as quiet, only answered the questions the desk sergeant put to him, and that was all," stated O'Ryan.

Penfield laid down his memorandum-pad. "All right, O'Ryan; you may retire," and at the words the policeman left the platform and the room. He was followed by the police sergeant, who had been on desk duty at the Eighth Precinct on Tuesday morning. His testimony simply corroborated O'Ryan's statement that the prisoner had done and said nothing which would indicate that he was other than he seemed—a house-breaker.

Coroner Penfield paused before calling the next witness and drank a glass of ice-water; the weather had turned unseasonably hot, and the room in which inquests were held, was stifling, in spite of the long, opened windows at either end.

"Call Miss Helen McIntyre," Penfield said to the morgue-master, and the latter crossed to the door leading to the room where sat the witnesses. There was an instant craning of necks to catch a glimpse of the society girl about whom, with her twin sister, so much interest centered.

Helen was extremely pale as she advanced up the room, but Kent, watching her closely, was relieved to see none of the nervousness which had been so marked at their interview that morning. She was dressed with fastidious taste, and as she mounted the platform after the morgue-master had administered the oath, Coroner Penfield rose and, with a polite gesture, indicated the chair she was to occupy.

"I am Helen McIntyre," she announced clearly. "Daughter of Colonel Charles McIntyre."

"Tell us the circumstances attending the arrest of James Turnbull, alias John Smith, in your house on Tuesday morning, Miss McIntyre," directed the coroner, seating himself at his table, on which were writing materials.

"I was sitting up to let in my sister, who had gone to a dance," she began, "and fearing I would fall asleep I went down into the library, intending to sit in one of the window recesses and watch for her arrival. As I entered the library I saw a figure steal across the room and disappear inside a closet. I was very frightened, but had sense enough left to cross softly to the closet and lock the door." She paused in her rapid recital and drew a long breath, then continued more slowly:

"I hurried to the window and across the street I saw a policeman standing under a lamp-post. It took me but a minute to call him. The policeman opened the closet door, put handcuffs on Mr. Turnbull, and took him away."

Coroner Penfield, as well as the jurors, followed her statement with absorbed attention. At its end he threw down his pencil and spoke briefly to the deputy coroner, who had been busily engaged in taking notes of the inquest, and then he turned to Helen.

"You heard no sound before entering the library?"

"No."

"No one walking about the house?" he persisted.

"No." She followed the negative with a short explanation. "I went to bed soon after dinner, not feeling very well, and slept through the early hours of the night."

"At what hour did you wake up?"

"About four o'clock, or a little after."

"Then you were awake an hour before you discovered the supposed burglar in your library?"

"Y-yes," Helen's hesitation was faint. "About that length of time."

"And you heard no unusual sounds in that hour's interval?"

"I heard nothing," her manner was slightly defiant and Kent's heart sank; if he had only thought to warn her not to antagonize the coroner.

"Where were you during that hour?"

"Lying down," promptly. "Then, afraid I would drop off to sleep again, I went downstairs."

Coroner Penfield consulted his notes before asking another question.

"Who lives in your house besides you and your twin sister?" he asked.

"My father, Colonel McIntyre; our house guest, Mrs. Louis C. Brewster, and five servants," she replied. "Grimes, the butler; Martha, our maid; Jane, the chambermaid; Hope, our cook; and Thomas, our second man; the chauffeur, Harris, the scullery maid and the laundress do not stay at night."

"Who were at home besides yourself on Monday night and early Tuesday morning?"

"My father and Mrs. Brewster; I believe all the servants were in also, except Thomas, who had asked permission to spend the night in Baltimore."

"Miss McIntyre," Coroner Penfield put the next question in an impressive manner, "on discovering the burglar, why did you not call your father?"

"My first impulse was to do so," she answered promptly. "But in leaving the library I passed the window, saw the policeman, and called him in." She shot a keen look at the coroner, and added softly. "The policeman was qualified to make an arrest, my father would have had to summon one had he been there."

"Quite true," acknowledged Penfield courteously. "Now, Miss McIntyre, why did the prisoner so obligingly walk straight into a closet on your arrival in the library?"

"I presume he was looking for a way out

of the room and blundered into it," she explained. "There are seven doors opening from our library; the prisoner may have heard me approaching, become confused, and walked through the wrong door."

"That is quite plausible—with an ordinary *bona fide* burglar," agreed Penfield. "But was not Mr. Turnbull acquainted with the architectural arrangements of your house?"

"He was a frequent caller and an intimate friend," she said, with dignity. "As to his power of observation and his bump of locality I cannot say. The library was but dimly lighted."

"Miss McIntyre," Penfield spoke slowly. "Were you aware of the real identity of the burglar?"

"I had no suspicion that he was not what he appeared," she responded. "He said nothing after his arrest to give me the slightest inkling of his identity."

Penfield raised his eyebrows and shot a look at the deputy coroner before going on with his examination.

"You know Mr. Turnbull intimately, and yet you did not recognize him?" he asked.

"He wore an admirable disguise," Helen touched her lips with the tip of her tongue; inwardly she longed for the glass of ice water which she saw standing on the reporters' table. "Mr. Turnbull's associates will tell you that he excelled in amateur theatricals."

Penfield looked at her critically for a moment before continuing his questions. She bore his scrutiny with composure.

"Officer O'Ryan has testified that you informed him you examined the windows of your house," he said, after a brief wait. "Did you find any unlocked?"

"Yes; one was open in the little reception room off the front door."

"What floor is the room on?"

"The ground floor."

"Would it have been easy for anyone to gain admittance through the window without attracting attention in the street?" was Penfield's next question.

"Yes."

"Miss McIntyre," Penfield rose. "I have only a few more questions to put to you. Why did Mr. Turnbull come to your house—a house where he was a welcome visitor, in the middle of the night, disguised?"

The reporters as well as the spectators bent forward to catch her reply.

"Mr. Turnbull had a wager with my sister, Barbara," she explained. "She bet him that he could not break into the house without being discovered."

Penfield considered her answer before addressing her again.

"Why didn't Mr. Turnbull tell you who he was when you had him arrested?" he asked.

Helen shrugged her shoulders. "I cannot answer that question, for I do not know his reason. If he had only confided in me—" her voice shook—"he might have been alive to-day."

"How so?" Penfield shot the question at her.

"Because then he would have been spared the additional excitement of his trip to the police station and the scene in court, which brought on his attack of *angina pectoris*."

Penfield regarded her for a moment in silence.

"I have no further questions, Miss McIntyre," he said, and turned to the morgue master. "Ask Miss Barbara McIntyre to come to the platform." Turning back to his table and the papers thereon he failed to see the twins pass each other in the aisle. They were identically attired and when Coroner Penfield looked again at the witness chair, he stared in surprise at its occupant.

"I beg pardon, Miss McIntyre, I desire your sister to testify," he remarked.

"I am Barbara McIntyre." A haunting quality in her voice caught Kent's attention, and he leaned eagerly forward, his eyes following each movement of her nervous fingers busily twisting her gloves inside and out.

"I beg you pardon," exclaimed the coroner, recovering from his surprise. He had seen the twins at the Police Court on Tuesday morning for a second only, and then his attention had been entirely centered on Helen. He had heard, but had not realized until that moment, how striking was the resemblance between the sisters.

"Miss McIntyre," the coroner cleared his throat and commenced his examination. "Where were you on Monday night?"

"At a dance given by Mr. and Mrs. Charles Grosvenor."

"At what hour did you return?"

"I think it was half past five or a few minutes earlier."

"Who let you in?"

"My sister."

"Did you see the burglar?"

"He had left," she answered. "My sister told me of her adventure as we went upstairs to our rooms."

"Miss McIntyre," Penfield picked up a page of the deputy coroner's closely written notes, and ran his eyes down it. "Your sister has testified that James Turnbull went to your house disguised as a burglar on a wager with you. What were the terms of that wager?"

"I bet him that he could not enter the house after midnight without his presence being detected by our new police dogs," exclaimed Barbara slowly. She had stopped twirling her gloves about, and one hand was firmly clenched over the arm of her chair.

"Did the dogs discover his presence in the house?"

"Apparently not, or they would have aroused the household," she said. "I cannot answer that question, though, because I was not at home."

"Where are the dogs kept?"

"In the garage in the daytime."

"And at night?" he persisted.

"They roam about our house," she admitted, "or sleep in the boudoir which is between my sister's bedroom and mine."

"Were the dogs in the house on Monday night?"

"I did not see them on my return from the dance."

"That is not an answer to my question, Miss McIntyre," the coroner pointed out. "Were the dogs in the house?"

There was a distinct pause before she spoke. "I recall hearing our butler, Grimes, say that he found the dogs in the cellar. Mr. Turnbull's shocking death put all else out of my mind; I never once thought of the dogs."

"In spite of the fact that it was a wager over the dogs which brought about the whole situation?" remarked the coroner dryly.

Barbara flushed at his tone, then paled.

"I honestly forgot about the dogs," she repeated. "Father sent them out to our country place Tuesday afternoon; they annoyed our—our guest, Mrs. Brewster."

"In what way?"

"By barking—they are noisy dogs."

"And yet they did not rouse the household when Mr. Turnbull broke into the house—" Coroner Penfield regarded her sternly. "How do you account for that?"

Barbara's right hand stole to the arm of her chair and clasped it with the same convulsive strength that she clung to the other chair arm. When she spoke her voice was barely audible.

"I can account for it in two ways," she began. "If the dogs were accidentally locked in the cellar they could not possibly hear Mr. Turnbull moving about the house; if they were roaming about and scented him, they might not have barked because they would recognize him as a friend."

"Were the dogs familiar with his step and voice?"

"Yes. Only last Sunday he played with them for an hour, and later in the afternoon took them for a walk in the country."

"I see." Penfield stroked his chin reflectively. "When your sister told you of finding the burglar and his arrest, did you not, in the light of your wager, suspect that he might be Mr. Turnbull?"

"No." Barbara's eyes did not falter before his direct gaze. "I supposed that Mr. Turnbull meant to try and enter the house in his own proper person; it never dawned on me that he would resort to disguise. Besides," as the coroner started to make a remark. "We have had numerous robberies in our neighborhood, and the apartment house two blocks from us has had a regular epidemic of sneak thieves."

The coroner waited until Dr. Mayo, who had been writing with feverish haste, had picked up a fresh sheet of paper before resuming his examination.

"You accompanied your sister to the police court," he said. "Did you see the burglar there?"

" Yes."

" Did you realize his identity in the court-room?"

" No. I only awoke to—to the situation when I saw him lying dead with his wig removed. The shock was frightful—" she closed her eyes for a second, for the room and the rows of faces confronting her were mixed in a maddening maze and she raised her hand to her swimming head. When she looked up she found Coroner Penfield by her side.

" That is all," he said kindly. " Please remain in the witness room, I may call you again," and he helped her down the step with careful attention.

Back in his corner Kent watched her departure. He was white to the lips.

" Heat too much for you?" asked a kindly stranger, and Kent gave a mumbled " No," as he strove to pull himself together.

What deviltry was afoot? How dared the twins take such risks—to bear false witness was a grave criminal offense. He, alone, among all the spectators, had realized that in testifying before the inquest, the twins had swapped identities.

CHAPTER IX.

" B-B-B "

THE return of the morgue master to the platform caused Coroner Penfield to break off his whispered conversation with Dr. Mayo.

" Colonel McIntyre just telephoned that his car had a blow-out on the way here," explained the morgue master. " He will arrive shortly."

Penfield consulted a list of names. " Call Grimes, the McIntyre butler," he said. " We will hear him while waiting for the Colonel."

Grimes, small and thin, with the stolid countenance of the well-trained servant, was exceedingly short in his replies to the coroner's questions. Yes, he had lived with the McIntyres during their residence in Washington, something like five years, he couldn't quite remember the exact dates. No, there was never any quarreling, up-stairs or down; it was a well ordered household.

" Exactly," remarked the coroner dryly. " What about Monday night? Tell us, Grimes, what occurred in that house between midnight Monday and five o'clock Tuesday morning."

" Haven't much to tell," was the grumpy response. " I went up-stairs about half past eleven and got down the next morning at the usual hour, seven o'clock."

" And you heard no disturbing sounds in the night?"

" No, sir. We wouldn't be likely to; the servants' rooms are all at the top of the house and the staircase leading to them has a brick wall on either side, like stairs leading to an ordinary attic, and there's a door at the bottom which shuts off all sound from below." It was the longest sentence the butler had indulged in and he paused for breath.

" Who closes the house at night, Grimes?"

" I do, sir."

" Why did you leave the window in the reception room open?"

" I didn't, sir;" was the prompt denial. " I had just locked it when Mrs. Brewster came in, along with Colonel McIntyre and Mr. Clymer, and they sat down to talk. When I left the room the window was locked fast, and so was every door and window in the place," he declared aggressively. " I'll take my dying oath to it, sir."

Penfield looked at Grimes; that he was telling the truth was unmistakable.

" Who sits up to let in the young ladies when they go to balls?" he asked.

" Generally no one, sir, because Colonel McIntyre accompanies them or calls for them, and he has his latch-key. Lately," added Grimes as an after thought. " Miss Helen has been using a duplicate latch-key."

" Has Miss Barbara McIntyre a latch-key, also?" asked Penfield.

" No, sir, I believe not," the butler looked dubious. " I recall that Colonel McIntyre gave Miss Helen her key at the luncheon table, and he said then to Miss Barbara that he couldn't trust her with one because she would be sure to lose it, she is that careless."

The coroner asked the next question with such abruptness that the butler started.

"When did you last see Mr. Turnbull at the house?"

"Sunday afternoon." Grimes's reply was spoken with more than his accustomed quickness of speech. "Mr. Turnbull called twice, after a long time in the drawing-room he went away taking the police dogs with him, and later called to bring them back."

"Where were these dogs on Monday night?"

"I last saw them in the library," replied Grimes shortly.

"And where did you find them the next morning?" prompted the coroner.

"In the cellar," laconically.

"And what were they doing in the cellar?"

"Hunting rats."

"And how did the dogs get in the cellar?" inquired the coroner patiently. Grimes was not volunteering information, even if he could not be accused of holding it back.

"Some one must have let them down the back stairs," he admitted. "I don't know who it was."

"Which servant got down-stairs ahead of you on Tuesday morning?"

"No one, sir; the cook over-slept, and she and the maids came down in a bunch ten minutes later."

"And who told you of the attempted burglary and the burglar's arrest?" asked Penfield.

"Miss Barbara. She asked us to hurry breakfast for her and Miss Helen 'cause they had to go at once to the Police Court; she didn't give any particulars, or nothing," added Grimes in an injured tone. "'Twarn't 'till Thomas and I saw the afternoon papers that we knew what had been going on in our own house."

"That is all, Grimes," announced Penfield, and the butler left the platform with the same stolid air he wore when he arrived. He was followed in the witness chair by the other McIntyre servants in succession, whose testimony added nothing to what he had said but simply confirmed his statements.

Kent, who had grown restless during the servants' monotonous testimony, forgot the oppressive atmosphere of the room on seeing Mrs. Brewster under the escort of the morgue master. Spying a vacant seat several rows ahead of where he was sitting, Kent, with a muttered apology to the people over whom he crawled in his efforts to get out, hurried into it just as the vivacious widow had finished taking the oath to "tell the truth and nothing but the truth," and seated herself, with much rustling of silk skirts in the witness chair.

"State your full name, madam," directed Coroner Penfield, eying her dainty beauty with admiration.

"Margaret Perry Brewster," she answered. "Widow of Louis C. Brewster. Both I and my late husband were born and lived in Los Angeles, California."

"Are you visiting the Misses McIntyre?"

"Yes." Mrs. Brewster spoke in a chatty impersonal manner. "I have been with them since the first of the month."

"Did you attend the Grosvenor dance?"

"No; the affair was only given for the debutantes of last fall and did not include married people," she explained. "It was a warm night and Colonel McIntyre asked me and Mr. Benjamin Clymer, who was dining with him, to go for a motor ride, leaving Barbara at the Grosvenors' *en route*. We did so, returning to the house about eleven o'clock, and sat talking until about midnight in the reception room, then Colonel McIntyre drove Mr. Clymer home, and I went to my room."

"Were you awakened by any noises during the night?" asked Penfield.

"No; I heard no noises," Mrs. Brewster's charming smile was infectious.

"When did you first learn of the supposed burglary and the death of James Turnbull?"

"The McIntyre twins told me about the tragedy on their return from the Police Court," answered Mrs. Brewster, and settled herself a little more comfortably in the witness chair.

"When you were in the reception room, Mrs. Brewster"—Penfield paused and studied his notes a second—"did you observe if the window was open?"

"It was not open when we entered," she responded. "But the air in the room was stuffy and at my request Mr. Clymer raised the window."

" Did he close it later?"

She considered the question. " I really do not recall," she admitted finally. Her eyes strayed toward the door through which she had entered, and Penfield answered her unspoken thought.

" Just one more question," he said hurriedly. " Did you see the dogs on Monday night?"

" Yes. I heard them scratching at the door leading to the basement as I went upstairs, and so I turned around and went down and opened the door and let them run down into the cellar."

Penfield snapped shut his notebook. " I am greatly obliged, Mrs. Brewster; we will not detain you any longer."

The morgue master stepped forward and helped the pretty widow down.

" Colonel McIntyre is here now," he told the coroner.

" Ah, then bring him in," and Penfield, while awaiting the arrival of the new witness, straightened the papers on his desk.

McIntyre looked straight ahead of him as he walked down the room and stood frowning heavily while the oath was being administered, but his manner, when the coroner addressed him, had regained all the suavity and polish which had first captivated Washington society.

" I have been a resident of Washington for about five years," he said in answer to the coroner's question. " My daughters attended school here after their return from Paris, where they were in a convent for four years. They made their debut last November at our home in this city."

" Were you aware of the wager between your daughter Barbara and James Turnbull?" asked Penfield.

" I heard of it Sunday afternoon but paid little attention," admitted McIntyre, " My daughter Barbara's vagaries I seldom take seriously."

" Was Mr. Turnbull a frequent visitor at your house?"

" Oh, yes."

" Was he engaged to your daughter Helen?"

" No." McIntyre's denial was prompt and firmly spoken. Penfield, and Kent from his new seat near the platform, watched the colonel narrowly, but learned nothing from his expression.

" I have heard otherwise," observed the coroner dryly.

" You have been misinformed," McIntyre's manner was short. " I would suggest, Mr. Coroner, that you confine your questions and conjectures to matters pertinent to this inquiry."

Penfield flushed as one of the jurors snickered, but he did not repeat his previous question, asking instead: " Was there good feeling between you and Mr. Turnbull?"

" I never quarrelled with him," replied McIntyre. " I really saw little of him since he called at the house to see one or the other of my daughters, or both."

" When did you last see Mr. Turnbull?" inquired Penfield.

" He was at the house on Sunday and I had quite a talk with him," McIntyre leaned back in his chair and regarded the neat crease in his trousers with critical eyes. " I last saw Turnbull going out of the street door."

" Were you disturbed by the burglar's entrance on Monday night?"

McIntyre shook his head. " I am a heavy sleeper," he said. " I regret very much that my daughter Helen did not at once awaken me on finding the burglar, as she supposed, hiding in the closet. I knew nothing of the affair until Grimes informed me of it, and only reached the Police Court in time to bring my daughters home from the distressing scene following the identification of the dead burglar as Jimmie Turnbull."

" Colonel McIntyre," Penfield turned over several papers until he found the one he sought. " Mrs. Brewster has testified that while you and she were sitting in the morning room, Mr. Clymer opened the window. Did you close it on leaving the room?"

McIntyre reflected before answering. " I cannot remember doing so," he stated finally. " Clymer was in rather a hurry to leave and after bidding Mrs. Brewster good night, we went straight out to the car and I drove him to the Saratoga."

" Then you cannot swear to the window having been re-locked?"

"I cannot."

Penfield paused a moment. "Did you return immediately to your house from the Saratoga apartment?"

"I did," promptly. "My chauffeur, Harris, wasn't well, and I wanted him to get home."

Penfield thought a moment before putting the next question.

"How did Miss Barbara get home from the Grosvenor dance?" he asked.

"She was brought home by friends, Colonel and Mrs. Chase," McIntyre in turning about in his chair knocked down his walking stick from its resting place against its side, and the unexpected clatter made several women nervously inclined, jump in their seat. Observing them, McIntyre smiled and was still smiling amusedly when Penfield addressed him.

"Did you observe many lights burning in your house when you returned?"

"No, only those which are usually left lit at night."

"Was your daughter Helen awake?"

"I don't know. Her room was in darkness when I walked past her door on my way to bed."

Penfield removed his eye-glasses and polished them on his silk handkerchief. "I have no further questions to ask, Colonel. You are excused."

McIntyre bowed gravely to him and as he left the platform came face to face with his family physician, Dr. Stone.

Penfield, who was an old acquaintance of the physician's, signed to him to come to the platform. After the preliminaries had been gone through, he shifted his chair around, the better to face Stone.

"Did you accompany the Misses McIntyre to the Police Court on Tuesday morning?" he asked.

"I did," responded the physician, "at Miss Barbara's request. She said her sister was not very well and they disliked going alone to the Police Court."

"Did she state why she did not ask her father to go with them?"

"Only that he had not fully recovered from an attack of tonsilitis, which I knew to be a fact, and they did not want him to overtax his strength."

There was a moment's pause as the Coroner, his attention diverted by a whispered word or two from the morgue master, referred to his notes before resuming his examination.

"Did you know James Turnbull?" he asked a second later.

"Yes, slightly."

"Did you recognize him in his burglar's disguise?"

"I did not."

"Had you any suspicion that the burglar was other than he seemed?"

"No."

Penfield picked up a memorandum handed him by Dr. Mayo and referred to it. "I understand, doctor, that you were the first to go to the burglar's aid when he became ill," he said. "Is that true?"

"Yes," Stone spoke with more animation. "Happening to glance inside the cage where the prisoner sat, I saw he was struggling convulsively for breath. With Mr. Clymer's assistance I carried him into an anteroom off the court, but before I had crossed its threshold Turnbull expired in my arms."

"Was he conscious before he died?"

At the question Kent bent eagerly forward. What would be the reply?

"I am not prepared to answer that with certainty," replied Dr. Stone cautiously. "As I picked him up I heard him stammer faintly: 'B-b-b'."

Kent started so violently that the next man to him turned and watched him for a moment, then, more interested in what was transpiring on the platform, promptly forgot his agitated neighbor.

"Was Turnbull delirious, doctor?" asked the coroner.

Stone shook his head in denial. "No," he stated. "I take it that he started to say 'Barbara', and his breath failed him; at any rate I only caught the stuttered 'B-b-b'."

Penfield did not immediately continue his examination, but when he did so his manner was stern.

"Doctor, what in your opinion caused Mr. Turnbull's death?"

"Judging superficially—I made no thorough examination," Stone explained parenthetically. "I should say that Mr. Roches-

ter was right when he stated that Turnbull died from an acute attack of *angina pectoris.*"

"How did Mr. Rochester come to make that assertion and where?"

"Immediately after Turnbull's death," replied Stone. "Mr. Rochester who shared his apartment, defended him in court. Mr. Rochester was aware that Turnbull suffered from the disease, and Mr. Clymer, who was present, also knew it."

"And what is your opinion, doctor?" questioned Penfield.

Stone hesitated. "There was a distinct odor of amyl nitrite noticeable when I went to Turnbull's aid, and I concluded then that he had some heart trouble and had inhaled the drug to ward off an attack. It bears out Mr. Rochester's theory of his death."

"I see. Thank you doctor. Please wait with the other witnesses, as we may call you again," and with a sigh the busy physician resigned himself to spending another hour in the room reserved for the witnesses.

The next to take the witness stand was Deputy Marshal Grant. His testimony was short and concise, and his description of the scene in the Police Court preceding Turnbull's death was listened to with deep attention by everyone.

"Did the prisoner show any symptoms of illness before his heart attack?" asked Penfield.

"Not exactly illness," replied Grant slowly. "I noticed he didn't move very quickly; sort of shambling as if he was weak in his legs. I've seen 'drunks and disorderlies' act just that way, and paid no particular attention to him. He did ask for a drink after he returned to the cage."

"Did you give it to him?"

"No, an attendant gave the glass to Mr. Rochester who handed it to Mr. Turnbull."

Penfield regarded Grant in silence for a minute. "That is all," he announced, and with a polite bow the deputy marshal withdrew.

Detective Ferguson recognized Kent as he passed up the room to the platform and gave him a slight bow and a smile, but the smile had disappeared when, at the coroner's request, he told of his arrival just after the discovery of the burglar's identity.

"I searched the cage where the prisoner had been seated and found this handkerchief," he went on to say. "It had been dropped by Turnbull and was saturated with amyl nitrite. I had it examined by a chemist, who said that this amyl nitrite was given to patients with heart trouble in little pearl capsules to be crushed in handkerchiefs and the fumes inhaled.

"The chemist also told me that"—the detective spoke with impressive seriousness, "judging from the number of particles of capsule adhering to the linen, more than one capsule had been crushed by Turnbull. Here is the handkerchief," and he laid it on the table with great care.

Kent's heart sank; the moment he had dreaded all that long afternoon, had come. Penfield inspected the handkerchief with interest, and then passed it to the jurors, cautioning them to handle it carefully.

"I note," he stated, turning again to Detective Ferguson, "that it is a woman's handkerchief."

"It is," replied Ferguson. "And embroidered in one corner is the initial 'B'."

Penfield ran his fingers through his gray hair. "You may go, Ferguson," he said, and beckoned to the morgue master. "Ask Miss Barbara McIntyre to return."

The girl was quick in answering the summons. Kent, more and more worried, was watching the scene with attention.

"Did Mr. Turnbull have one of your handkerchiefs?" asked Penfield.

Her surprise at the question was manifested in her manner.

"He might have," she said. "I have a dreadful habit of dropping my handkerchiefs around."

"Did you miss one after his visit to your house on Monday night?"

"No."

"Miss McIntyre," Penfield took up the handkerchief which the foreman replaced on his desk a moment before, and holding it with care, extended it toward the girl. "Is this your handkerchief?"

She inspected the handkerchief and the initial with curiosity, but with nothing more, Kent was convinced, and in his relief was almost guilty of disturbing the decorum of the inquest with a shout of joy.

"It is not my handkerchief," she stated clearly.

Penfield replaced the handkerchief on the table with the same care he had picked it up.

"Thank you, Miss McIntyre, I won't detain you longer. Logan," to the morgue master. "Ask Dr. Stone to step here."

Almost immediately Stone reentered the room and hurried to the platform.

"Would two or more capsules of amyl nitrite constitute a lethal dose?" asked Penfield.

"They would be very apt to finish a feeble heart," replied Stone. "Three capsules, if inhaled deeply, would certainly kill a healthy person."

Penfield showed the handkerchief to the physician. "Can a chemist tell from the particles clinging to this handkerchief, how many capsules have been used?"

"I should say he could." Stone looked grave as he inspected the handkerchief, taking careful note of the letter "B" in one corner of it. "But there is this to be considered—Turnbull may not have crushed those capsules all at the same time."

"What do you mean?"

"He may have felt the attack coming on earlier in the evening and used a capsule, and in the Police Court used the same handkerchief in the same manner."

"I see," Penfield nodded. "The point is cleverly taken."

Kent silently agreed with the coroner. The next instant Stone was excused, and after a slight pause the deputy coroner, Dr. Mayo, left his table and his notes and occupied the witness chair, after first being sworn. The preliminaries did not consume much time, and Penfield's manner was brisk as he addressed his assistant.

"Did you make a post-mortem examination of Turnbull?" he asked.

"I did—in the presence of the morgue master and Dr. McLane." Dr. Mayo displayed an anatomical chart and drew his pencil down it as he talked. "We found from the condition of the heart that the deceased had suffered from *angina pectoris*," he paused and spoke more slowly. "In examining the gastric contents we found the presence of aconitine."

"Aconitine?" questioned Penfield, and the reporters, scenting the sensational, leaned forward eagerly so as not to miss the deputy coroner's answer.

"Aconitine, an active poison," he explained. "It is the alkaloid of aconite, and generally fatal in its results."

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK. Don't forget this magazine is issued weekly, and that you will get the continuation of this story without waiting a month.

EXPERIENCE

BY CHARLES HANSON TOWNE

I HAVE known sorrow; therefore now I know
The worth of laughter. I have been betrayed,
Tried in the crucible, utterly dismayed;
Henceforth with Truth forever let me go.

I have known men who poured on me their hate;
How closely now I cleave unto one friend!
I have heard scandal; therefore I defend
The absent, when foul vultures desecrate.

I have been blind to goodness; now I see
The glory of her name all names above.
I have known Judas; therefore give me love
One hour, and I will face Eternity!

Fenwick Gets "By"

by George J. Brenn

"IT is probably the most audacious jewel robbery that has ever been perpetrated," announced Mr. J. Gordon-Taylor, of Diffany's.

Mr. J. Gordon-Taylor conveyed an air of precision, if nothing else. Precise in his speech, the utterance just quoted was delivered with an air of finality that brooked no debate. Precise in appearance as well, for his patent-leather boots, gray-striped trousers, cutaway coat, fawn-colored waistcoat, and ascot tie with twinned-pearl pin discouraged any question as to their correct formality. He sat before Fenwick's desk in the Springfield Central Office terminal-room, his immaculate silk hat on his knee, and waited for Fenwick's comment.

"It has some interesting features, no doubt," Fenwick admitted.

"Audacious, sir—absolutely! The newspapers know practically nothing of what has occurred."

"To save time, Mr. Gordon-Taylor, let me tell you that I have only a sketchy idea of what has occurred. Every one has heard of 'Diamond Jack' Ordway, the railroad magnate, and of his collection of jewels. The newspapers value it at half a million."

"Four hundred thousand would be nearer the true value," interrupted Mr. Gordon-Taylor.

"I see. Well, I know that Mr. Ordway lives on Madison Avenue. He stays at Palm Beach during the winter, and deposits his collection at Diffany's for safekeeping during his absence. I believe your concern makes any necessary repairs to the jewelry during this period.

"The jewels are returned to Mr. Ordway when he reopens his Madison Avenue home. This year, you say, the jewels were returned, and Ordway says they were stolen. I know none of the details, and if I am to take the case you will have to acquaint me with the whole story."

"Very well, Mr. Fenwick. Mr. Ordway usually opens his town house on April 1st. This year he telegraphed the House Protective Company that he intended returning a month earlier than usual, and was sending his butler to them to arrange for the opening of the house, in order that there might be no misunderstanding regarding the burglar-alarm.

"On the fourth of March Mr. Ordway called me up on the telephone. I was quite surprised to hear from him, inasmuch as he was not expected for another month. He is rather brusk and hasty in his speech, and never wastes words.

"'I see you have acquired the Holcomb necklace,' he barked.

"'We have,' I answered with pardonable pride, since I had handled the negotiations whereby the Holcomb diamonds had become the property of Diffany's.

"'What are you holding them at?' he asked.

"'Thirty thousand dollars,' I answered.

"'Twenty-five,' he offered.

"I told him I would confer with Mr. Diffany and let him know in five minutes.

"'Call me at my office,' he ordered, and hung up.

"Mr. Diffany agreed to the sale at what was doubtless a fair price, particularly in view of the fact that Ordway always pays within the month. I therefore telephoned him at his New Street office, and told him it was a sale.

"'Very well,' he shouted. 'Send 'em to my home, and deliver my other stuff at the same time. Leave 'em with the butler. I won't be home until five o'clock.'

"I did as he had ordered. There was nothing unusual, so far, in these relations with our oldest client. Three days ago, however, we acquired a jeweled snuff-box from the Holcomb collection, and I thought Mr. Ordway might be interested. I therefore telephoned his office. A clerk advised me that Mr. Ordway was not in—would not return from Florida until early in April.

"'But he has been in,' I said.

"'He is in Florida, and has been there all winter,' the clerk insisted.

"I was astonished. As soon as I recovered my wits I hastened to Ordway's office and conferred with his business secretary. The clerk was right; Ordway was at Palm Beach, suffering from the gout; had not left there, and had no intention of returning home for another month.

"I immediately notified our insurance people, and they sent a man to accompany me to Ordway's Madison Avenue home. The house was no longer boarded up, but there was not a living soul in it, as we discovered with the assistance of the House Protective Company's man. We had been duped!

"The Swift Detective Agency, which is retained by the Jewelers' Association, immediately went to work on the case. Ordway's secretary notified the millionaire of what had occurred. We disliked taking the matter up officially with police headquarters, but Ordway returned from Florida at once, consulted Chief Corson, and demanded that the thief be apprehended.

"Ordway is a choleric old gentleman; and while Diffany's are responsible, and must make good any loss he sustains, he objects to being made the butt of New York's jokes regarding the loss of his collection. He ranted and roared at Corson until the chief was on his mettle, and Corson is now giving the case personal attention."

"Have the Byrnes people established anything?" asked Fenwick.

"They have." Mr. Gordon-Taylor gravely produced a small morocco-bound note-book from an inner pocket and consulted it. "They have learned that the telegram to Ordway's burglar-alarm concern was telephoned to the telegraph company from the Hotel Palma, at which Ordway was a guest. Another telegram was sent to the telephone company in New York City at the same time, requesting the restoration of telephone service at Ordway's home on March 1st.

"The Swift people have also established the fact that servants occupied the Madison Avenue house for at least the first four days of March. Our men, who delivered the Ordway jewels as well as the Holcomb necklace, report that the house was not boarded up on March 4th, a gardener was engaged in pruning the hedge, servants passed through several of the rooms while they were there, and a man named Jimson, who said he was the butler, signed a receipt for the articles delivered."

"Ordway's butler?" queried Fenwick.

"Ordway's butler has been acting as his valet at Palm Beach. Ordway claims he never heard of Jimson."

"How about those telephone calls to and from Ordway's office? You say you spoke to Ordway, personally?"

"I would have sworn to it at first, but now I've changed my mind. Ordway's secretary insisted that the millionaire's private office had been locked during the entire period of his absence, and that if the phone rang it had invariably been answered from an extension station on the secretary's desk. The Swift's detective questioned the fellow closely, however, and learned that on March 4th a repair man from the telephone company had visited the suite of offices and reported that Ordway's private telephone line evidently was short-circuited.

"He was admitted to the private office,

and worked at the telephone all morning, occasionally lifting the receiver to ask Central to ring or to inquire whether she got his signal. The secretary mentioned to the repair man the fact that Mr. Ordway had expressed a desire some time ago to have his desk moved. It seems he wanted it nearer the center of the office, but it had never been moved because it would have been necessary to run the telephone wire through the expensive rug with which the office is carpeted. The telephone man suggested a method of making the move without injuring the rug, and volunteered to do the work.

"The secretary agreed, and the repair man made the necessary changes after he returned from lunch, at one o'clock. It was shortly after two o'clock that I received the call purporting to come from Ordway. Of course there is no doubt but what the repair man impersonated Ordway. He imitated the millionaire's voice and manner perfectly. The telephone company officials state positively that they have no record of trouble on Ordway's line, and that none of their outside men were assigned to make repairs at the New Street office."

"Pretty slick," commented Fenwick.

"I tell you, Mr. Fenwick, the man who engineered the theft had intelligence, colossal nerve, and a great deal of luck," asserted Gordon-Taylor. "Assuredly one master mind directed a number of lesser ones in the undertaking."

"How about the servants?" Fenwick inquired.

"Neither the Swift operatives nor Corson's men can find any trace of them. They have all disappeared."

"That seems to support your theory that a gang was responsible for the job."

"Oh, assuredly. It could not have been handled so smoothly otherwise. Now, sir, Chief Corson referred me to you for the reason that the telephone has been a major factor in the crime. He has given me to understand that you are expert in telephony and criminology."

"I have combined the two to some advantage," assented Fenwick.

"Corson says he would like your assistance; that is, to work in conjunction with his men and under his orders. On the other hand, if you do not care to identify yourself with the headquarters force, he wished me to explain that he would be glad to have you tackle the affair 'on your own.' I trust I have made his message sufficiently clear?"

"Perfectly," smiled Fenwick. "I should prefer the latter arrangement, and you may so advise him. I am rather at a disadvantage in being called in on the case almost a week after the robbery occurred, but it is not too late for me to hope for a small measure of success."

"That statement pleases me, Mr. Fenwick. Have you any other questions?"

"I think not. Let's see—you might give me Ordway's residence telephone number."

"Madison Square 10987."

"Thank you. That is all, I think."

Mr. J. Gordon-Taylor arose from his chair, but at that moment the gong on the terminal room door boomed stridently. Fenwick left his desk and threw the door open. Corson, chief of the Detective Bureau of New York City, entered.

"Hello, Charlie," he greeted. "And you, too, Mr. Taylor."

"*Gordon*-Taylor," corrected that precise gentleman, with a slight frown of annoyance. "I'm glad to see you, chief."

"And so you should be—both of you. I have news for you, and thought I'd be my own herald in bringing it to Springfield. Run up in my car, and you may return with me if you like, Mr. *Gordon*-Taylor."

Mr. Gordon-Taylor acknowledged the chief's efforts with a serious little bow.

"Better sit down again—both of you," continued Corson, drawing up a chair. They resumed their seats.

"The—ah—news?" suggested Gordon-Taylor.

"We've made an arrest—at least my man; Kilpatrick, has. Bright fellow—Kil; he's done a fine job."

Diffany's representative appeared overjoyed; Fenwick was visibly disappointed.

"And the jewels?" demanded Gordon-Taylor anxiously.

"We haven't recovered them yet," the chief admitted reluctantly; "but we have every hope of doing so before many hours have elapsed."

"Tell us how Kilpatrick worked up his case, chief," requested Fenwick.

"Glad to. Foolish as it may seem, he followed the old practise of investigating the pawn-shops. Of course we examined the daily lists which the pawnbrokers are required to file by law, but it was hardly to be expected that any of the stolen articles would appear on them. Kilpatrick realizes that there are pawn-shops and *pawn-shops;* in short, he knows which are probably shady and those that are run by downright 'fences.'

"Kil has the happy faculty of inspiring fear by hanging around his man and saying nothing. He tried it on several of the pawnbrokers, and one of them—Siegal by name—weakened and showed him a ring. Diamonds and sapphires it was, and Siegal asked Kilpatrick's opinion as to whether the police might be looking for it. He knew mighty well that Kil suspected him. It subsequently developed that Siegal had reported this pledge to conform to the letter of the law, but no one would have recognized it from the description."

"Nothing but the ring found, chief?" quizzed Fenwick.

"That's all, Charlie. Kil identified it immediately as one of the Ordway articles. Siegal disclaimed all knowledge of the rest of the stuff. Kil questioned him, and learned that the ring had been pawned three days ago by 'Mame' Wagner.

"For your information, Mame is a real belle in the underworld, and has a reputation that is not exactly impeccable. Many of our best crooks have sought and fought for her favors, but she has usually managed to play one against the other to her own advantage. She did a bit up the river once, and has had a genuine fear of the bars ever since. Kilpatrick located Mame and brought her to headquarters."

"And she confessed to being implicated?" guessed Gordon-Taylor breathlessly.

"She did *not*. We grilled her unmercifully, and by threatening to give her another stretch behind the bars we finally loosened her tongued. It seems that Eddie Lewis, alias 'Baron' Lewis, was greatly enamored of Mame, and was constantly urging her to marry him. Mame frankly avows that her only reason for rejecting his proposals was the fact that he wasn't a big enough crook to support her in the style to which she was accustomed!

"Lewis is a mere tyro at crime; he peddles heroin, steals Liberty Bonds, and used to run a shady pool-room. Mame is acquainted with the biggest and best in the business, and was therefore inclined to despise Lewis and his modest exploits. There is caste among thieves, you know. Lewis became so importunate, however, that she finally told him quite frankly that unless he showed himself capable of turning a real substantial trick he was not to bother her in future.

"That was about a month ago. Lewis disappeared from his old haunts, and Mame didn't see him again until last week. He pumped and quizzed her to see what she knew or thought about the Ordway affair, and she was compelled to confess her ignorance of it. Then he smirked and posed, and finally showed her a pair of cuff-links encrusted with diamonds."

"Shaped like a cart-wheel, with spokes and a huge diamond hub," described Gordon-Taylor glibly.

"Right," acknowledged Corson. "He told her he had turned his big trick—the Ordway affair. Mame was incredulous, but was compelled to believe him when he gave her the diamond-and-sapphire ring and showed her a picture of it in a newspaper which carried a detailed and illustrated article on the stolen jewels.

"He insisted on her accompanying him to Chicago, and Mame was nothing loth, provided she received her share of the loot. They were to leave to-morrow, provided the 'Baron' could turn enough of the jewelry into cash to keep them in funds until they reached the Windy City, where the bulk of the collection could be disposed of with less risk."

"And then you arrested Lewis?" put in Gordon-Taylor, who could hardly wait for Corson to finish.

"We did. And Lewis confessed!"

"What?" exclaimed Gordon-Taylor and Fenwick in the same breath.

"Yes—he confessed, but he refused to disclose the whereabouts of the jewelry; refused to tell how he had managed the affair; wouldn't incriminate any one else, and wouldn't sign a confession. He insisted that we had no real evidence, and that he could easily repudiate his oral confession later on. He was immensely proud of himself, talked at great length of his ability and shrewdness, and pointed out that the 'skirt' was the one flaw in all his plans.

"Occasionally he would lapse into sullen silence, but a reference to his previous record and a veiled hint that he was only a member of a gang working under another man's direction would start him off again. Then he'd boast and brag, and reluctantly add some slight detail to convince us that he knew whereof he spoke. For instance, he pointed out that while he had taken the jewels, he had left Ordway the casket in which they were kept, and that it could be found in a storage room on the upper floor of the Ordway mansion.

"Kilpatrick investigated, and, sure enough, he found the jewel casket behind a pile of trunks. Lewis is the strangest conglomeration of vanity, bombast, and brag I ever encountered."

"The case seems quite complete," observed Fenwick. "At any rate, Mr. Gordon-Taylor will not require my services now."

"I hardly think he will, Charlie," beamed the chief, plainly elated at Kilpatrick's success. "That is," he hastened to add, as if fearing to hurt Fenwick's feelings, "unless you would like to help us ascertain the location of the jewels."

"Exactly what I was about to suggest," seconded the man from Diffany's.

"I'd rather not interfere with 'third degree' work," smiled Fenwick. "It doesn't appeal to me. There are one or two points about the case as you have related it that still puzzle me, however, and I intend investigating them for my own satisfaction. Has Lewis ever been 'mugged,' chief?"

"Mugged and finger-printed," answered Corson.

"Let me have a picture of him, will you?"

Corson was somewhat puzzled, but readily agreed.

"I'll mail it to-night, Charlie. I'll ring you up, too, and let you know how we make out with the Baron. Coming, Mr.—ah—*Gordon*-Taylor?"

Gordon-Taylor arose and shook hands with Fenwick.

"Sorry, old man," he drawled. "I'm glad, too, of course, but you seem to have been bowled out without decent innings."

"Fortunes of war," responded Fenwick, smilingly. "Perhaps I'll score a century the next time. No," seeing Gordon-Taylor about to frame a question, "I'm not English, and I don't play cricket."

"You anticipated my question."

"I sometimes do that. Don't I, chief?"

"You are continually surprising me, Charlie," agreed Corson.

"Thanks for the advertisement," Fenwick grinned. "I'm going to try to keep it up! Good-by."

Corson and Gordon-Taylor bade him good-by and left.

There was a mischievous twinkle in Fenwick's blue eyes as the door closed on the pair. "Yep," he said half aloud, "I'm going to try to keep it up."

He immediately telephoned the legal department of the telephone company in New York City and made a request for the tickets written to cover toll calls from Madison Square 10987, Ordway's residence telephone. He exacted a promise that the original tickets would be mailed him at once. This arrangement completed, he resumed his routine duties as wire-chief until it was time for him to leave the terminal room.

The mail at the central office the next morning included two envelopes for Fenwick. One contained the telephone toll tickets he had borrowed from the telephone company; the other, a Rogues' Gallery photograph of Baron Lewis. He gave the photograph a cursory glance and placed it in the drawer of his desk. The toll tickets interested him to a greater degree, and he gave these careful attention.

There were only six tickets; three small

yellow ones and three larger white tickets. The small tickets were dated March 2d, 3d, and 4th, respectively, and each indicated that a call had been made to Newtown 8976. A memorandum pinned to the three tickets for Fenwick's information read: "Newtown 8976 is the residence telephone of Geoffrey Lloyd."

The three large, white tickets caused Fenwick to smile. They were what are known as "Collect" messages; that is, they covered calls *to* Ordway's telephone on which the charges had been reversed for collection, presumably with the permission of some one at the Ordway residence, since a central office operator will not otherwise reverse charges. Furthermore, the tickets covered what are known as "report charges."

A wise and far-sighted government had assumed control of all telephone and telegraph companies during a military emergency, and had seen fit to exercise its authority in establishing some new classes of toll service. Prominent among these was the "report charge." If a person made a telephone call, requesting the operator to let him talk with a particular person at a certain address, the charge for the service would be somewhat higher than if the call were filed by giving the telephone number of the station with which a connection was desired. If, however, the particular person could not be reached, and a report to that effect was given the calling party, only a nominal charge known as a "report charge" would be made.

The large white tickets gave more information than the small yellow ones. The first one was dated and timed March 1, 10 A.M., and covered a call made by Mr. Smith at Jacksonville. Mr. Smith had wished to converse with Mr. Ordway. A note in code on the reverse of the ticket read: "U—A.M.—¾," indicating to Fenwick that the operator had reported to Mr. Smith that Ordway was not expected at his home until the morning of March 4.

The second ticket showed that a Mr. Jones had telephoned to Mr. Ordway from Baltimore on March 2 at 4 P.M. The third ticket showed that Mr. Browne had called Mr. Ordway from Philadelphia on March 3 at 8.40 A.M. These tickets bore the same information in code on the reverse as did the first one.

Fenwick could not repress a chuckle at the significance of the names Smith, Jones, and Browne. The attempted deception was too obvious. Moreover, the three calls, taken in their chronological order, plainly indicated that they had been made by some one *en route* from Jacksonville to Philadelphia, or perhaps to New York.

He called Ordway's office, and was surprised to learn that the millionaire had not visited it since his return from the South, having been confined to his home with an attack of the gout. Fenwick then called Ordway's home, and in a brief conversation established the fact that "Diamond Jack" had no knowledge of the three "report charges," nor of Messrs. Smith, Jones, and Browne.

Fenwick concluded that the man who had perpetrated the robbery had probably been on the ground in Palm Beach, where he could observe Ordway, and obtain information concerning him. Knowing that the millionaire would not go North until a month later, he had placed confederates in the Ordway mansion, and had then adopted the expedient of filing telephone calls to Ordway in New York at each stop-over on the way to that city. The report given him in each case had undoubtedly satisfied him that his plans had not miscarried.

Fenwick picked up the telephone and called Newtown 8976, the number shown on the small yellow tickets.

"Hello!" a pleasant feminine voice announced.

"Is Mr. Lloyd at home?" Fenwick inquired.

"No, sir. He is at work at the factory. This is Mrs. Lloyd speaking."

"My name is Fenwick, Mrs. Lloyd. I am with the telephone company, and am trying to learn who it was that telephoned you from the residence of Mr. Ordway in New York on the second, third, and fourth days of this month."

"It was my brother, sir. There is nothing wrong, is there?" The woman seemed anxious.

"No, indeed. Your brother's name

"Jimson. He was Mr. Ordway's butler for a short time. He's been staying here with me since he lost his situation, and has been greatly worried about the newspaper accounts of the robbery."

"May I speak with him, Mrs. Lloyd?"

"Certainly. Please hold the wire."

In a few moments a deferential voice announced, "Jimson speaking, sir."

"Jimson, if you have nothing better to do, I'd like you to visit me to-day. It will be to your advantage, I am sure, and will perhaps relieve your mind of worry. I'll see that you are properly compensated for your time and trouble."

"Thank you, sir—I should like to talk with some one. Where shall I find you?"

Fenwick advised him of the best method for reaching Springfield and the central office building, and Jimson promised to start at once.

Charlie then called up Corson.

"Any new developments, chief?"

"Nothing startling. We gave Lewis a mild preliminary grilling to-day, but could not get a word out of him by threats. Then we resumed our previous method of attack—wounding his vanity. Deprecated his lack of ability, and hinted that he was only a supernumerary in the little drama.

"This enraged him and caused him to lose his temper. He pointed out that the Ordway home was locked up when Gordon-Taylor visited it, and asked whether we knew who had locked it. We admitted our ignorance, whereupon he smiled knowingly and suggested that we try the largest key on the key-ring we had taken from him when he was arrested. I sent Kilpatrick up to the house with the key, and, sure enough, it fitted perfectly!"

"H-m. Another link, eh? Was Lewis employed by the telephone company?"

"So far as we are able to check up his record, he was never employed legitimately by any one."

"Was Ordway's secretary able to identify him as the man who called to repair the telephone?"

"No. The secretary states positively that Lewis was not the man. I am inclined to believe the bogus repair-man was another member of the gang."

"That sounds logical. What description does the secretary furnish?"

"He says the man had dark hair; Lewis is almost entirely bald. The telephone man was smooth-shaven, while the Baron sports a mustache. Lewis is about thirty-eight years old; the secretary places the other fellow's age at about twenty-seven. There were a number of other slight differences, but those I have mentioned are the most significant."

"I see. Have you been able to determine where Lewis spent his time during the month previous to the robbery?"

"We have not."

"Well, chief, I hope to be of assistance in recovering the stolen articles, unless your Mr. Kilpatrick beats me to it. You'll hear from me again shortly. Good-by."

Fenwick telephoned Ordway a second time.

"Fenwick, Mr. Ordway—yes, Chief Corson's assistant. Sorry to bother you again."

"Don't apologize. What is it?" grunted the millionaire.

"I wanted to ask whether you made the acquaintance of any strangers at Palm Beach who you now have reason to suspect were not absolutely on the level."

"No."

"Did you meet any telephone men, so far as you know?"

"No—I didn't. Hold on—there was the young fellow who operated the switchboard at the hotel. His name is George. Fine, obliging sort of youngster."

"Did you do much telephoning?"

"Lots. Run my office by phone when I'm away from it. That telephone man gave me first-rate service, too."

"Smooth-shaven, with dark hair?"

"Yes. Wasn't he straight?"

"I don't know. We can tell better in another day."

"If he wasn't—get him! That's all. G'-by." The gouty millionaire hung up.

Fenwick went back to work whistling. He felt that he had made substantial progress. Later in the day Jimson called, looked at the photograph of Lewis, and spent a profitable half hour in the terminal room. When Jimson left his face had lost

its worried expression, and Fenwick was whistling more blithely than ever.

He filed a long-distance call to the Hotel Palma, Palm Beach. There was some delay until a circuit was available, but he was finally rewarded with a perfect connection, and his three-minute conversation with the hotel manager was not disappointing.

Then followed calls in quick succession to the telephone companies in Philadelphia and New York, and when he had finished talking Fenwick felt that he had established his case.

Later in the day Chief Corson called him on the telephone.

"We've tried all the old stunts on Lewis," he advised, "but he's stubborn as a mule. We can't get a word out of him about the disposition he made of the jewels."

"Of course you can't, chief. Better listen to me, now. On Hope Street, in Hoboken, there lives a family named Gaston. The son, whose name is George, has not been home for some time. He is smooth-shaven and has dark hair."

"The telephone repair-man?" angled Corson, immediately interested.

"Perhaps. With the meager description I have given, do you think the remarkable Mr. Kilpatrick can determine George Gaston's present whereabouts and bring him to headquarters?"

"Professional jealousy, Charlie? Yes—I think Kil can do that little thing. What will we arrest him for?"

"I don't care—vagrancy, if you like. When you get him, let me know, and—release Baron Lewis."

"Here—hold on!" shouted Corson, but Fenwick hung up the receiver.

Two days later Corson called him.

"We've got Gaston," he announced.

"Have you released Lewis?"

"Not much, young man. You come in and tell your story."

"On the next train, chief." Fenwick replaced the receiver.

That afternoon he called at Corson's office. The chief wore a puzzled but expectant smile. Fenwick took the chair he offered.

"Mind if I have Kilpatrick in on this? He made both arrests, you know."

"Not at all," agreed Fenwick, and the chief pressed a buzzer-button. To the old doorman who answered he said, "Kilpatrick, please." The doorman withdrew, and Kilpatrick presently entered the office. He, too, was a young man; certainly not over thirty.

"Meet Mr. Fenwick, Mr. Kilpatrick."

The two shook hands appraisingly.

"Mr. Kilpatrick is the only college man on my force," smiled the chief. "I've concluded that a college education is no handicap, even for a sleuth, since he's been working for me."

"I'm sure it's not," remarked Fenwick.

"Sit down, Kil," invited Corson. "I want you to tell Fenwick how you found your man."

"Not much of a story," began Kilpatrick lazily. "Went to Hoboken, located the Gaston home in a shabby portion of the town, and quizzed the neighbors. Gaston has a mother and sister; his father is dead. The sister is a night telephone operator in Jersey City.

"Gaston's been away from home about a year. Just returned. Told the proprietor of a café near his home that he intended sailing next week as purser on a South American steamship. I hung around his home all day. He didn't leave the house until dark. Then he took a tube train for up-town New York. I followed him, and when he left the train at Thirty-Third Street I nabbed him and brought him here."

"Have you shown him to Ordway's secretary?" inquired Fenwick.

"We have," responded the chief. "He thinks Gaston is the man who repaired the telephone, but says he paid little attention to the fellow, and could not swear to it. While he's positive Lewis is not the man, he's not nearly as sure that Gaston is."

"What does Gaston say?"

"He says we're crazy," chuckled Corson. Kilpatrick and Fenwick both smiled.

"Have you kept the two men apart?"

"You bet. Now tell us the story."

"All right, chief. From certain telephone toll messages charged against the phone in the Ordway mansion I determined

that a man who called himself Smith in Jacksonville, Jones in Baltimore, and Browne in Philadelphia had called the Ordway residence at intervals of time that indicated the ordinary stages of a journey from Palm Beach to New York.

" Through unusual familiarity with the postmaster general's new telephone rates this man was enabled to keep in touch, to a certain extent, with the progress of his plans for stealing the Ordway jewels. The ingenious manner in which he had turned the telephone to his advantage throughout the case indicated an intimate knowledge of the business.

" I called the Hotel Palma, Palm Beach, by long-distance, and established the fact that their telephone switchboard operator had resigned and left the resort on March 1. He was a man named George Gaston, and had been employed there about a year. Previously he had been a public switchboard operator for the telephone company at Philadelphia, and he had shown the Hotel Palma people a recommendation to that effect.

" There was a lapse of one year between the time he left the Philadelphia company and was engaged by the hotel. Gaston claimed that during this period he had been ill. I checked the telephone people in Philadelphia, and learned that he had left their employ to take a position with the telephone company in New York."

" A rolling stone, eh?" commented Corson.

" He was," nodded Fenwick significantly. " The manager of public telephones in this city informed me that Gaston had appropriated a day's receipts at the public switchboard where he was an attendant and, abandoning the switchboard, had disappeared."

" Old offender, then," put in Corson. " He couldn't change his name at Palm Beach, because the only recommendation he had was an old one which referred to him as George Gaston."

" Exactly. Now, here we have a man who was a switchboard operator at a fashionable hotel. He established telephone connections for guests between their rooms and the outside world. In performing this work he had every opportunity in the world to ' listen in ' on conversations, and to acquire a knowledge of many intimate details regarding his patrons.

" In the case of Ordway, who stayed at the hotel throughout the winter, and who admits that he practically runs his office by telephone, the data the operator could acquire in this manner was practically unlimited. Moreover, he had an opportunity to study Ordway, his voice, mannerism, *et cetera*. He probably overheard some reference to Ordway's method of depositing his jewels with Diffany's, and immediately conceived the plan for the robbery. Does that sound reasonable?"

Corson and Kilpatrick nodded affirmatively.

" Very well. He ran across a butler named Jimson who had lost his position. Gaston posed as Ordway, engaged the man as a butler, and sent him to New York with authority and funds to engage additional servants and to open the mansion. Then Gaston had telegraphed the burglar-alarm and telephone companies, so as not to excite suspicion. He filed those telegrams and paid for them at the very switchboard he was operating."

" This is interesting," Corson admitted as Fenwick paused. Kilpatrick seemed amazed at the method in which Fenwick reconstructed the scheme.

" Gaston then resigned his position and went to Jacksonville," continued Fenwick. " Through a ' person-to-person ' telephone call for Ordway at New York he established the fact that everything had progressed favorably, since the operator advised him that Mr. Ordway was not expected home until the 4th of March.

" This was what he had informed Jimson, and what Jimson had told the operator. In order to make sure that the scheme of opening Ordway's residence had not subsequently been detected, Gaston filed similar calls, and received similar reports at Baltimore and Philadelphia, on his way to New York."

" Some stunt!" exclaimed Corson.

" He has brains," conceded Kilpatrick.

" Indeed he has. Arrived in New York, he dressed the part of a telephone repair-

man, arrived at Ordway's offices with a kit of tools, and bulldozed the secretary into permitting him to make repairs to a line and instrument in Ordway's private office that were undoubtedly in good order. The supreme nerve of the fellow is evidenced by the manner in which he succeeded in getting Diffany's to add the Holcomb necklace to the jewels that were delivered to Jimson, and which the unsuspecting butler received in good faith.

" If you will keep in mind the fact that Gaston had countless opportunities to study Ordway's manner of speech, the fact that he succeeded in fooling Gordon - Taylor over the telephone is no accomplishment at all. I have heard Ordway's voice on only two occasions, but I believe I could give a fair imitation of it myself."

" He's an old bear," Corson scowled.

" He sure makes a noise like one. Well, that evening, after the jewels had been delivered, Mr. Gaston, suitably attired, goes to the Ordway home and tells Jimson to dismiss all the servants with an extra month's wages, as he has decided to go abroad."

" How do you know all about Jimson?" demanded Corson.

" I talked with him," Fenwick replied quickly. " The telephone found him for me. When the servants had left the house Gaston packed the jewels, locked up, and skipped — probably for Hoboken, preparatory to getting this job as a purser. Once in South America the stuff would be readily turned into cash, and he would be on Easy Street."

" How about the jewels?" asked Corson and Kilpatrick almost in unison.

" Search me. I've shown you that it was a one man job, and told you who the man is. Lewis is posing merely to impress Mame Wagner. I don't know where he fits in. Let Mr. Kilpatrick put my story up to him and see what can be learned."

" Go ahead and try, Kil," ordered Corson. " I'm not satisfied yet that he isn't involved."

Kilpatrick left the room.

" Well, Charlie, you've scored off the official force! Sure you've got a real case?"

" Certainly. Jimson can identify Gaston, and so can Ordway. But the essential matter is the recovery of the stolen property. If Gaston hasn't disposed of it, give me a chance at him."

" All right, Charlie."

The two held an animated conversation regarding the various phases of the case until Kilpatrick returned, wearing a broad smile.

" He caved, chief," chuckled Kilpatrick. " What do you think the idiot wants us to do? Keep the newspapers from knowing he didn't do the job! That dame has sure got his number." Which convinced Fenwick that even a college graduate can quickly acquire the vernacular of a real " bull."

" Well?" queried Corson.

" Lewis met Gaston after the trick had been turned," related Kilpatrick. " Gaston needed money badly; his trip North and the wages he had paid the servants had probably left him ' broke.' Lewis knew Gaston several years ago, and couldn't refrain from bragging about holding up a bank messenger boy and stealing two thousand dollars' worth of Liberty Bonds. That was Gaston's opportunity, and he sold the Baron a couple of pieces of the jewelry for five hundred dollars.

" Lewis wasn't taking any chances on being stung with phoney ice, and in order to convince him that it was really from the Ordway collection he returned to the mansion with the Baron and, unlocking the door, took him into the house and explained some of the details of the crime.

" Lewis bought the jewelry for cash, on condition that Gaston would give him the key to the place. He vaguely intimated that he had hoped to discover and appropriate some articles of value. He had also seized on the incident as a possible aid in establishing himself with Mame. He's crazy about that woman."

" He must be," assented Corson. " What shall we do now, Charlie?"

" Get the jewels."

" Yes—but how?"

" Give Gaston a chance to communicate with the outside. Maybe he'll show his hand."

"You mean the telephone?"

"Perhaps. Try it."

"We will. Kil, have Gaston brought into the small witness-room. Pump him for a few minutes, and then have the switchboard operator ring you up on the witness-room extension telephone and say that I want you. That will call attention to the telephone.

"Tell Gaston you'll be back in five minutes, and point out that there's an armed officer in the corridor outside the door. Then leave the room, have the operator supervise the extension telephone from the switchboard, and learn to whom he talks and what he says."

Kilpatrick departed on the errand. Fenwick and Corson gossiped until his return.

"No use, chief," announced Kilpatrick as he reentered the office. "He didn't go near the phone."

"Of course he wouldn't," Charlie pointed out. "Gaston has had too much experience with switchboards to be ignorant of the fact that conversations on extension stations can be observed. Is he still in the witness-room?"

"Yes," nodded Kilpatrick. "Thought I'd leave him there until after I reported to the chief."

"He doesn't know me, chief," Fenwick suggested. "Throw me into the witness-room, as though I'm being held as a suspect for something. I'll try to strike up an acquaintance with him."

"All right, Charlie. Put on your hat. Take him in, Kil."

Kilpatrick ushered Fenwick out of the office and down a narrow corridor to a point where a plainclothesman sat facing a door. Throwing this door open, he pushed Fenwick violently into the room.

"Sit down and keep your mouth shut," Kilpatrick ordered harshly. "If you feel like talking, I'll listen to you in a little while."

Kilpatrick slammed the door from the outside. Fenwick looked about him. The windows of the room were iron-grated. There was a table on which was a telephone. Behind the table was a swivel chair. There were also two benches, each about six feet long. The walls were bare.

On one of the benches sat Gaston. He was dark-haired and smooth-shaven, wore a blue serge suit, tan shoes, a soft linen collar and bow tie. His features were pleasant enough, but a weak chin and petulant lips seemed to Fenwick to furnish fair warning that the man was not one to be trusted. To one less observant he might appear to be a clerk or bookkeeper in modest circumstances, with nothing to distinguish him from thousands of his brethren.

Fenwick took a newspaper from his pocket, unfolded it deliberately, and hid himself behind it. For the next five minutes the room was silent, save for the occasional crackling of the newspaper as Fenwick turned a page. Finally Gaston sauntered over to him.

"Got a cigarette, friend?"

"No, I have not," answered Charlie.

"They searched you and took 'em away, huh?" he smiled knowingly.

"No, they haven't searched me—yet," answered Fenwick, returning the smile. "I never use 'em. Me for the old jimmy-pipe."

"Too strong," objected Gaston. "What brings you here?"

"That fat-head, Kilpatrick," prevaricated Charlie. "I passed a twenty-dollar bill I thought was O. K., and it was a counterfeit."

"Thinks you're shovin' the queer, eh?" quizzed Gaston.

Fenwick concluded that Gaston meant to test his knowledge of the jargon of criminals.

"What?" he answered blankly.

"Thinks you're shovin' the queer, I said," repeated Gaston.

"I beg pardon?"

"He thinks you are putting phoney money in circulation," explained the erstwhile Mr. Ordway.

"Yes—I dare say. The ignorance of police officials is astounding. I work in Gordon's Department Store. Window dresser. Been there for five years. I found the bill in my pay envelope. Just as soon as my boss gets down here they'll have to let me go. It's all a mistake."

"Don't you believe it," retorted Gaston. "These 'bulls' like to make records. They

framed me up, too, but I can't get away until they get some dope from my home town. Say, I wonder if you'd do me a favor?"

"If I can," agreed Fenwick doubtfully.

"I gotta girl over in Hoboken, and she'll be kinda worried about me. Would you mail a note to her for me when they let you go?"

"Sure," assented Charlie.

"Gee, I haven't anything to write it on."

"I've got a fountain pen and a note-book," volunteered Fenwick, proffering the pen and proceeding to tear a sheet from the note-book.

"Thanks." Gaston accepted the paper and pen and retired to the table, where he spent ten minutes scrawling a note, frequently pausing as if at a loss as to how to proceed. He finally completed the note, folded it twice, and passed it to Fenwick.

"Know this gal since I went to school. Used to write love letters to her in a little code we invented. I'm using it in this note, 'cause you never can tell what's going to happen. When you get out, get an envelope and address it to 'Miss Lillian Gaston, 24 Hope Street, Hoboken.' Then paste a stamp on it and give it to Uncle Sam. I'll make it all right with you some day."

"Sure," responded Fenwick, pocketing the note. "I hope they let you go soon, too."

Kilpatrick suddenly threw the door open.

"What are you fellows up to?" he barked.

"Just talkin'," answered Fenwick.

"Well, quit it! You, there"—pointing to Fenwick—"come into the chief's office. He wants to see you."

Gaston directed a surreptitious wink at Charlie as the two left the witness-room.

"How did you make out?" Kilpatrick asked as they walked down the corridor.

"Don't know yet. Wait till we reach the chief's office."

"What luck, Charlie?" was Corson's question as they entered the office.

"Gaston told me he'd been framed, and said there was a girl over in Hoboken who would be worried about him. I convinced him that a mistake had been made in my case, and that it was only a question of a few minutes before I'd be released.

"He wrote a note to the girl, and I'm supposed to mail it. I imagine the girl is really his sister, since I am to address an envelope to 'Miss Lillian Gaston, 24 Hope Street, Hoboken,' enclose the note, and mail it. He says it's in code. Let's have a look."

He produced the note from his pocket and spread it out on the desk. The three men examined it eagerly. At the first glance Fenwick started imperceptibly, but the others were too intent on reading the strange missive to notice it. He felt inclined to laugh, however, at Corson's crestfallen expression and Kilpatrick's evident disappointment.

The note read:

DEAR LIL:

Get By. See if you CL. at Hs. You know WX. C. at BUR. (G. B. A. from ck.) without D. I want R's Wdr. EK for W. CAB. in my BUR. O. CAB. and T. T. things they will be LK to your Dpst. Bx. C. O. Mp.—IDW.—bl.

They don't AC in this PL and you CC yet.

GEORGE.

"Good Lord!" ejaculated Corson. "What d'ye make of it, Kil?"

Kilpatrick shook his head doubtfully.

"It's Arabic to me. Of course the girl is his sister. Better give it to Bannon to decipher."

"I think so. Bannon's my one best bet on codes and ciphers," the chief explained to Fenwick. "Take it in to him, Kil."

He handed the note to Kilpatrick.

"Just a moment, chief," interrupted Fenwick. "If you don't mind, I'd like you to give Bannon a copy of the note, and Mr. Kilpatrick and I will see what we can do with the original."

"Fine," applauded Corson.

He copied the cryptic message on a sheet of note-paper and gave the original to Fenwick.

"You boys may work at my desk," he offered. "I'm going in with Bannon."

"We're going right out, chief," advised Fenwick. "Get your hat, Mr. Kilpatrick."

"Going to hand me another jolt, Charlie? Well, good luck to you!" But the chief of detectives did not seem wholly

pleased with himself as he watched the pair depart.

" Where to?" asked Kilpatrick as they reached the street.

" Hoboken," answered Charlie. " You'll have to be the guide."

Arrived in Hoboken, they visited a telegraph office, and Fenwick sealed Gaston's note in a yellow envelope and addressed it as he had been directed. Then he handed the envelope to a counter clerk.

" Please have this delivered by messenger this afternoon," he directed, and prepaid the delivery charges.

The two men left the telegraph office and proceeded to a café on Hope Street, almost directly opposite the Gaston home. They established themselves at a small, round table in a side room, ordering drinks and cigars. From a window facing the street they were able to observe the house across the way. After fifteen minutes of patient waiting they saw a uniformed messenger deliver the note. A rather drab young girl in a pink kimono held the door half open while she signed for the message.

" Gaston's sister, I guess," commented Kilpatrick.

Fenwick nodded. The girl slammed the door as the messenger placed the receipt blank in his cap and ran down the steps. For half an hour the two smoked in silence, their gaze directed at the Gaston home and awaiting further developments.

Finally the girl emerged, dressed for the street. Kilpatrick jumped to his feet, but Fenwick, grasping his arm, detained him.

" No hurry, old man," he cautioned. " Give her a fair start. We won't lose her."

They watched until she was almost out of sight, and then left the café, following her leisurely. The girl went directly to the Hudson Tube Station and boarded a train for down-town New York. They entered the same train just as the automatic doors were closing.

At the Hudson Terminal in New York she ran up the stairs and proceeded to a parcel checking booth. She opened the small patent-leather purse she carried and withdrew a white ticket which she handed the attendant. He disappeared for a moment, and then returned with what was evidently a box wrapped in brown paper. This he delivered to the girl.

" Now's the time, Kilpatrick," whispered Fenwick. " Go get her!"

Kilpatrick did. The girl gave him a tremendous tongue-lashing, and a curious, jostling crowd congregated, its sympathies entirely with the prisoner. It was soon dispersed, however, by a uniformed officer who recognized Kilpatrick and whisked the girl into the information booth while the detective obtained a taxicab on Cortlandt Street.

Five minutes later Fenwick, Kilpatrick, and Miss Gaston were on their way to headquarters. The girl was sullenly silent during the ride.

Kilpatrick turned the girl over to a matron, and the two entered Corson's office, Fenwick carrying the brown paper parcel, which he deposited on the chief's desk.

" How did Bannon make out, chief?" inquired Charlie.

The chief shook his head.

" He's still working on the note. What have you there?" indicating the package.

" Search me," grinned Kilpatrick sheepishly. " This man Fenwick is the fastest worker I ever saw."

The chief clipped the twine with which the package was tied and removed the paper. He found a white enameled cabinet or chest with a brass lock. The chest was locked. Kilpatrick produced a key-ring, and after several unsuccessful efforts found a small one that turned in the lock. He threw back the lid dramatically, and an involuntary exclamation escaped each of them.

Thrown carelessly into the chest in no apparent order were the missing Ordway jewels!

Corson turned on the electric light above his desk. The light fell directly on the cabinet and revealed a picture of barbaric splendor—pigeon's blood rubies reflected in the sparkle of huge blue-white diamonds, the cold beauty of the latter resenting the warmth of gorgeous fire-opals. Here and there was a touch of blue or emerald, but the white and red gems predominated.

There were rings, scarf pins, cuff links, and other pieces galore. The newspapers had only slightly exaggerated the value, and

had not even done justice to the beauty of the Ordway collection.

The chief whistled softly.

"Some reward coming to you on this, Charlie. It was a clever trick. How on earth did you do it?"

"We sent the note and followed Miss Gaston. She led us to the jewels."

"Weren't you taking a chance?"

"No."

"Did you know what the note contained?"

"I did. Get the duplicate from Bannon and I'll show you."

Kilpatrick left the room, and soon returned with the copy. Fenwick sat at Corson's desk and wrote above each coded word or abbreviation the meaning. When he had finished he handed it to Corson. It read like this:

DEAR LIL:

Get busy. See if you can't locate voucher at house. You know which one is wanted. Call at Bureau (get better address from check) without delay. I want rings withdrawn. Emergency key for white cabinet in my bureau. Open cabinet and temporarily transfer things they will be looking for to your deposit box. Cut out mouthpiece—I don't want trouble.

They don't allow calls at this place and you can't call yet. GEORGE.

"That code is a new one to me," confessed the chief. "How does it work?"

"It's nothing more than a series of contractions and abbreviations to indicate words and phrases. For instance, 'By' means 'busy'; 'C.L.' means 'Can't locate,' *et cetera*."

"But how is it that you happened to know it?" asked Kilpatrick.

"Gaston had several years' experience in the traffic departments of two telephone companies. His sister is a telephone operator. The abbreviations are used by practically all telephone companies in writing tickets and memoranda covering toll calls. I recognized it the minute I saw the word 'By,' our abbreviation for 'busy.' If you make a telephone call and the line you call is busy, the operator writes 'By' on the ticket to indicate that the connection was not completed, and that no charge is to be made."

"Some stunt!" murmured Kilpatrick admiringly.

"It was ingenious," admitted Fenwick. "Gaston's sister evidently knew the parcel of jewels had been checked, but she did not know where. He merely suggested how she could find out, provided she located the parcel room check or voucher, since the address was printed on it. Then, too, he had no code to indicate jewels on jewelry, but the list of abbreviations includes 'R' for 'ring.' Gaston wrote it 'R's'—rings, you see.

"And notice his method of cautioning her not to talk about the affair: 'C. O. Mp.,' meaning 'Cut-out mouthpiece.' There was a vocabulary of several hundred words and phrases at his disposal. Any telephone girl who has worked at a toll-board can give you dozens of others, such as: 'AB,' meaning 'any one who can talk business,' 'AG' for 'try again,' and 'LW' for 'leave word.' I doubt, however, whether the code was ever used for criminal purposes before."

"It sure was a telephone case," remarked Corson.

"And it's been a real pleasure to work with Mr. Fenwick," said Kilpatrick enthusiastically.

"It always is," smiled the chief. "Going to stay here while we have Gaston brought in?"

"No. I feel a little bit mean about the way I fooled him. You see, he trusted me implicitly."

"So I notice. Wrote his note in code!"

"That was for your benefit, in case you took it from me."

"I think you're chicken-hearted," ridiculed the chief.

Fenwick nodded seriously.

"I admitted Gaston's cleverness," he said, "and didn't mind matching wits with him, but I always dislike the finish of a case of this kind. There's his mother, you know. Oh, I don't mean to grow maudlin and sob over it, but it's a mean business."

The chief nodded understandingly.

"Going to quit it, Charlie?"

"No," answered Fenwick promptly, "I'm going back to Springfield to work on another case!"

The Riders of Ramapo Pass

by Dean L. Heffernan

CHAPTER I.

A DOUBTFUL WELCOME.

THERE was a time in the West when hard men lived hard—and died hard! The mountains and ravines were pouring out their long-hoarded treasures with reckless prodigality, and the lure of gold, like a magnet, drew creatures of every description and nationality. So rapid was the invasion of eager fortune-hunters that law and order, unable to keep pace, were left far behind.

On the strength of a mere rumor, towns sprang up overnight, flourished feverishly and briefly, and expired. Fortunes were hourly lost and won on the turn of a card. A hasty word produced a hasty funeral. Men came to accept strangers at their face value; nor did they inquire too closely into the past life and antecedents of even their best friends. Every one was a law unto himself. The long-barreled six-shooter was the accepted judge, jury, and executioner in all controversies, and the slowest of tongue, the quickest of arm, the surest of eye, were the longest of life.

It was an everyday affair for a man to be a beggar at morn, a millionaire at noon, and a corpse at night!

The Red Valley stage, rocking and swaying, bowled down the steep, rutty road and came to a jarring halt before the "Silver Star" amid a swirling, scurrying cloud of dust. For a second or two it paused, with horses panting. Then old Bailey, the driver, shouted and cracked his whip, the four horses strained forward, and the next minute the lumbering vehicle careened around a bend in the road and disappeared into the forest.

It left a stranger behind it, standing in the road beside his baggage.

He calmly looked over his surroundings. Then, with perfect ease, he lifted his heavy wooden box by its rope handle and advanced to the group of men who had been more or less disinterestedly watching him from the low porch of the town's combined saloon, post-office, and general store.

A miner who was distinguished by his height, his unusual slenderness of waist, and a long scar which drew up the left corner of his lip into a repulsive grin, eyed him closely from the front of the group. The new arrival set down his baggage and addressed him.

"Is this Ramapo, friend?" he asked quietly.

The miner let his eyes rove superciliously over his questioner. He saw a young man almost as tall as himself, with curly black hair. His features were clean-cut, his figure straight, and his shoulders broad and powerful. He wore the comfortable, careless western costume of that period, now dusty and mud-splashed from traveling; but he carried no pistol at his hip. Except for an indefinable air of breeding about him, and a soft drawl in his speech that proclaimed him as a Southerner, there was little to distinguish him from any member of the group before which he stood.

"You gits a bull's-eye, Curly," the tall man answered, making no effort to conceal the sneer in his voice. "This is the great an' in-famous metropolis o' Ramapo, itself! An', bein' one of its leadin' citizens an' misfortunes, I hereby welcomes you, an' invites you to plant your stakes in this fertile landscape an' decorate the scenery with your charmin' personality."

There was a little snicker behind him.

"Thanks," the stranger answered coolly, his gray eyes, under his broad-brimmed hat, looking steadily into the other's. "Evidently Ramapo has some curious attractions."

"The keenness o' your observation is astonishin'," the other replied, his face flushing and his eyes narrowing. "Ramapo has special attractions to induce the weary traveler to locate here, the most convincin' o' which is a good supply o' lead, forty-four caliber, which it hastens to offer to them as has command o' language, but no control of it."

"I suppose you're a newcomer then," the curly-haired man remarked evenly. Then, seeing the other's scowl darken, he added quietly: "Perhaps you can direct me to Major Dudley's house."

The other's face instantly became suspicious. "What do you want there?" he asked.

"I reckon you needn't worry about that, friend," the stranger answered pleasantly. "Now, if you will kindly point out the major's house to me, I won't take up any more of your undoubtedly valuable time."

For a moment the other eyed him angrily. Then he smiled. "Why, yes, I'll do that, Curly," he said slowly. "I al'ys endeavors to prevent the wayfarer gittin' lost in the mazes o' this here metropolis. It's that one yonder that you see stickin' above the trees at the bend in the road."

The stranger looked up the road in the direction indicated.

"There are three white ones there," he said. "From your vivid description, it might be either."

The ugly grin deepened on the miner's face. "I never was no hand at disseminatin' description," he drawled. "The domicile to which I refers, Curly, is the one with the broken winder in front."

With careless unconcern yet astonishing speed he drew his revolver and fired. From where they stood they could all see a pane in a front window of the farthest house collapse. The tinkle of breaking glass came to their ears.

A loud guffaw broke from the group. Passers-by stopped for an instant, saw what had happened, shrugged their shoulders and went on about their business. The miner with a mock bow thrust his revolver back into its holster.

"That ought to help you locate it, Curly. Think you'll be able to find your way there now, or do I gotta send a guide along with you so's you won't git lost?"

The stranger gazed toward the house a moment, then turned to his informer. His face preserved its pleasant expression; but it was paler, and his eyes held a little gleam.

"I suppose there are people living there," he said.

"Your supposition is in accord with the law an' the evidence in the case," the other replied. "That disinspirin' mansion has the honor to contain the major an' Ramapo's pride an' joy, his daughter."

"Then, of course, there was a chance that your clever manner of pointing it out might have resulted in killing one of them."

"Them little accidents has been known to happen here, Curly. But us inhabitants o' this thrivin' city don't lose no sleep over no such uninteristin' reflections. Y'see, we git whisky here for a dollar a throw, an' life for nothin'; so we natcherly figgers as how the former ought to git considerable more respect an' attention. Life ain't at no high premium here, Curly."

The stranger's gray eyes had not left those of the man before him. "It mustn't be," he said pleasantly, "when they permit you to live here—you drunken dog!" He calmly reached for his baggage.

At the words a little murmur went up from the group. It shifted expectantly. The face of the miner went black with wrath, and his lip curled back from his discolored teeth in a vicious snarl. His revolver again flashed from its holster.

Over on the side of the crowd some one laughed.

" 'Fore y'kill it, Williams," the voice said, "ask it where it wants the remains shipped to. Maybe its maw is pinin' for it somewheres, an' might git angry if it was put away without no nice flowers an' oratory an' sech like."

The tall man turned quickly. " Shut up, Red! Reckon I can emanate all the elocution necessary for this here occasion." He turned again to the stranger. " Just a minute with that baggage, sonny, while I gives you a hint or two regardin' your future behavior in this here town. Them remarks you was uncautious enough to drop ain't considered courchus an' proper in polite s'ciety in Ramapo. We usually relieves our feelin's by applyin' gunpowder an' lead to the offender an' turnin' him over to the undertakin' Oscar for treatment. But o' course 'tain't reasonable to expect a newcomer to git to know us an' all our little customs all to once. So we'll overlook them little violations of etikett. Howsever, as spokesman an' representative o' this here unnoble metropolis, I begs to state as how we takes sort o' natcherl to entertainment, an' al'ays displays a brotherly interest in the accomplishments of our new citizens. We has a hankerin', therefore, to see what you can do. Next to drinkin', dancin' is our fav'rite sport an' recreation. S'pose you gives us some idear o' your abilities along that line, Curly. Better begin now."

As he finished speaking, he lowered the muzzle of his revolver, and one after another the bullets cracked around the newcomer's toes, sending spurts of dust over his boots. But the young fellow did not move. He stood coolly eying the man before him. When the six chambers were empty, the miner angrily drew his other pistol.

Before he had time to fire a single cartridge, however, something happened. The stranger leaped forward like a spring suddenly released. His right hand shot out and struck the revolver from the miner's fingers, and his left, knotted into a solid ball of bone and sinew, flashed straight from the shoulder, collided firmly, but quite ungently, with that individual's unimposing physiognomy, and hurled him sprawling into the dust.

For an instant the miner lay where he had fallen; then, with a roar of rage, he started to scramble to his feet. He found himself, however, looking past the business-like bore of his own weapon into two very cool but earnest gray eyes. Discretion hinted that it would be best to retain a sitting posture for the time being.

" Keep your hands away from your guns, boys," the stranger was remarking. " It would be embarrassing to have to shoot such new acquaintances! As for you, you emaciated rum-hound, dancing is an excellent recreation, as you say, but unfortunately I enjoy it only when I do it to amuse myself. Now, listen—I'm not in the habit of repeating! My intentions in this place are perfectly peaceful; and I didn't come here to start trouble. But if you feel any inclination to begin it, I'll hold up my end. I'm pretty generous with it, when I get going. It would be best for your health, therefore, not to waste more of your valuable lead or time on me. Try to remember that, friend, and I have no doubt we'll get along splendidly."

For a moment he continued to gaze steadily into the furious, blood-shot eyes of the miner. Then he smiled, picked up his box with his free hand, and moved away in the direction of the house with the broken window. Fifty feet from the group, he tossed the pistol into the road. It lay there half-buried in the dust.

The crowd of miners milled around uneasily, and murmured under their breaths. It was an unwritten law that no man interfere in the little misunderstandings and arguments of any other man. One of them walked out into the road, secured the discarded weapon, and silently handed it back to its owner. It was evident that the tall man was one of those creatures who frequently attained a doubtful leadership in the early days of the West through sheer brutality and terrorism, and the ability to kill too quickly to be killed themselves. As he scrambled to his feet, his small, darting eyes caught the question and doubt in the faces of the men around him. He burst into a volley of profanity, raised the

weapon, and pointed it at the disappearing figure.

Before he could fire it, however, there was an interruption. A big roan horse had darted suddenly from nowhere, flashed before the group, and reared up on its haunches before him. Now a riding-crop swung through the air and descended on his wrist. For the second time that afternoon, the revolver was sent spinning from his fingers.

Mad with pain and fury, he reached for the weapon. But the rider forced the horse against him and jostled him back. He looked up into the snapping blue eyes of a remarkably handsome and remarkably pale girl. She was dressed in a riding costume almost mannish in its Western simplicity; and a very serviceable revolver was suspended at her side from a well-stocked cartridge-belt.

"You coward!" she blazed. "Would you kill a man with his back turned!"

He was silent a moment, trying to meet the fiery gaze.

"Don't reckon I owe you no account o' my doin's," he answered with a curious mixture of deference and sullenness. "You better be on your way. I don't fight with women!"

"Oh, you don't! But you're perfectly willing to shoot a man when he's not looking! Brave, aren't you?"

His eyes dropped before her. For some reason, the man seemed to become a different creature in her presnce. When he answered, it was almost respectfully.

"I don't intend to have no quarrel with you, anyhow."

"No?" Her eyes quickly ran over the smirking faces of the group behind him. "I'm glad to hear it. But I can't help wondering why I'm so highly honored."

"You know why just as well as I do!"

The girl flushed. "I'm not just sure that I understand what you mean," she answered coldly. "But if you insinuate what I think you do, I advise you not to make a remark like that again, if you value your life! I don't! Perhaps you understand me."

His face darkened; but the ugly smile appeared again on his lips.

"I ain't a man what gives up easy," he leered. "An' when I wants anythin', I usually gets it sooner or later! Maybe you gits *my* meanin'!"

The blood slowly drained from her face. The clean line of her chin seemed to become more apparent. Her fingers tightened about the handle of the riding-crop until the knuckles showed white.

"I ought to shoot you like a dog for that," she said quietly. "But, instead, I'll tell you this: There isn't a decent woman alive who would tolerate you near her! As for me, if you ever so much as repeat what you said, or show yourself inside our gate, I'll kill you without a second's hesitation! That's all I have to say to you."

With easy grace, she wheeled the big roan, touched him lightly with her spurs, and galloped up the road.

CHAPTER II.

JEANNE DUDLEY.

"I'M glad you are here, of course, Rand—awfully glad! But I can't understand how you ever came to leave God's country for—this!"

Her voice, soft and reminiscent, came to him through the darkness as they moved slowly across the little garden toward the high bluff overlooking the river. The garden was Jeanne Dudley's special care and pride; and the delicate odors of the vivid flowers were very sweet and refreshing to him after his long journey. Over head, stars twinkled with the bigness and brilliance which they show only in the high, free lands of the mountains.

"'Beggars can't be choosers,' Jeanne," Rand Cameron, the curly-haired man, laughed. "Dad left nothing—but bills; and they swallowed the plantation! I had to do something. The gold-fields seemed to offer a chance; and, as I knew you and the major were in this neighborhood, I—well, here I am!"

"Yes, here you are," his blue-eyed companion answered seriously, "in one of the wildest gold-fields of the country!"

"But—with you," he replied softly.

She did not answer, and he took her

hand. After a moment, she gently withdrew it.

"Don't, Rand, please."

"You're—you're not holding that silly quarrel against me, are you?" he asked dejectedly. "Five years, Jeanne! I—I hoped you would forgive and forget that!"

"I did, Rand! I realized long ago that I was wrong, too! It's not that. I'm afraid I can't make you understand! It's just that—that I've seen so much of the wickedness and greed and brutality of—men, since gold was found here, that—well, I don't expect—oh, I can't talk about it, Rand!"

"But we're not all that way, Jeanne!"

"I know that, of course. But it—doesn't seem to make up for some of the—things I've seen."

"Then—is there no hope for me?"

"I'm afraid not." Her answer was in a low voice, and she did not look up.

They had come to the edge of the cliff and now stood looking down at the chattering little river whose magic name had summoned the treasure-seekers from far and wide.

"Nevertheless," he said quietly, "I *will* hope. I haven't come across a whole continent to—to give up now! I love you, Jeanne. I always have loved you. I won't lose you just because these creatures out here have been making—gold-beasts of themselves!"

She was silent a moment. "Then," she questioned softly, "it wasn't true that you came here for the gold-fields?"

"That was the truth," he answered slowly, "but only a small part of it. I came here for *you!* And just as soon as I make my strike, I'll try again—and keep on trying until I win or there's not a chance left. But until then, Jeanne, you will not be bothered about it any more. I give you my word for that."

There was a little awkward pause.

"The major is looking well," he said, changing the subject with an effort. "The air and the climate out here must have helped him a great deal."

"Papa was getting along wonderfully until gold was discovered." Her voice was troubled. "But since then the excitement and the—the fever here have almost undone it all. It—it almost makes me cry to think of it! It was so beautiful and peaceful here, Rand. Now they're flocking into the valley by thousands, all kinds of creatures, some of them almost savages! They're fighting and robbing and killing each other every day. There is no control whatever. Crimes of every kind are committed as if they were nothing! I'm afraid we'll have to move again, for papa's sake!"

"But can't something be done about it? Aren't there any decent men here at all?"

"There are lots of them," she answered hopelessly, "but they are all demoralized by the worse element. They have no leader, and they're so eager to get rich themselves they haven't time to think about anything like organizing. No one will accept the office of sheriff, or any other office that would require them to take risks! You must be careful, Rand! You did a dangerous thing in quarreling with Williams the very first day you were here!"

"Williams!" he echoed. "Oh, you refer to that thin, sneering brute that I had the pleasure of knocking down this afternoon. I'm not much worried about him."

The girl glanced at his clean-cut profile. It was evident that he was not aware of what had happened that afternoon after he had taken his departure from the "Silver Star."

"You don't know him," she answered anxiously, "or you would be! They call him "Wasp" Williams, and it's not merely because he looks like one, but because he *is* one! He is a coward at heart, I'm sure—like all bullies! But he is dangerous. He is the best and quickest shot around here. He has killed any number of others, and he won't hesitate to kill you, too, Rand, if you give him an excuse—and you have already done that, according to their code! He has a queer smattering of education, and he has got to be one of the leaders of the men. Most of them hate him; but they fear him even more so. You needn't expect any mercy or fair play from his creatures! There are quite a few who were probably glad of what you did, and would like to take your side! but they do not dare to. They know how any kind of a

duel with him always ends! The worst of it is, Rand, he—he—"

"What?" He suddenly stopped in front of her and shot out the question.

"He—oh, Rand, it makes me shiver to—talk about it!"

Very quietly he took her by the shoulders, and stared down into the shadowy oval that was her face. When he spoke his voice was calm; but it was the dangerous calmness of deep waters.

"Jeanne," he asked, "did that beast dare to—make love to you?"

"He tried to," she faltered, "but I—I drove him away!"

"Good God!" His arms dropped to his side. "If I had known that this afternoon, I would have smashed his leering face to pulp!"

She placed a small, strong hand on his arm.

"Rand, for my sake, and father's, you must not do anything like that! Any trouble now might—take him away from me. I'm hoping we'll be able to manage till things get better here. And, in the meanwhile, we're just—being careful!"

He walked up and down for several moments in silence. Then he turned a controlled face to her.

"Perhaps in time we'll find a solution," he said. "In the meanwhile, don't worry, Jeanne. Above all, don't worry any more about that creature you call Wasp Williams. There isn't a drop of courage in his entire body!"

"That is why we should fear him!" she said quickly. "If he was a decent man, he would move in the open, and there would not be so much to be alarmed about. But he is a—a snake, Rand! You have not been here long enough to realize what a nest this place has become."

As if to prove her words, at that very moment a volley of shots rang out from the direction of the village. A sharp cry, a chorus of hoarse laughter, and then the usual low hum of the night-life in the little town!

The girl trembled. "It is happening like that every day and every night. I'm afraid poor papa won't be able to stand it much longer! And I have gotten to love this place so, Rand—these mountains and rivers and cañons! I love them in spite of—this!" Her arm swept in a wide semicircle which took in the entire town. "It would break my heart to leave Red Valley!"

There was another little pause. He stood with grave face, looking in the direction whence the sound of the shots had come.

"There must be some way," he said thoughtfully. "I wish I knew what it was."

"There is only one way I can think of," she answered slowly. "It has often occurred to me, but it is unusual and extremely dangerous! Still, it succeeded once before, however, and might again."

"What is it?" he asked, trying to see her face in the faint light of the stars.

She came closer, and for several minutes whispered eagerly in his ear. Then she stepped back and waited. He drew a long breath.

"I think it would work again," he said at last. "Your father was one of the chiefs, wasn't he?"

"Chief of the Clans of our whole State," she answered proudly.

"It has this advantage," he said after a moment, "that it is most powerful against the ignorant and superstitious; and that is mostly the kind we would have to contend with here! And it would give the decent men a chance to do something without being known! Jeanne, I believe we can do it! I believe we can save this place yet!"

"We would need help, Rand, and we would have to be careful. But I'm sure if we got it started we could get many more to join us! I could name a dozen. And, if we began to be successful, the better element would be glad to flock to it. It would be hard at first; but I believe we can do it, too."

"Then we will!" he said quickly. "It's well worth the danger and the sacrifice. I'm willing to do my part, no matter what it brings!"

"And I'll do mine," she answered very quietly.

With a little murmur, he took her hand again; and this time he would not let it go.

"If we win," he said with grim tenderness, "I might not be willing to wait until

I make my strike. I might claim my reward at once, Jeanne; and it will be—you!"

He raised the hand to his lips and kissed it.

"For success!"

CHAPTER III.

LAW AND ORDER COME TO RAMAPO.

ONE morning the riotous, reckless, feverish town of Ramapo awoke to a new excitement. On a rude bulletin-board in front of the post-office, appeared a poster in large, clear letters. No one knew how it had come there. The post-office force had discovered it when "he" arrived to open up for the day.

Its message was brief and to the point:

To the People of Ramapo:

Law and Order are hereby declared in force. All men are warned that henceforth lawlessness will be met with swift punishment. Serious offenses will merit death. J.

Though the letters in all the rest of the notice were black, the "J" at the end was in bright-red. It was large, and set squarely in the center of the sheet. There was a quiet power in the single red character, an absence of bluster in the wording, that did not fail to have their effect. A large crowd quickly gathered. Men read the poster with serious faces, and questions flew thick and fast as to its origin and meaning. No one knew. No one could find out. Some openly scoffed. But the large J remained there, looking out at the crowd with a sort of calm and confident power!

Rumors sped from mouth to mouth, and were expanded at every exchange. A vague uneasiness, a feeling that there was something in the wind and that the warning boded new and sinister experiences for the town, served for a time to throw a damper on its reckless gaiety.

Then a tall, thin miner forced his horse through the crowd, read the message, and broke into a loud guffaw. It seemed to relieve the situation. Several others laughed with him.

"Feller citizens," said Wasp Williams, wheeling his horse and facing the crowd, "I begs to call your attention to this noble appeal which you sees behind me. You all knows the respect an' esteem which I feels for them two contrivances, knowed as law an' order! There ain't nothin' to compare with 'em! They offers refuge to tenderfeet an' pertection to the weak-kneed. Them which is careless with language, but don't hanker none to face the business end o' these little toys us men is kind o' partial to out here, cries for law an' order like a baby for its bottle. They gotta have it so's red-blooded he-men won't decorate 'em with lead when they gits naughty. I'm in favor of it, by all means! But it strikes me, friends, as how this here notice shows a disconcertin' lack o' common ornamentation; and I figgers you'd be kind o' pleased if I fixed it up pretty an' attractivelike."

He turned again, and drew both of his revolvers. With careless accuracy, he fired bullet after bullet into the sign. Twice he reloaded, and the flame leaped in a steady stream from the muzzles until the chambers were empty. Then he thrust them back. He took off his hat, made a jeering bow to the group before him, and addressed them.

"As a leadin' inhabitant o' this here flourishin' metropolis," he remarked, "I has the honor to present my answer to the aforesaid warnin'."

There was a shout, then a roar of laughter, from the crowd. The tension was broken. Across the face of the notice the bullet-holes clearly traced the letters D-a-m! That was Williams's version of the spelling of the word.

Another horse cantered up to the outskirts of the crowd. In the saddle was the straight, graceful figure of Jeanne Dudley. Seeing her, Williams made another mock bow and called to her across the heads of the men between them.

"We is celebratin' the beginnin' o' law an' order here in Ramapo," he said. "P'r'aps you would like to git a glimpse o' the announcement o' this surprisin' an' gratifyin' change. Boys, give way there a little an' let the lady through."

The crowd parted. The girl leisurely walked her horse nearer. Then she saw the bullet-holes in the poster and stopped.

With a scornful glance at the man before her, she drew her own weapon and leveled it at the sign.

"Your spelling is rather poor," she remarked coolly. "There is another letter in that word. Perhaps I can impress it upon your memory better by using your own methods."

The revolver cracked out six times, was quickly reloaded, and flashed again. Then the girl returned it to its holster, skillfully piloted her roan through the crowd, and trotted away.

Another burst of laughter and applause went up from the crowd. The missing "n" now appeared on the poster, and its even lines exhibited much more perfect shooting than had the letters stamped by the leaden markers of the Wasp. His triumph had been snatched away from him! Chagrined and flushing, he stood scowling after her.

"Got yuh that time, Wasp!" one of the men before him laughed.

Williams looked down from his horse upon the speaker, a small man notable for his very gray hair and his pleasant expression. The heavy, vertical lines between his eyebrows deepened.

"Mebbe so," he answered; "mebbe so! But git this idear into that little think-organ o' yourn, an' plant it there: I'll git *her* 'fore I'm done, an' what I gits I keeps!"

"You got a full day's work ahead o' you, then! There ain't no 'fool's gold' about that girl!"

"Your tongue is too active for a feller o' your size, stranger. Reckon you better be movin'!"

The little man paled, but his voice, when he replied, was even and unafraid.

"I never run from nobody yet, an' I don't figger to begin now."

"No? Then stay, since you insists! An' accept this little token o' my esteem!"

The revolver of the Wasp darted from his hip, shot forward, and flashed once. The other staggered. He strove to keep his feet, but collapsed in the dust. A couple of bystanders carried him into the nearest house, while some one casually looked for a doctor. One of the bearers, a huge, powerful fellow, swore violently.

"The hound!" he growled. "He didn't give little Peterson a chance!"

The other eyed the wounded man sympathetically. "Williams ain't bothered with no sech scruples as that," he said. "Besides, he's been totin' a grudge agin 'Smiley' here, an' figgered this was a chance to git even."

"How's that?"

"Seems the little feller strayed into town a couple o' days ago an' showed some nuggets so big they nearly made the eyes o' Wasp an' his gang pop out. They tried to git him full an' then find out where his claim is. But it didn't work. The little man was too sharp for 'em."

"Good for him! Hope he gits well an' shoots the everlastin' daylights out o' that coyote!"

"He'll git over it, all right. Ain't nothin' serious, I reckon. Guess the Wasp wasn't tryin' to kill him outright, 'cause then he'd never git to know where the little feller has planted his stakes! An', if I was you, McCoy, I wouldn't be too careless with them remarks. Funerals is too common in this town as it is!"

Outside, the momentary hush which had fallen upon the crowd was quickly lifted. Some shrugged their shoulders. Others laughed. One or two tried a few pot-shots at the red "J" for luck; and in a short while the town was about its haphazard business as indifferent, as unconcerned as ever.

CHAPTER IV.

THE RIDERS.

BUT less than a week later it had occasion to remember the incident!

The stage was held up and robbed in the deep woods just before it entered the town. Old Bailey, gallantly attempting resistance, was brought down with three bullets from the revolvers of the highwaymen. But the keen eye of the old Westerner somehow recognized the two assailants. Before he died, every one knew that the bandits were "Pete" Slocum and "Red" Ritter, two of the worst characters in the valley. Yet no effort was made to appre-

hend them. They quietly disappeared. No one assumed authority to trace them and administer punishment.

Nevertheless, two days afterward the bodies of both men were found on the post-office steps. The looped ends of the ropes with which justice had been done upon them had been left around their necks. And on the shirt-front of each there was a piece of black paper about four inches square, with a red J in the center!

This disquieting incident was quickly followed by others. " Big Bill " Bondy, slayer of " Gabby " Taylor—and others—was found sprawled out on the floor of his shack with a bullet-hole in his forehead. The room showed abundant evidences of a struggle—and the red J was pinned on his breast!

In the weeks that succeeded, other leaders of the worse element, men whose pistol-stocks bore many a notch, and whose sense of decency and morality bore more, met the same fate. After a particularly notorious example of his marksmanship, and disregard for such trifles as the conventions, one would be located swinging from a tree; another discovered, lifeless, in his cabin; still another picked up, now and then, from the dust of the road. In every case the same terrible red letter on the body showed whence the retribution had come.

Fear and excitement ran high in the valley. Men became cautious about venturing out after sunset. All went fully armed. But, withal, it did not escape the notice of many that the better inhabitants were not molested. Only those whose crimes were known and certain had suffered. There was a large element which found relief and satisfaction in that reflection.

Rumors began to spread of night-riders roaming the valley. On several occasions pale-faced men galloped up to the " Silver Star " and reported having seen small troops of horsemen flitting along the dark roads. Their tales were usually incoherent and contradictory; but all tallied in one particular—that the riders wore some kind of long, dark, flowing garment, and that nothing could be seen of their faces.

It was observed also that certain of the lesser desperadoes were mysteriously disappearing from time to time and failing to return. Their shacks betrayed signs of a hasty departure. Invariably hoof-prints around their deserted cabins indicated that a considerable number of horses had been present.

At last, at two different times, parties composed of the most determined and desperate of the troublesome element, set out in search of information about the nocturnal raiders, and, if possible, revenge. " Wasp " Williams was not a member of either of these expeditions. For some reason he found it necessary to attend to important business each time they were being formed.

The first party returned late at night, unsuccessful and grumbling at their long, useless ride. The second one did not return at all!

Two hours after they had ridden away from the town, a solitary horseman galloped furiously through the Pass, launched himself from his foaming animal before the Silver Star, and staggered up to the bar. His face was ashen. He gulped down glass after glass of whisky as though it were water. Then, somewhat calmer, he noticed the gathering around him, eyed them stolidly a moment, and spoke:

" Boys," he remarked grimly, " I'm sayin' ' Adios!' I got my fill o' this here hell-hole, an' I'm pullin' my stakes soon's I can git my dust together. I wish you all luck that stays here, but I reckon Ramapo ain't in fer no happy times!"

It took a long time, and much coaxing and whisky, to get him to explain more fully. Finally he consented.

" We was trottin' through that gulch they calls Rapheel's Ravine—'count o' the echo, I guess—an' Bud Borresky was leadin'. We was all feelin' pretty boisterous, when all of a sudden we hears a voice yell ' Halt!' We don't see nobody at all, but we don't waste no time comin' to a stop.

" Well, we waits awhile without sayin' nothin'; but I can see everybody's kind o' loosenin' up his shootin' iron. Then a figger rides out from behind a big rock about thirty yards ahead. It's all rigged out in a kind o' shapeless, black cloak or some-

thin', an' has a sort o' hood over its head. Couldn't see no face at all! There was somethin' on its chest that looked like a letter.

"I ain't a goin' to deny as how I gits to feelin' kind o' creepy! The moon was up, an' the light, comin' down from the openin' at the top, was queer an'—an' confusin'. The place is full o' big boulders, an' the shadows an' bushes an'—oh, hell!" He took another gulp of the liquor, and stared gratefully into the empty glass for several minutes. Finally he drew a long breath and resumed.

"Well, this black thing eyes us a couple o' minutes an' then says, kind o' quiet an' convincin': 'Better turn round an' go back. If you value your lives, don't try any more o' these excursions!'

"Boys, I knows right off I has heard that voice before. I couldn't make out who it was, but it was somebody from this here town.

"But don't say nothin' for a second or two. Then he pushes his gun out. 'You damn night-runnin' coyotes!' he yells, 'I'll git one o' you anyhow!' With that he lets fly. The black figger gives a little cry, rolls around in the saddle, an' drops off.

"Then I hears a whistle blowin' loud an' shrill. Good Gawd! At that a reg'lar flock o' them black birds dashes out everywhere, an' the whole place busts into uproar! Guns begins crackin' from behind every bush an' rock, an' the noise an' echoes 'd wake the dead. Bud an' about five o' the other boys goes down with the first volley. We tries to git in a few shots ourselves, but we was wastin' lead—didn't seem to have no heart in the work, nohow! Some o' the horses is hit, an' they all begins kickin' an' tearin' around. Fust thing you know, what's left of us is gallopin' back up the hollow hell-for-halleluiah, all mussed up an' gittin' in each other's way! But we ain't gone far when shots begins to come from that end, too, an' another flock o' them hooded devils pops out! Some o' the boys drops off. Gawd! I ain't no good recollection o' what happened after that, an' I don't know how I ever got out o' that partic'lar portion o' Hades! A couple o' them black figgers dashes out from behind rocks an' comes after me on horseback. I ain't denyin' as how I give poor old Billy some rough persuasion—but there wasn't no time for kindness an' sympathy! I ain't no clear idear when them two give it up—didn't have no hankerin' to look back! But I guess they must 've followed nearly all the way to town!"

He resorted again to the bottle, then turned away. No amount of coaxing could induce him to delay and tell more. With drunken awkwardness, he mounted his horse, mumbled several times "I'm through, boys! I'm sayin' 'Adios,'" and vanished into the night.

The following morning a small party set out, very doubtfully and cautiously, for the scene of the encounter. They buried four of their former comrades, and brought home three whose wounds had received a rude first-aid from the night-riders. The other doughty members of that notable expedition, wounded and otherwise, were never seen again in Ramapo.

CHAPTER V.

A TRUST.

TWO riders appeared upon the crest of the hill overlooking the Pass. They drew rein and looked down at the rough little town below them straggling along beside the river.

"Jeanne, we are going to win," he said at length. There was quiet triumph in the tone.

Her eyes remained fixed on the scene below her. When she answered, her voice was sad. "Oh, Rand, think of what it is costing! I know that it has been necessary. But it's terrible to me anyhow!"

"Is it any more terrible than what was going on before?" he asked kindly. "It was happening then simply as murder and crime. Now it is justice! There is a tremendous improvement all over the valley. Most of the people are secretly in favor of us, and there are a great many now who openly support us. It is a rough cure, I know; but remember that there was not one of those creatures we punished who had not merited it a dozen times. No one was

ever killed in cold blood. All that did not resist were given the fairest trial we were able to give them under the circumstances. Nearly all of them admitted their guilt in the end. Of course, some of them fought it out; and I must admit that their courage would have been fine, if they had not been merely murderers resisting justice. My only regret, Jeanne, is that we haven't been able to get our hands on that coward, Williams! But he's shrewd enough not to leave town, and to keep close to the Silver Star." His voice had been growing more and more earnest as he spoke. "That incident in the Ravine was regrettable; but after Borresky killed poor Bernard, there was no hope of restraining the boys. You need not waste your sympathy on those rascals, Jeanne! They were caught in a trap they had hoped to spring themselves!"

She did not answer, and after a moment he spoke again.

"We have done well in the first part of our work. But we will never be entirely successful until we make a public display of our power, and convince them that we are not merely a band of marauders working under cover of the dark, but a strong organization, capable of holding its own in the open. That is our final goal! It's a chance; but if we win it our work is done. And we are strong enough now to try it with good chances of success."

"And this time," she said quietly, "I'm going with you."

He started a little. "I hope you won't do that," he answered, his gray eyes gazing anxiously into hers. "You've done your part, Jeanne! Without that endless work of yours, we could not have made much of an impression. Isn't it enough," he asked, smiling a little, "to have supplied the—er —army with uniforms, without going out into the thick of the battle, too?"

"Not quite, Rand," she replied. "I want to feel that I've done something more than just sit at home and sew. I want to have a little share in the actual *winning* of this victory! I'm jealous of you getting all the honor, you see!"

He hesitated. "You have done too much to be denied whatever you ask, Jeanne," he answered seriously. "Moreover, the whole thing is your idea. I have no right to refuse you. But I hope you will change your mind."

Her clear, blue eyes looked up into his, and she smiled. "We have an unfortunate habit in our family," she said quietly, "of not changing our minds."

She patted her horse affectionately, and moved off with her companion's powerful chestnut pacing gracefully beside her.

They had scarcely begun the descent of the hill, however, when a voice hailed them. A moment later a small, gray-haired man trotted up. He was smiling amiably.

"Howdy, Miss Jeanne! Howdy, Rand!"

"Hello, Peterson," Cameron answered heartily. "How is the convalescent?"

"Gittin' along fine," the little man answered. "Say," lowering his voice, "I thought I'd tell you I'm with the boys tomorrow night."

"Do you think you're well enough?" Cameron's voice was doubtful.

"Well or not well don't make no difference! I got a few little obligations comin' to me which I'm meanin' to collect if anybody gits excited."

"Suppose I forbid you?"

"I'd shore hate to go ag'in' the rules o' the organization," Peterson grinned, "but I'm afeard I'd have to chance it." His face became serious again. "Can I see you alone a minute, Rand? I asks your pardon, Miss Jeanne, but I got to talk over a little business with Rand in private."

The girl smiled and nodded. The two men drew away a little, and Peterson took a sealed envelope from his pocket. He held it out to Cameron.

"I'm askin' you to keep this," he said gravely, "in case somethin' might happen to me durin' the next couple o' weeks. Better put it in a safe place an' take care of it. If I'm unlucky y' understand—open it up. If not, I'll take it back; an' then I'll have a little business proposition to talk over with you. But whatever you do, don't lose it!"

Cameron took the envelope and put it in his pocket.

"I'll be glad to, 'Smiley,'" he said quietly, "and you can trust me to see that it's kept safely."

A look of relief flashed over the little man's face. "Thanks," he said. "It means a lot!"

They rejoined the girl, who had ridden her horse fearlessly to the dge of the cliff and was now looking out across the green valley. A moment later the three trotted down toward the town.

CHAPTER VI.

AT THE "SILVER STAR."

"HANDS up!"

The command rang simultaneously from three directions. After a startled interval, during which many arms made unconscious gestures toward many hips, every hand was raised. These men that lined the counter, and crowded the sloppy tables of the "Silver Star," were rough creatures all of them—men that had ridden weary miles, borne bitter hardships, and faced death in countless forms, in every State west of the Mississippi! But this was different. They were awed. More than one strong face paled. The silence became intense.

From every window at least two bright rings of metal—remorseless eyes of the grim forty-four—were turned upon them. And behind each weapon was the motionless, black figure of one of the dreaded night-riders!

The costume of the visitors consisted of a long, loose garment which fell almost to the feet, and was topped by a cape, so arranged as to cover the back and breast while leaving the arms free. It was surmounted by a round helmetlike hood. A flap, which fell like the chain-mail of the knights of the Middle Ages from under the hood, and in which oblong horizontal apertures were cut for the eyes, effectively concealed the entire head and face. The sinister blackness of the habit was relieved by just one thing—the even more sinister red "J" on the right breast of each rider!

One of the visitors, distinguished by his height, his powerful shoulders, and the slightly larger "J" on his arm, advanced into the saloon. The men gave way before him, and he stood alone before the bar.

"Keep quiet," he said in a clear, emotionless voice, "and there will be no trouble."

Nevertheless, from the back of the crowd, a voice spoke. "I know you," it snarled. "Tryin' to work the Ku Klux Klan again, eh? Well, that old game won't go in this town!"

Very quietly half a dozen revolvers focused themselves on the unprepossessing face of "Wasp" Williams, rising above the heads of his companions. He did not speak again.

The black-robed figure in the center eyed the silent assembly keenly for a moment, then beckoned toward the door. Another figure entered, carrying several articles. It climbed nimbly upon the bar, straddled the space between it and the wide shelf where the array of bottled liquor stood, and, with leisurely attention to symmetry and design, pasted two posters upon the mirror behind. Then it swung down again. It stood for a moment beside the other, and seemed to be dwarfed by comparison. Its eyes could be seen traveling slowly over the speechless crowd. Finally, with a gesture plainly expressive of contempt and disappointment, it turned and passed out as silently as it had come.

The posters were printed in large, black letters, and at the bottom of each was the now familiar red "J."

The tall man before the bar again addressed the crowd. His voice was quiet; but there was a quality in it which conveyed a stern warning.

"Just a word or two before we leave. This organization has been formed in the interests of decency and justice. It will exist just as long as it is necessary—and no longer. No man who is decent and straight has anything to fear from us.

"One of these posters announces an election three days from now. It is time this town had a mayor, a sheriff, and some sort of governing body and authority. We propose to give it a chance to select those. The notice explains all that is necessary. Every man is welcome to vote, and vote as he pleases. Nobody will be molested, no matter how he votes, provided he is peaceable. But you are warned against attempt-

ing lawlessness of any kind. It will be put down without mercy!"

He turned, crossed the room, and went out. There was the sound of men getting to horse. A little later all but the four figures at the doors withdrew; and, a moment later still, four others on horseback appeared at the windows, and the ones at the doors also backed out. After a short delay, during which the noise of pawing hoofs and the jingle of trappings entered the silent room, the black figures at the windows suddenly vanished.

A dead instant followed, every one in the saloon standing with hands still up-raised. Then, with an oath, a burly miner, who towered above his fellows, rushed to the door, jerking out his two revolvers as he ran. Fifty yards along the road, a large body of black figures was just getting under way. He fired into the very center of the group.

A little muffled cry came back on the wind, and a figure, strangely smaller and slighter than the others, reeled for a second in the saddle. Instantly, the tall rider who had addressed the crowd, wheeled his horse, glanced at the smaller figure, saw that it was again sitting its horse easily, and galloped back toward the door.

Spurring straight into the stream of bullets that poured from the two revolvers before him, he swiftly closed up the interval. His arm darted from under his cape, and a flash of light stabbed the darkness. The huge man in the doorway clutched once at the jamb for support, then toppled backward. A clean hole in his forehead told that he would never cause trouble again.

Others in the saloon had also hurried toward the windows. But the sight of this sudden retribution stopped them in their tracks.

The avenger waited a moment, facing them unmovingly, then rode back to his comrades. After a deliberate delay, the black band, unmolested, trotted quietly away.

Back in the saloon, the pause held but a moment, broke, and left the crowd in uproar. One or two ran out into the road and sent a belated, scattered, and harmless volley after the riders. Others examined the fallen miner; but it was evident that he was past assistance, and scant attention was given him. It was the way of the youthful West to pay ready homage to any one who could amuse, interest, or terrorize it; but, once a leader went down, it turned readily and quickly to any one else who could take his place. There were not a few who openly murmured that Simpson had got what he deserved. The majority ignored him completely and surged around the posters.

As the leader of the visitors had said, one was simply an announcement of an election, giving the time, place, and details, and suggesting the names of various men as likely candidates.

The other was a column of seventeen names. Beneath was a curt order giving their bearers forty-eight hours to leave town. The name of "Wasp" Williams headed the list.

CHAPTER VII.

WHAT CAME IN THE STAGE.

AS the empty stage reached the edge of the town on its homeward trip, it slowed up and stopped in front of Major Dudley's house. Dooley, the young fellow who now had the proud distinction of driving Red Valley's only means of rolling transportation, climbed down from his high perch. To the casual observer he would have appeared to be examining one of the wheels. As a matter of fact, his sharp eyes were carefully scrutinizing the surrounding territory. After a little, he began to whistle.

Almost immediately, the door of the house opened, and Jeanne Dudley hurried out. He whispered earnestly in her ear.

"That's fine, Jimmie," she answered, elated. "But we haven't a minute to waste! I'll have to be a bit careful with this shoulder, but I think we can manage it. Let's get to work!"

"He shore paid—for—what he done to you, Miss Jeanne," Jimmie panted, struggling with a heavy box in the interior of the coach. "Rand didn't waste no time in givin' him what he desarved!"

Together they began to lower the box to the road. They had nearly succeeded when the young fellow caught his foot on something inside. His momentary loss of balance tilted the box, jamming the girl's left shoulder between it and the side of the coach. With a sharp gasp of pain, she started back, losing her hold. She tried to recover it again, but failed. The box fell to the ground with a heavy thud and split wide open. Bolts of black cloth, and several large pieces of red, were revealed.

For a moment they stood eying the catastrophe in silent consternation, the girl biting her lips to keep back sobs of pain, and the driver flushing in mortification. Then she sprang again to the broken container.

"Quick, Jimmie! If we get it into the yard and under the bushes, there is no harm done. Hurry! Some one may be coming."

With considerable difficulty they managed at last to get the wrecked packing-case and its contents into the yard. They concealed it as well as they could under a big laurel. Breathing heavily, she sat down upon it. She leaned back with closed eyes, and fought to keep down the tears which insisted on welling out between the long, dark lashes. The boy eyed her miserably.

"Gawd, Miss Jeanne," he burst out, "I'm hell-fired sorry! I wouldn't 'a' hurt that shoulder o' yores for all the dust in Ramapo! Damn Simpson!"

"Steady, Jimmie, steady," she said, trying to smile. "My shoulder will be all right in a minute or two. Don't worry about it—it was just an accident, anyway. And you've done wonderfully, Jimmie, wonderfully! Now hurry along or some one will be passing and wondering what the coach is doing there!"

Somewhat relieved, but bitterly cursing his clumsiness, the young fellow trudged reluctantly away. A minute later, as the lumbering old vehicle gathered headway, he turned around on the box and lifted his broad-brimmed hat in a gallant, if somewhat awkward, salute. He saw a white handkerchief flutter in answer. Vastly heartened, he lashed the horses into a gallop.

For several minutes Jeanne Dudley remained sitting on the box under the laurel. Then, having regained her composure, she started to rise.

A man suddenly stepped around a thick fringe of shrubbery, vaulted lightly over the low fence, and stood before her. Her startled eyes met the leering gaze of "Wasp" Williams.

"Evening, Jeanne," he said. He lifted his hat and swept it almost to the ground in his usual mocking manner.

The girl stepped back a pace. Her face alternately flamed and paled.

"Don't seem to be particular cordial in welcomin' your guests," he grinned, putting the hat on again. "Thought all us Southerners had the name o' bein' mighty generous thataway!"

"Apparently," she answered through set teeth, "you have forgotten what I told you some time ago."

"You can't kill with conversation," he replied calmly. "So I guess you'll jest have to have a nice little chat with me instead."

The girl's hand dropped quickly to her waist, and she reddened. In her hurry to come out, she had not thought to strap on her belt and revolver!

"No, I ain't goin' to forgit what you said," he continued. "An' what's more, I ain't goin' to forgit what I seen out here on the road a few minutes ago, either!"

During the last few years, Jeanne Dudley had undergone hard training in a rough school. Many things had been indelibly graven on her mind that had had little effect upon her in her untroubled, girlhood days in the far Southland. Not the least important of these was the value of keeping cool under all circumstances, and steeling the face never to betray the thought that lay behind it. But the remark of the man before her was a bolt from the blue; and the significant tone in which he made it was not to be misunderstood. For an instant, in spite of herself, her eyes were wide and frightened.

"Well, what do you think you can do about it?" she asked coolly. "By the way, I understand that you and some of your friends are going to leave town to-day or to-morrow."

The ugly grin vanished from his lips. "I wouldn't risk no dust on that," he remarked scowling. He stared silently at the lovely, scornful face before him for several moments. His expression slowly changed. Finally, he came a step nearer.

"Listen, Jeanne," he said in an oddly-pleading tone, "I—I ain't a-goin' to do nothin' about it—give you my word for it—if—if—"

"What?" The question cut through his sentence like a knife.

"—if you—treat me right! I ain't never done nothin' to you to git treated like—a dog! Ain't I al'ays been respectful an'—an' decent?"

"Oh, remarkably so!" Her voice was so soft, her face became so pleasant, that he was actually deceived. "You have always been a gentleman, at the least! Really, I *have* been rather unkind to you, haven't I?"

"I ain't a-goin' to say no more about it," he said, surprised and encouraged. "I'm a good man to them I likes—an'—an' I shore likes you, Jeanne! I'd shore treat you—mighty fine! I'm askin'—I'm askin' you to marry me!" The last words came out in a rush.

For a moment the girl's steady eyes gazed into his. Then suddenly she burst into laughter, high, clear trills of genuine amusement. Astounded by this remarkable change, he stared at her uncertainly. Finally she regained her calm.

"Get out!" she ordered briefly. "I warn you for the last time not to come here again!"

It took him several seconds to realize that he had been duped. Then, with an oath, he sprang. He gripped her fiercely by the shoulders.

"You little cat," he snarled, "I'll learn you to fool with a he-man!"

The girl struggled fiercely in his grasp and struck again and again at the vicious face before her. She was young and strong; but the fearful agony of her wounded shoulder rapidly weakened her. The miner, though thin, was sinewy, and not without a sort of wiry power. Gradually he pinned both her arms behind her and held them there. He forced her writhing shoulders against him, and began to press kiss after kiss upon the white face.

Then suddenly she was released! He seemed to fly from before her face and to go tumbling over and over into the bushes!

Sobbing weakly, the girl sank to the ground.

When she could open her eyes, she saw Rand Cameron standing over the fallen miner.

"You yellow hound!" he was muttering with murderous intensity. "I'm going to send you to join the rest of your crew in hell!"

He extracted both of the other's pistols from their holsters. It is highly probable that, in the violence of his rage, he would have slain the brute without mercy, had not the girl, with a cry, thrust herself between.

"Don't, Rand!" she begged wildly. "Don't, for God's sake!"

He would have pushed her aside even then; but she clung to his arms. The fury of the man was almost uncontrollable. His baleful eyes glared past her. At length, with a tremendous effort, he regained some measure of control. But it was long before his heavy breathing calmed.

Finally, he drew a deep breath and lifted her to her feet. He tenderly assisted her to a seat on the stump of a tree.

Then he turned again to the stingless "Wasp." "Get up! You're not through yet!"

When the dazed creature did not respond quickly enough, he roughly dragged him to his feet. Without giving him time to speak, he hustled him toward the girl.

"Now," he commanded grimly, "get down and beg her pardon on your knees!"

At last beginning to recover his senses, Williams declared with violent profanity that he would not get down on his knees to any woman alive. He started to back away.

In an instant Cameron was upon him. Breaking down the miner's resistance as one might crush the puny efforts of a child, he seized his wrist, and forced it around behind his back and upward. Then he began to twist. That hold, properly taken, is one of the most terrible tortures to which

a man can be subjected. Each attempt to escape only increases the agony. Under its deadly punishment, strong men break down and cry like children.

That is exactly what Williams did. His breath coming in harsh sobs, he at length muttered the words of the required apology.

Cameron instantly released him. Again jerking him to his feet, he hurried him to the gate and shoved him out.

"Now go," he ground out, "and thank God, if you know who He is, that you're alive! Never mind the revolvers! I'll take charge of them. And, if I ever catch you around here again, I'll shoot you on sight!"

He watched the man as he made his way, humiliated, venomous, muttering, into the town. Then he hastened back to the girl.

"Oh, Rand, oh, Rand," she whispered through white lips, "I wish I had never seen this place!"

"Don't feel so badly, Jeanne," he pleaded unhappily. "It will soon be the town you used to love. We have little to fear from that beast now. And I think, sweet—er—I think we have almost reached the goal! Our work the other night won all of the good element over, and most of the doubtful ones. The big majority are eager for the election. I feel sure we are nearly at the end of our troubles!"

But had he known of a bitter meeting which took place that night between a certain seventeen, he would not have been so confident.

"I know who's at the head o' this thing now," one of them was muttering savagely. "I seen somethin' to-day, an' I know all I needs to know! I figgers that if we can git rid o' the leaders—or any o' the rest o' them, in the mean while—we can put a stop to it yet! An' I'm not agoin' to leave Red Valley until I gits one o' them myself!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE WASP'S STING.

TWO days later, at nine o'clock in the morning, a cavalcade of black-robed riders, in column of fours, trotted silently into Ramapo. There were at least two hundred of them. Their costume was identical with that of the body which had appeared at the "Silver Star," with one exception—behind the large, red "J" other smaller letters completed the word "Justice."

Once inside the town, they quickly broke up into smaller units. Strong groups posted themselves at the head of each road leading into the town. Others quietly patroled the streets. The main body formed in front of the post-office and made preparations for the work before them. There was a skill in the disposition of the riders, an orderly snap and precision about all their movements, that betrayed competent leadership by one experienced in military strategy. When the visitors had taken position, there was as much chance for resistance in Ramapo as for the proverbial snowball in the well-known place of warmth and discomfort.

But no resistance developed. There was no organization in the town which could combat these well-drilled and determined men. Not all the inhabitants were in favor of the riders; but the few who were not displayed no overmastering desire to attempt to subdue them alone. The majority were loud in their expressions of welcome and approval.

For a brief period after everything was in readiness the men hesitated to come forward. Then one of the hardier spirits stepped up and recorded the first vote ever cast in Ramapo. He was quickly followed by others. The ice once broken, it was only a short while before the self-appointed election commissioners were working under high pressure. Lines were formed, directions given, and the voting went merrily on. At the invitation of the riders, several of the better known miners took their places on the board, as an assurance that everything was being done "above the table." Half in a spirit of jest, half in a spirit of grim earnestness and sober satisfaction, the rough-and-ready men of that rough-and-ready country hastened to deposit the little slips that told of their choice.

It was a crude election, if you will. But in those pioneer days men had neither the time nor the inclination for the complicated restrictions which the law of the present day

casts around its ballot-boxes. A pencil, a piece of paper, a basket, and a battery of forty-fours to guarantee peace and fairness, were all that was necessary. On this occasion they were amply sufficient. The votes were squarely cast and squarely counted.

At two o'clock the last man dropped his ballot. At six the committee, which had been working steadily throughout the day, had completed its work. The precious slips were carefully locked in the post-office safe —the only one in town. Then the leader of the riders advanced to the porch of the building and quietly announced the results.

Ten minutes later the riders reformed. A few sharp words of command, a rolling beat of hoofs, a cloud of dust gently eddying upward above the road, and the black cavalcade had vanished as unostentatiously as it had come.

Not a shot had been fired during the whole day. But now, as the last of the visitors disappeared, a perfect blast of explosions shattered the quiet. After a momentary pause the black company moved leisurely on, and under every hood there was a broad grin. That was merely Ramapo's way of celebrating its first proud consciousness of the inauguration of law and order!

A mile from the town the troops halted. The leader rode back toward the center of the column and drew rein.

"Boys," he said in a quiet voice, which nevertheless came clearly to every man's ears, "I can't thank you for the work you've done. It's bigger than words. All I can say just now is: we've won! I'll have to be content with that until the general assembly to-morrow. After we break up I'm going to take a short cut back to Ramapo and see that everything is still all right. I'd like to have about thirty men with me in case anything goes wrong."

More than that number promptly offered themselves. Then, at a word from the leader, the rest broke ranks and began to disperse, going in all directions. The new party plunged into the woods. In a few seconds the black riders had disappeared as completely as if the earth had opened and swallowed them up.

Two of them, however, were moving along a by-road which led in a roundabout direction back toward the town. Talking over the victory, and trotting leisurely through the soft light of early evening, they had covered nearly two-thirds of the distance, when more than a dozen men suddenly dashed from the trees of each side. In an instant they were surrounded. In the face of such odds their resistance, valiant though it was, lasted but a moment. Both were roughly dragged from their saddles, disarmed, and secured with stout cords. They were then hurried beneath the overhanging branch of a giant oak.

"Boys," said Wasp Williams, "I reckon it wouldn't be decent an' respectful not to call attention to the fact that Providence has obligin'ly presented us with two o' these here coyotes, accordin' to our prayers! So don't waste no time with them preparations for the ceremony. After we has decorated the scenery with these black beauties from time to time, Ramapo 'll begin to see as how there's al'ays two sides to every question. An' by the way, reckon it would be considerable more satisfyin' to git a look at these pretties 'fore we elevates 'em."

He advanced to the nearest prisoner and lifted his hood. The undaunted eyes of Smiley Peterson looked out at him.

"Well, well," the Wasp grinned, "this is shore a unexpected pleasure! I didn't make a very good job o' you some time ago, friend; but I guess there ain't no excuse for not completin' it this time. Now, let's see who we got here."

As Williams advanced to the other, Peterson struggled fiercely to extricate himself from his bonds. The cords had been bound only around the waists of the two, securing their arms to their sides, and not very tightly at that. It had not been the intention of the captors to waste much time on their prisoners. Nevertheless, the little man was apparently unable to loosen himself. After a short struggle he desisted.

Williams smiled tantalizingly. "Enjoyin' yoreself?" he asked.

"I will be," Peterson growled, "if I ever meets you in the next world!"

"Look here, Wasp," one of the others broke in, as he clambered up the tree and threw two ropes across the overhanging

branches, " git through with that there little comedy o' yourn, an' let's git out o' here. We ain't exactly in no encouragin' situation ourselves." He lowered himself to the ground and waited impatiently with the two looped ends in his hands.

Williams ignored the thrust and coolly lifted the hood of the other. Then he started back. " Gawd!" he ejaculated.

Before them was the ashen face of Jeanne Dudley. She was standing with closed eyes. Her white teeth had sunk so deeply into her trembling lip that a little drop of blood had welled out and now stood like a bright-red spot upon the soft, pale bow of her mouth.

For several moments Williams stared at her in genuine amazement. Then, gradually, the consternation on his face was supplanted by his evil, leering grin. Under the influence of their surprise, none of the captors was watching little Peterson. Very slowly, very cautiously, his right hand was working its way into a slit in the side of his garment. There was no hope of entirely freeing himself, and he had no weapon even if he succeeded. But he was not entirely at the end of his resources.

Williams turned to his confederates. " Boys," he said, " as I says before, I got a lot to be thankful for; but I never counted on no blessin' like this! You're welcome to that little ungrowed bunch o' cactus there; but, as for me, I reckon I'll jest struggle along with this one myself!"

" You mean yo're a goin' to take the gal?" one of the men asked, grinning.

" Them's my sentiments," Williams answered. " Y' see, I been holdin' a sort o' option on this here person for some time. Reckon I'll jest take it up now that I got the chance. Mrs. Wasp Williams! Sounds purty nice, don't it?"

The girl opened her eyes. They were dark and glittering.

" You coward!" she taunted. " Why don't you shoot me? I dare you! I dare you all!"

But the grin on his face only broadened.

" Reckon I ain't a goin' to do nothin' foolish like that—sweetheart," he mocked. " I got better plans." He advanced toward her.

Just then Peterson, with a supreme effort, withdrew his hand from the slit in his robe. There was a small cylindrical object in his knotted fist. So far he had not been noticed. Now he suddenly stooped forward and struggled to reach his half-freed hands with his lips. He could not quite make it. Without hesitation, the quick-witted little man dropped the object he had been holding to the ground. He threw himself upon it.

The others had quickly realized his intention, and with a rush they were upon him. But they were a moment too late. He had succeeded in closing his teeth upon the precious whistle, and before it could be knocked from his lips its loud, long blast had shrilled through the woods.

Taking advantage of the momentary pause that resulted, the little man managed to drag himself to his feet. Now he hurled himself, bonds and all, at the figure of Williams. With a snarl of fury, that highly moral and conscientious individual snatched his revolver from its holster and fired twice, pointblank. Both bullets buried themselves in Peterson's breast.

The little man stopped, stood still an instant with an old, surprised expression on his face, and crumpled up in the dust of the road.

" Don't stand there gawpin', you fools!" There was a note of alarm in the Wasp's shout. " Quick! Git aboard them nags o' yourn an' clear out! First thing y' know, we'll have a flock o' them black devils on our heels. I'll take care o' this here person."

He leaped at the girl, lifted her in his arms, and carried her in among the trees. He thrust her upon his horse. She was too stunned by the sudden catastrophe that had just taken place to resist. Williams sprang up behind her.

Several minutes later all were in the saddle and driving in their spurs.

But they had not gone twenty yards when there was a heavy crashing among the underbrush. A moment later black figures seemed to swarm into the road in front of them. So sharp and furious was the onslaught that the demoralized ruffians had no time to prepare themselves for the shock.

Some of them were literally ridden down; others managed to fire a few scattered shots before the attackers were upon them; the majority turned tail and fled. The leader of the newcomers had picked out one man and ridden straight at him. Williams had no opportunity even to draw his weapon when the other's fist smashed him senseless to the road.

In less time than it takes to tell it the mêlée was over. Those of the defeated party that had not escaped, or gone down in the skirmish, were standing sullenly in the road, well guarded by the rescuers. The steady drum of galloping hoofs and the occasional crack of revolvers, dying away in the distance, told of relentless pursuit of the rest.

"Rand, Rand—come quick! Cut these cords!" At the girl's despairing cry, the leader had dashed again to her side. In a moment she was free. She leaped weakly down, and stood there, grasping the saddle for support.

"Peterson!" she gasped. "Williams shot him—when he—blew the whistle! Back there on the road!"

Then she let go and rushed dizzily back to where the little, gray-haired man lay on his side. Careless alike of pain and the eyes that watched her, she dropped beside him and took his head into her lap. Little wordless murmurings fell from her lips.

Peterson opened his swiftly dimming eyes and looked up. He recognized the two faces bending over him. A smile, a shadowy reflection of the pleasant expression that had given him his nickname, hovered round his lips.

"Guess—it's—good-by—this time," he whispered faintly. "Rand, reckon you can —open—that letter now. An'—an'—take care—o'—Miss Jeanne here. She's a fine—girl—a almighty—fine—fine—"

The last words trailed off into silence. And, with the little smile still on his face, Smiley Peterson crossed the Great Divide. Minutes later Rand Cameron, utterly unsuccessful in his efforts to console her, rose from beside the bitterly sobbing girl. He walked softly back to the group which had been watching them in silent sympathy.

"McCoy," he said in a low, hoarse voice, "I'm going to take Miss Dudley home. She's been under too great a strain. I wish you'd bring back little Peterson when you come. I'll leave these creatures to you, and"—his gray eyes burning into the steady pair that showed through the slits in the black hood before him—"you can use your own judgment!"

McCoy threw back his mask. His gaze strayed to a big overhanging branch a little farther back beside the road. His jaw tightened grimly.

"All right, chief," he answered coolly. "Reckon everything's all ready to take good care o' them!"

CHAPTER IX.

THE AFTERGLOW.

THE afterglow of the sunset, welling up from behind the ridge of mountains along the western horizon, bathed the girl's face in its soft, warm light. She was seated, cross-legged, on the outermost point of a narrow, jutting crest, and her gaze roamed out across the town of Ramapo, far below her, and the rolling, green velvet of Red Valley beyond. A little way behind her, her big roan, Ted, was peacefully nibbling at the scattered tufts of coarse mountain grass.

She heard a step in back of her and turned quickly.

A tall, curly-headed man was smiling down at her. His dusty clothes showed abundant evidences of long, hard riding, and he appeared to be exceedingly weary. But there was a quiet satisfaction in his eyes that seemed to overshadow everything else about him.

"Rand!" She sprang to her feet, and her voice was glad. "Where have you been all this last week?"

"I've been about twenty-five miles from here, Jeanne," he replied, coming forward and taking her hand. "In fact, I was that far away until this very afternoon. Then I decided that there was nothing to keep me away from you any longer; and Baldy and I came back in a hurry." His gray eyes looked into his blue ones; and, under the influence of that steady gaze, the blue

ones dropped. Her cheeks became the color of the red rose. "Let's sit down for a while, Jeanne," he said, after a bit. "This is a pretty spot you've selected."

"Now," she said severely, when they were seated, "perhaps you'll let me know why you were so unkind as to rush off without telling me a word about it. I could not find out what had become of you." Her smile of welcome, however, robbed the words of their pretended rebuke.

"I went away for two reasons," he answered slowly. "One was that I wanted to verify some information that I had received; the other was that I had something to say to you, Jeanne, and I felt that I couldn't say it while you were under the—er—influence of certain—certain events that happened recently." He was beginning to have a hard time of it.

After one startled look the girl turned away her face, and her eyes stared vacantly across the valley. He waited for her to speak; but when she remained silent he resumed.

"Jeanne, do you remember when we were out riding some time ago, and Smiley joined us just as we were starting down toward the town? Do you remember he asked to talk to me alone?"

She nodded without looking around.

"Well, he gave me a letter then and asked me to keep it, unless—er—something happened to him. Perhaps you remember what he said to me about opening a letter when he was dying?"

She turned slowly, at that, and her eyes were misty and questioning.

"I remember," she said softly.

"That letter contained a queer document." His voice was strangely deep and quiet. "It told where his claim was located, and—it gave it to you and to me. That's where I've been, Jeanne. I was looking for the claim and investigating it. It is one of the richest I've ever seen. His document—I don't know what else to call it—asked us to take it as partners and develop it."

It was long before she answered.

"Poor little Smiley!" she murmured. Her lips were trembling and her eyes were full.

"A finer or braver friend never lived," he answered gently.

He waited with averted eyes until her heavy breathing calmed. At length he rose to his feet and began to walk uneasily up and down behind her.

"Jeanne," he said finally, "there is no reason for—for me beating around the bush any longer. The first day I came here I told you what had brought me here. I told you it was you. I still love you—I always have, and I always will. I can't be without you any longer, sweetheart. But I told you also that I would not ask you again until I made my strike—or until we brought peace and decency back to Red Valley."

He paused a moment and glanced at her in an effort to read her thoughts. But her face was turned away from him. She was unconsciously pulling out blades of the long grass and winding them in and out between her slender fingers.

"I've kept that promise, Jeanne," he said quietly. "Both conditions were fulfilled a week ago. I did not come to you then because you had just been through some terrible experiences, and were—er—weakened from your wound and depressed and—and pretty well worn out. But now—"

"But now," she interrupted in a low voice, getting slowly to her feet, "after deserting me, you follow me out here, and take advantage of me when I'm lonely and unhappy to—to tell me all—this! It is no use, Rand."

"Jeanne!" His voice was hurt, dumfounded.

"Yes," she continued still in the same subdued tone, "I could have given you my final answer a month ago—and I won't change it now, Rand, even if you have taken me unawares!"

She faced him, and his despairing gaze met the deep, tender light that glowed in her eyes.

"It is no use, you see," she said softly, "because you must have known long ago that I love you."

"Jeanne!" This time the glad cry fairly echoed over the mountain. In a bound he was beside her. He took her face between his hands.

"You adorable torturer!" he cried.

"Why did you give me that terrible minute?"

"Because," she murmured, "you kept me—waiting so long till you made your strike! Did you think *that* mattered?"

"Good Lord!" The exclamation came forth on a long sigh of relief and happiness. "Oh, Jeanne, why didn't I have enough sense to refuse to take your answer that last time!"

"Why didn't you!" she breathed. "It would have been just as well." There was a little gleam deep in the blue eyes beneath his. "You are so—so stubborn, Rand, that I knew as soon as you came here it was useless for me to resist."

He drew her closer and gently tilted back the blushing face until the tender sweetness of the red lips lay defenseless before him.

And only the evening star, peeping down from the deepening blue of the twilighted sky, saw what he did then!

(The end.)

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THE CITY

BY MARY L. BRAY

THE city lies upon the ground
That slopes toward the bay.
Have you not heard the city's sound
Like the far baying of a hound
Close on the hunter's prey?

So many leagues the city calls,
So many thousands hear,
There is a constant host that crawls
Toward the busy, barren walls
That it shall help to rear.

The city needs each eager hand
Of all that eager throng;
They do not always understand—
The city needs each eager band,
But does not need it long.

The streets where strangers walk alone
With population seethe.
There is not any hint of home;
The earth is overlaid with stone
Until it cannot breathe.

There are strange glimpses of delights
That poverty debars;
There are the brilliant, crowded nights—
The city has so many lights
One cannot see the stars.

The people shift as in a sieve
That shakes without a pause;
There is so little time to live,
No one has any thought to give
But to his little cause.

So comes the host from far and wide,
To strive and strive again;
A few shall swell the city's pride,
But, ah, the great defeated tide
Of women and of men!

No Fear

by Captain Dingle

Author of "The Clean Up," "The Pirate Woman," "Steward of the Westward," etc.

PRECEDING CHAPTERS BRIEFLY RETOLD

WHEN a boat that John Hollis, geologist, was trying to beach on a Caribbean island capsized in the surf, big, rough Paul Rollins saved him at risk of his life, but gave him but a cold welcome, as he had a supreme contempt for any man who was not physically strong. Paul and Richard Lascelles had leased the beach from the government for trepang fishing, the capital for the enterprise being furnished by Dormur, Richard's sister, with whom Paul was in love. Both men were greatly interested in a legend that treasure was buried on their leased property, and intent on finding it—and for this reason were not at all glad to have a visitor. However, when he recovered, Hollis insisted that the government had the right to grant him permission to make scientific researches on the property, and that it had done so. Unwillingly the partners allowed him to stay, and the Lascelles's made him comfortable in their rough shack.

Paul, furious because Hollis seemed to interest Dormur, sneered brutally at the smaller man, but when the girl was attacked by a pack of savage dogs it was Hollis who, bare-handed, saved her, at the cost of numerous bites and scratches. Hollis went about his business of geological investigation. He soon announced that he had made a "splendid find," and that he was going to town. Suspicious, Paul knocked him down. As the scientist regained his feet, he said: "I promise you that I shall cause you to hide your head for that blow."

Despite Paul's objection, Hollis went to town. There he met Dormur, who was on a shopping expedition. They returned together in a small sailboat that Hollis had hired. Hollis told the girl that he had a secret to tell her, but just then, as they neared the Lascelles beach, a rowboat, like their trepang boats, but painted white, and rowed by dark-skinned men whose faces had been whitened, shot out from shore and tried to run them down. On shore Hollis noticed a man on a bicycle watching them. Dormur, who was steering, ran the rowboat down, but some of its occupants boarded them, and in the fight that ensued before they were driven off they got possession of some of Hollis's scientific notes.

Because of a dishonest transaction in the past, Paul had a hold on Richard and demanded that the latter force Dormur to marry him. While Richard was considering the matter Paul had a fight with some of the Malays who did the fishing, and was saved by Hollis, who bombarded them with sharp shells and drove them away. Paul was badly hurt, but his great strength made his recovery rapid.

That night Hollis discovered that a bag of specimens that he valued highly had been stolen. Next day, while standing on a rocky headland he was knocked on the head, and when he recovered consciousness found himself in a wonderful cave, the prisoner of Jambi, the Malay headman. The fishermen had supposed the specimen-bag to contain treasure, and, disappointed, demanded that Hollis give them money. Upon his refusal they tied him up and left him in the cave, Jambi telling him grimly that he would visit him the next day to see if he had changed his mind.

The cave was flooded at each high-tide, and before long the rising water had reached Hollis's mouth.

CHAPTER XIII.

PAUL PAYS A DEBT.

SILENT in his agony Hollis crouched tense and quivering. His face, upraised to avoid the stinging brine at his lips, was set and white; but now no fear sat upon it, but rather the quiet, calmly defiant half-smile of one who sees the inevitable end and goes to meet it uncomplainingly.

A frequent singing in his ears irritated him slightly, for it meant that the sound-carrying waters were all but in them; a tiny drop from the roof, falling close beside him, wetted his temples with its paltry splash. And about him and beyond, drip-drip, drip-drip, ghostly drops fell incessantly, sharper of note now that the fall was lessened by one half.

To his strained senses the vaulted cavern was booming with sound: the faintest of

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splashes from dropping water became a report as of a gun. He shivered, and a smothered curse escaped him when through the shadowy distances of the place rang the cry of a bird.

"Tweedee - plip - plip! Tweedee-ee-plip-plip!" the song said and it echoed uncannily. The shiver that assailed him was induced by the sheer incongruity of such a sound in such a place; the mild, smothered curse, so utterly at variance with his habit, was the fruit of a fear lest his senses were scattering under the strain of his plight.

"A cardinal! a red cardinal makes a noise like that!" he ground out between clenched teeth. Then he laughed, harshly, bitterly. "A cardinal in here! Horrible!"

Yet his eyes searched the dimness overhead. His body ached with cramps, his neck felt as if it could never again hold his head at a normal poise; his lips had long since become bloodless and blue. But his eyes held the undaunted light, his vision was clear. And suddenly a thrill shot through him, causing him to ignore his pains to the extent of forcing further movement from his numbed muscles to enable him to bend his neck still farther backwards.

"By Jove, it is! It's a star!" he breathed, and wondered how he had missed that God-given twinkle before. High in the vault above him just one tiny speck of brilliant light hung like a flawless diamond against night-hued velvet. It vanished as suddenly as he had found it, and a new fear assailed him.

Then again it shone down upon him, mocking his misery or holding out hope—he could not decide which. And again through the spaces rang the cardinal's cry:

"Tweedee - plip - plip! Tweedee-ee-plip-plip! and the star was gone.

"Confounded nuisance—nerves!" muttered Hollis, forcing his eyes to leave the black space left by that fleeting star. For a moment he noticed nothing new in his situation; but, incredulously at first, then with surging hope, he realized that his chin was almost at its normal level and no bitter brine attacked his lips.

Peering anxiously, he saw an inch of wet rock opposite him, certain sign of falling waters; and, involuntarily, a shout of jubilation burst from his strained throat. It was answered in a fashion that set his pulses leaping.

"Mr. Hollis, can you hold out a little while longer?"

It was the low, rich, thrilling voice of Dormur Lascelles, trembling slightly with excitement, yet filled with deep concern and womanly pity. It came down from the place that star had hallowed by its ray of light; but, try as he would, Hollis could not detect any outlines which could possibly be a human face. The query came again, strained now, as if anxiety impelled it, and the professor gathered his wits and sent back a reply.

"Please don't be alarmed, Miss Lascelles. I'm quite all right now, thanks. It's awfully good of you to bother, though."

A little gasp high above greeted his cool reply. He strained his ears for words, but none came. And while yet his ears were tuned for that answer, he was plunged into darkness with the nerve-testing deliberation with which the waters had crept over him.

One lantern had gone out some time before, barely noticed by him, entirely disregarded; now the other one guttered to death, leaving for a moment a smoky, evil-smelling flicker, then falling to blackness which was stabbed ten times by a red, struggling dart of expiring flame before utterly dying out.

Now when he looked upward, he saw again that luminous star, doubly bright in the accentuated blackness. One thing it showed him, or perhaps two, since the fact of it being solitary indicated that the crack through which it shone must need be but small; the other thing was that the face which had filled the aperture was no longer there. Yet he heard voices above, two voices, and one was the lowered voice of Dick. Presently the star was blotted out again, and Dick called down:

"Hollis, I can't find any way into that prison of yours. How did you get there?"

"I don't know," Hollis laughed back, and his laugh was answered by Dick's protesting oath. "Don't fool time away," growled Dick. "How can we get you out?"

"How about that hole up there?"

"Might get your head through—no more,

Here, I'll send down a rope. You can try it."

"No use, old fellow," answered Hollis. "I'm trussed up to a post here like a mummy. Can't move. Don't bother. My jailers will be back soon, I expect."

A whispered discussion took place above, argument and objection, and then Dick's voice again.

"Dammit man! Can't you say how you got in there?"

"Hardly, Lascelles. I was whacked on the head first. Then I believe we walked in—water up to my chin—but I don't know a bit whereabouts, except that I walked mostly on level sand, and there aren't many sandy spots on this part of the shore."

A thought occurred to him, and he added: "Don't suppose it helps much, but at half-tide I heard 'em leaving the cave, and I believe they had a boat."

"Boat! There's no place within a mile that'll take a boat!" returned Dick; then swiftly the girl's voice broke in, and for a space Hollis could hear a vehement argument overhead. Again Dick spoke, but not to the prisoner.

"But Dot, I can't do that! I couldn't pull off a thing like that if it were you instead of Hollis. You know I'm the poorest swimmer alive, and absolutely no diver. Here—"

The voices ceased, and the professor fell to vaguely wondering what had been proposed in his behalf. Just once he heard a clatter overhead as from violently displaced rock; then, except for an infrequent word of encouragement from Dick, and rather more frequent grumbling of doubtful note, silence reigned in the cave.

Perhaps fifteen minutes passed before the hush was broken; then another voice, the deep growling voice of Paul Rollins, boomed hollowly through the vault as the star was again obscured. No word did the giant pass to the prisoner; he simply sought in the darkness for light. "Gimme that dark lantern, Dick," he growled with irritation; and a ray of light shot down and illumined the cave in darting circles, to rest for a long moment at last upon some spot invisibly behind Hollis's back.

"Huh! Some chance to take for that shrimp!" was the last remark Hollis heard; then the silence fell again, this time broken only by agitated breathing above, and the ceaseless drip of the water.

Had a whale broke water in the black pool at his feet, it could not have startled Hollis more than the tremendous sound that soon filled the cavern. Far behind him it rose, a tremendous outburst from laboring lungs, accompanied by the upheaval of waters; and through the volume of sound shot the panting oaths of a sore and distressed man.

Twisting himself painfully, Hollis sought to pierce the darkness, ineffectually. But he heard stumbling steps, and a grim, shrill-breathing voice demanded to know—

"Can't y' speak? Where are yuh?"

"Oh, here, Rollins! By Jove, this is awfully sporting of you! All cut up as you—"

"Shut up!" growled Paul, savagely. "D'yuh think I'm doing this for you? Blast this salt water, anyway!" and the voice trailed into lurid oaths that concealed the agony of brine-shot knife-wounds.

The stumbling steps came close, guided by Hollis's voice, until Paul brought up against the Pixie's organ and nearly scalped himself on the curtain fringe. But his hand found his man, and Hollis felt the swift slash of a knife at his wrists, which released him from his pillar.

"Show that light!" roared Paul, irritably, and a shaft of yellow radiance encompassed them. "Come on, he said, gripping Hollis's arm until he winced. "You can swim, I seen you once. Can y' dive?"

He dragged the professor along, over rough going in which his eyes seemed to possess the virtue of a cat's, never listening for nor repeating the demand for an answer to his question. For ten feet the lantern had followed them with its light, leaving the darkness the more intense when it failed to reach them. But now Hollis saw ahead a luminous patch which glowed dully like water under a clouded moon.

"There's the way out," said Paul, grimly, nodding at the luminous patch. "Got to dive, or wait for the tide to fall two feet."

"I'm afraid I'll have to wait," replied the professor, his teeth chattering with the

exquisite torture that assailed his limbs now he had relinquished his cramped position. "I never could dive."

Without a word more, but breathing fiercely as he worked, Paul seized Hollis and threw him deftly, having three turns of the cut rope around him again before he could utter protest or enquiry. Then loops were made in the rope, behind the bound man's shoulders, and Paul hauled him to his feet, twisting him around until their backs touched.

"Now keep still!" growled Paul, slipping his arms through the loops. "Shut up!" he grated, furiously, when Hollis would have protested. "Hold yer breath and keep still, that's all."

Helpless in the hands of the giant, Hollis relaxed and let things take their course. He felt the water rise to his knees, then to his waist again, felt the great shoulders of the man who bore him heave tumultuously, heard the sharp, smothered gasps as freshly opened wounds began to smart afresh; then came a brief order, "Fill yer lungs!" and he felt his heels fly upwards as his head went under, while the rushing of water past his ears told him of a fishlike rapidity of movement.

A sharp rock struck his elbow, his chest seemed to be bursting with pressure, the great limbs that propelled them both quivered with power; then came the upshoot into air, the wan light of a setting moon, the frowning rocks on all sides as they emerged, to be immediately caught in the circle of the lantern's light and to find hands clutching to aid them.

"Don't yuh dare say thanks!" snarled Paul, before the other could speak. "I'm one ahead on yuh now—paid fer them shells—and you're goin' to keep in my debt from now, see?"

CHAPTER XIV.

A STRICKEN GIANT.

DORMUR was human enough to feel a little bit pleased when Paul failed to appear for breakfast, for a distasteful task lay before her when they should meet. Barely recovered though he was, Paul had responded to her excited plea last night and pulled Hollis out of a perilous dilemma, but not entirely gratis. He had peered hard into her eyes by the lantern light when she aroused him from a doze to tell him what had happened, and had challenged her.

"You're mighty concerned about this fellow, ain't you? Do you forget there's an answer due to me before you monkey with others?"

She had replied quietly, fighting down with a terrific effort the furious anger that his words aroused in her: "Paul, please don't speak like that. Your answer will be ready at the proper time. Do try to help Mr. Hollis. If you can't, no man can, I'm certain."

Paul, fixing his black, glittering eyes full upon her pale face seemed to read her soul; then, his features writhing under the sting of healing wounds as the action of rising sent the blood to them, he had forced his splendid body to respond to her plea, while the meanest part of his being insisted upon exacting a price.

"I'll get the shrimp, and I want your answer as soon as I land him," he almost snarled at her. She had accepted with a silent nod, and the rescue was accomplished. But, unaccountably, Paul had not demanded his wages; he had stumbled away to his own hut as soon as Hollis was safe, and none had seen him afterward.

The respite did not bring rest to the nervous girl, for she spent the balance of the night, after Hollis was made comfortable, anticipating the ordeal of breakfast, when she was certain she must face the inevitable.

It had not come. Her brother was already down the shore haranguing his wavering crews to return to their work, for they were at the point of following Jambi's example since Rollins's exploit of the day before. The professor had also finished his meal, and now sat humped up on a chair, keeping his sore soles off the floor while he worked laboriously to fashion cushion-shaped footwear which would enable him at least to hobble. His feet had suffered agonizingly from his experience in the cave, and his other cramps and aches were trifling by comparison.

He glanced up when Dormur hesitated over the table, and he saw some of the trouble in her face, yet never guessed the the cause. But he was as eager to greet his rescuer as she was anxious to avoid him, and he remarked casually enough:

"In two minutes I'll have my pads done, Miss Lascelles. Shall I take something along to Rollins? He may not be very fit this morning, y'know, after that corking thing he pulled off last night. By Jove! but those cuts must have stung in the salt water!"

He surprised a scarlet flush on the girl's face, when he looked up again, and she was swiftly putting together some food and hot coffee. The flush was one of shame, for she realized that her repugnance for the meeting had caused her to forget entirely that the man she sought to avoid had suffered recently, and must be doubly suffering now.

"Please rest yourself," she said. "I am going down there myself. I was waiting in case you needed anything else."

"Er-no, thanks," Hollis stammered, astounded at the contrast between the girl's speech and appearance. His mouth remained open, as if to speak further, but she had vanished through the open door and her steps could be followed by sound as she hurried along the shelly beach.

The face he bent over his work gave no indication of Hollis's inward emotions. It was the face of the scientist, cold, inscrutable, a calm lake only rippled when a sudden pain shot through his limbs. He finished his sole-pads, and lay down, and fell asleep.

Dormur found Paul in a sore plight. Loss of blood, the tremendous effort he had put forth in Hollis's behalf, the inflammation set up by the clinging salt bandages in his hurts,. all resulted in a collapse of the powerful body, and Rollins looked a fitter subject for a doctor than for a cook or waiter. He was muttering between clenched teeth when Dormur entered, his face toward the wall; he made no sign of recognition even when she spoke to him, and she set aside the food she had brought and ran to his side, forgetful of the sentiments which had possessed her regarding him right up to that moment.

"Paul!" she cried, laying a hand on his shoulder. "Look at me, Paul. It is Dormur, come to bring you your answer."

She colored warmly as she uttered the words, forcing herself to say them in the hope that he could be aroused, for her first greeting had been ignored. But the man continued muttering, his great frame moving slowly from side to side, his face buried in the side of the bunk next the wall.

Dormur laid her hand on his forehead, and started back in fear of the fever she felt there. Gazing around helplessly, she saw the bare necessaries contained in the place, with neither comforts nor facilities for nursing a patient; there was only one thing to be done, and that was for Paul and Hollis to exchange their residence, because the bungalow could not house them all.

She hurried out and sought Dick. She found him wandering gloomily over the spot where, last night, she had discovered a faint glow among the rocks which had developed into the hiding place, or prison, of the professor. She told him what she wanted, and he followed her, telling her his own troubles as he went.

"Dot," he said, "I can't understand this business. If something is not done soon we'll have no men left who'll work. I don't know what Paul did to startle the hands, or what made them pile on him; but I do know that they won't turn-to for me, and they talk of quitting—quitting, Dot, now things are beginning to turn our way.

"And listen, didn't Hollis say he heard a boat in that hole? Well, I've searched every yard of shore nearby, and I can't find any place that a boat could ride through."

"It must be there, Dick," she replied, barely interested in what he said except as it concerned the slackening of the fishery operations; but she felt impelled to assert her belief in Hollis's story, even though she could not see any more clearly into the thing than Dick had. "We can come down at low tide, and look again. The thing that bothers me is where that boat goes to when it's not in the cave. I must have reached here last night very soon after they had left Mr. Hollis tied up there, and I saw no sign of boat or men."

"I'd like to know that, too," he returned. "The more I think about things, the more I am inclined to believe that Paul was right, Dot; that this chap Hollis is not so simple as he seems."

"Dick! Oh, you can't mean that you believe that utter nonsense about those men who attacked our boat doing so at the professor's orders? Why, it's too childishly silly! Why on earth should Mr. Hollis want to even dream of carrying me off? And suppose he did—Dick, if you say anything like that again I'll have to scream. It's ridiculous."

Dick laughed awkwardly. He knew how ridiculous it was. But he had given himself to a bargain which was shady if not shameful, and he was not sufficiently hardened in such things as to be able to carry it off with effrontery.

He needed an excuse, good or bad, wise or ridiculous: and he seized on the impossible tale of the professor's imagined duplicity as the nearest to hand of all excuses. But he was not anxious to follow it up. His conscience was soothed by merely mentioning it, and he was glad to follow Dormur into Paul's shack and let the matter drop.

"By Jupiter, Dot, he's in a bad state," he exclaimed when he had examined Paul. "Looks very like fever to me. It's either a doctor here or the hospital for Paul. Which d'you think?"

"Oh, surely neither!" cried the girl. "He and you made enough commotion about the professor coming here, although he was shot out on the beach in a gale; do you want another stranger here?

"Let me try with him first, before you call in assistance. Mr. Hollis will gladly help me if he knows anything about nursing, and I suppose he must, or he would never start out to be a geologist alone. Can you get help to carry Paul to the house?"

"Not so easy as it sounds," said Dick, with a scowl. "Paul's the chap they were all trying to carve up a few days ago. I doubt if any of 'em will put a hand to him unless there's a knife in it."

"Then I'll have to persuade them," the girl answered, and ran outside where she whistled shrilly on her fingers. In response a half-dozen hounds came bounding down to her, wide of mouth, sly of glance. She had picked up a stick when she whistled, and they fawned before her at sight of it.

With a sharp call to them she walked along to the shanties of the trepang crews, and the pack loped at her heels. Outside the mess-shed she stood and called men she knew by name, and the faces that appeared in response were dark and sullen until it was seen that she was alone save for the dogs.

Then eyes lighted, and scowls lessened, for Dormur had many times laid these uncouth men under obligations by her kindness and desire to make their life more endurable. On some faces, however, the scowls remained dark, or even darker, at sight of her; and it was in expectation of meeting such that she had taken the savage hounds with her.

She stated her errand, and the camp was immediately divided. None wanted to aid Rollins; but some would do anything to please Dormur, if it did not mean disloyalty to their fellows. The dogs caused some to hesitate about their refusal, but hatred of Paul was by far the stronger sentiment in camp, and her errand seemed doomed to failure.

It was perhaps remembrance of her own feelings toward Paul that forced her into the step she took. Not for worlds would she leave undone anything calculated to help Paul, now that he had been stricken down helpless in the performance of an act which was to bring its own reward in her answer to him. She gripped her stick firmly, half-raising it, and stepped up to a stalwart Portuguese.

"Here, 'Tolomew, I want you," she said sharply, and looked straight into his eyes as she spoke. The man towered above her, and his teeth flashed with lazy insolence. "Stand out here!" she repeated, and stepped toward him, her stick quivering, the dogs at her heels growling throatily.

Her cool gray eyes met 'Tolomew's flashing brown ones unwaveringly, her red lips were parted in a smile of scorn. The two wills contested a situation which meant all to the winner: it was a question of obedience or mutiny, precipitated before its time

by Paul's necessities. The Portuguese permitted his eyes to drop, and an awkward shrug of the shoulders heralded his defeat; for again Dormur spoke her order, and he stepped out from his mates, hiding his discomfort under a swaggering laugh.

"Thank you, 'Tolomew. I knew you were a man. Now pick me one more man like yourself, and that will do. I shall remember who are my friends."

Dormur turned without a further look, and walked toward the hut where Dick awaited her; she gave no look backward, confident that the two men would follow; and they overtook her at the door, 'Tolomew and a compatriot, Diaz. 'Tolomew laid a hand on her shoulder, gently, and halted her before entering.

"Missy, we do this for you," he muttered, "not for the big pig inside. Some time you remember, yes?"

"Yes, I shall remember," she replied hurriedly, then led them to the couch.

They lifted the whole weight bodily, Dick helping, and Paul was removed to the larger house in his bed, unconscious of his transfer. The two Portuguese left the moment the cot-legs touched the floor, and the noise of their entry and departure awakened John Hollis from the sleep of physical exhaustion he had fallen into after breakfast. He reached the cot-side swiftly, and his eyes, heavy with fatigue, darkened still further at sight of Paul.

Hollis himself had not escaped scot-free from his ordeal; that long period of wet and cramp and torturing rock had left a deep mark upon him, and his frame was bowed and twisted from sheer agony of nerve and muscle. But he saw before him a crying need for swift and expert attention, and his mind responded, forcing his tired and pained limbs to obey.

"Get some hot water, Miss Lascalles," he said. "If you have any tallow, let me have it, please. I can make his wounds easier before I go down to his hut. Frankly, though, he ought to have some expert attention."

"I will look after him," said Dormur, quietly but with emphasis. "We need no outside interference."

Hollis began to unwrap bandages, and Dormur cut fresh ones. Dick stood by, willing to help but incapable of improving on what was being done. And Paul stirred restlessly, as if stung by the removal of the covering from fiercely burning sores. He turned, and tossed his arms, yet his eyes remained closed.

But his brain was awakening to full consciousness, and presently he opened his black eyes and gazed vacantly into the faces above him. Some spark of mercy permitted him to first see Dormur, and his awakening was complete; he seized her hand, and gazed passionately up at her. The hand he had flung out was seized at the elbow by Hollis, and a bandage applied, for the sight was not a pretty one for the girl to see; and with the new touch Rollins turned angrily and met the eyes of the man he despised.

"Don't you touch me!" he barked hoarsely, snatching away his arm. "D'ye hear me? Get out o' my shack, and don't you dare to touch me!"

He stubbornly pulled the covers over him, turning to the wall, muttering fretfully like a sick child. Dormur stood irresolute, for Paul's action had undone all the good the professor had managed to accomplish, and she shuddered at the sight. But Hollis saw the futility of remaining. He gave Dick simple instructions, and left the patient to brother and sister, staggering away himself to try to alleviate some of his own aches and pains.

As he left the door he heard a stir behind him and a growling, impatient voice from the cot. Flashing a glance backward, he saw that the petulance of big Paul was more utterly childish than he had believed possible; for with his acceptance of his dismissal the sick man had again turned, and was now clutching Dormur's hand tightly, and his eyes blazed up into hers. The growling, impatient voice was saying:

"If that fellow's ever coming back here, Dormur, I want your answer right now! What is it?"

Hollis hurried away as fast as his cramped limbs would carry him, for he did not care to pry into such palpably intimate business; but it was humanly impossible for him to avoid conjecturing, and he won-

dered, with a dull ache at his heart, what could be the answer: the question he was forced to admit there was little doubt about.

He tried to forget the matter in busying himself about the hut, for the cot had gone with Paul, and at the best of times accommodation was scanty. Toiling painfully, he contrived to arrange some sort of hammock with a blanket and rope, and stood back to regard his handiwork. He was aware of a presence, and turned swiftly to come face to face with Jambi, who, finger on lips, with warning instead of threat in his face, stood just within the door he had just closed.

CHAPTER XV.

HOLLIS PLAYS A LONE HAND.

HOLLIS evinced no surprise at the apparition of his late captor; but unostentatiously he retained a good grip on the clasp knife he had been using in making his hammock. Jambi's keen eyes missed nothing, but his smile was silky and ingratiating as he spoke:

"We are verry sorry we hurt you," he said softly, selecting his words carefully as if to make them carry conviction. "I was thinking wrong. Now I think right, Misser Hollis.

"We are many people; you are but one, and those men you live with are not your friends, I think. You are verry clever man, also. Me, and my men, we want to go away from this place. We are afraid of the big pig.

"Somewhere is gold by here. I know. I think you know. Suppose you help us find it, we give you one half, and then we go away, with no bother."

"I have already told you I know nothing of this gold," replied Hollis sharply. "I told you, too, I would tell you nothing if I knew. Now I tell you to get out of here before I call for assistance and have you whipped."

Jambi's face worked hideously, his venemous eyes seemed to dart fire. But as suddenly as the paroxysm came it passed, and the silky, ingratiating smile returned. He called softly, and two other silent men entered, ranging themselves beside him.

"See?" murmured Jambi, "I am not so helpless, yet I seek your good will. Do not think again of whipping. You can help me by your wisdom. Help me seek that gold, that is all, and in return we will remove the big pig from here."

For a moment Hollis failed to catch the full import of the man's words. Then he saw that soft, incongruous smile slowly spread and take on a more vivid expression, and there was no longer room for doubt when the Malay murmured sibilantly:

"Missy Lasell!"

The professor, unskilled in wordy craft, felt his blood boil to the point of eruption at the cunning suggestion that he lend himself to these men in exchange for the removal of helpless Paul Rollins—Paul the tempestuous, Paul the courageous, Paul the enigma. But thought of Paul and his helplessness was the one thing required to endue the man of peaceful pursuits with the power to see and grasp all the tremendous possibilities in the keeping of these mutinous men.

He saw, in fact, that, whether he consented to Jambi's request or not, with Paul incapacitated, the entire camp and its fate lay in the hollow of Jambi's yellow paw; should the Malay once decide that further search was hopeless, and relinquish it, vengeance upon Dick and Paul must be amazingly simple of execution, and Dormur must inevitably share in their fate if nothing worse befell her. And, with a clarity that amazed him, he suddenly seemed to acquire the faculty for reviewing the situation in all its phases with as complete an understanding as even Paul, man of action entirely, could do.

The outstanding point that occurred to him was that two men at least were well-disposed toward Dormur, no matter how they felt toward Rollins, for they had certainly carried out her wishes in transferring the wounded man from house to house. It was a peg on which to hang much of later moment; and the professor, with the simplicity that marked his every-day aspect, answered Jambi.

"It would be easy just now to remove Mr. Rollins, wouldn't it?" He shuddered inwardly at the malevolent gleam that

flashed in the Malay's eyes; but maintained his own attitude of transparent simplicity which, however, was maintained with difficulty. "No, no!" he cried, in apparent horror, "I don't want you to do it—yet! But I am willing to help you seek that treasure, on condition that you do as I tell you until you see that there is nothing left to be done."

"Yes, yes!" assented Jambi with unconcealed eagerness. The other two men shuffled nearer, their dark, animal faces alight with greed and enforced restraint. Their yellow fingers writhed and grasped, as if seizing throat and knife, or clutching red, milled gold.

"Very well. Then first let us go away from here. It will never do for me to be seen with you chaps. Besides, we cannot talk freely here, and you might just as well begin your search at once."

"Where we go?" demanded Jambi breathlessly. Shrewd rascal that he was, he thought he saw beneath the professor's outward simplicity the unmistakable sign of intimate knowledge.

"To your cave."

The three Malays glared suspiciously at Hollis; then they exchanged glances, and muttered comments in their own tongue. The professor smiled over their heads, and went on, noticing nothing of their aspect: "I believe if this money is anywhere on these shores, it is more likely to be in that cave than anywhere else. I know the story so well, and I think every other place has been well searched."

He paused, as if now seeing for the first time their hesitation, and remarked indifferently: "Just as you like, of course. The cave is no secret now, and I can get other men here to help me. I thought you wanted to—"

"All right, all right," broke in Jambi hastily. "We go. You come along bimeby, in five minutes, and I meet you. But"—he became transformed for a second into an imp of evil, and two inches of wicked knife-blade appeared at his belt line—"six men watch you all the time, and—" the gesture was more eloquent than any words.

Hollis laughed rather nervously, but held his attitude of cool indifference until the three men had gone; then he turned livid, and his frame shook violently with the stress of his overwrought nerves.

He hurriedly put the shack in condition to be left, and collected into a heap several of his own things. His glance fell on a box of dynamite in a locker, and he closed the door on it, retaining the thought of it for future reference. It was used at times for dynamiting fish, and had also been put to good use in removing an awkward rock from the fairway to the little haven.

The last thing he selected was one of his geological hammers, and with this in hand he followed down the shore and clambered to the ridge of rocks, waiting for the appearance of his guides with a flutter of elation, for, whatever the outcome, he was about to solve the mystery of the cave and the boat—if he could only succeed in cloaking his tremendous eagerness.

The Malay came to him out of a narrow rocky cleft running to the sea, and mutely motioned him to follow. While waiting, Hollis had used his eyes to good purpose, and now, when he stepped down in the wake of Jambi, he had established definitely the exact position of the narrow opening in the roof of the cavern, and from that estimated the trend of the entrance with reference to it.

As on the previous occasion, his guide led him into the sea, but this time he could use his full faculties by vivid sunlight, and the extraordinarily transparent waters showed him that which made him marvel that the entrance, which Paul had seemed to find instinctively in the night, had remained so long undiscovered by others. First he must step down to the sea floor, hard sand and shells; then, following Jambi, he saw at his feet a silvery path winding apparently direct into the heart of a forbidding rock, in which no opening was visible above water. A sharp bend revealed a low arch, not more than six inches clear of the surface, and into this tiny aperture they walked, forced to lower their heads until the water lipped their mouths in order to pass.

"So far so good," muttered Hollis, "but what about the boat?" He saw by the

waterline on the rock that at the lowest tide the arch could never be more than a scant foot clear; he controlled his curiosity and stepped forward, soon to find the roof rising, and with it the sandy floor, until at length he emerged on dry ground and saw about him the wonders of the cave, this time lighted in dazzling shafts by the sunlight pouring in from the hole overhead and through the low tunnel he had passed. He looked around eagerly for the boat, for he now heard the voices of many men; but Jambi hinted at more momentous matters.

"Here, take lantern," he said, "I show you all the cave."

Other lanterns appeared like glow-worms in distant spaces, and the professor was urged forward into a part of the cavern he had not seen before. Five steps beyond the great organlike formation, he burst upon a veritable fairyland palace, and all thought of boat, men, or his situation fled and left him again the keen, intent geologist, blind and deaf to all but his beloved pursuit.

With Jambi ever at his side he paced a gallery of spiraled and fluted columns, glistening like glass, that ran around a placid lakelet of velvety black sheen; a pool like that beside which he had suffered, but greater by many times, and, estimating by the startling visibility of objects at the bottom, not more than five feet deep. He stopped and peered into the pool, and the Malay anticipated the question he would have put.

Calling one of the men, he secured a lead-line, and grinning all the while, threw the lead into the water. Then Hollis's eyes opened wide in amazement, for thirty, forty, sixty feet slipped out, and then the end, while yet the lead hung suspended.

"By Jove! How deep is it?" he exclaimed.

"He verry deep," grinned Jambi, hauling in the line. "You no think gold down there, p'raps, hey?"

But the professor was silent. He was scanning the surrounding walls, and the crevices nearer the surface beneath the water, and into his trained mind there swept the conviction that here was a pool not formed by the ages, but excavated by man, whose work had perhaps been interrupted, or totally stopped, by some convulsion of nature.

For, in spite of the swarms of gorgeous fishes, angel fish and green, venomous morays, which seemed to have held the pool their home since the creation, he detected forms of stalagmite a little way down which could never have been deposited in their present position unless above water. On the farther side, just submerged, a shelf ran for twenty feet as level as a plank; immediately beneath it, far down in the depths, its counterpart lay, as if the plank had been sawn lengthways.

Following the walls around, from the place where the planklike shelf seemed to have been abruptly broken off, there appeared a black void, from which came those boat sounds he had heard before. Beyond that, the glistening walls again ran on, following the twisting of the place and finally reappearing beside the place where he stood; and here, in a darker corner, illuminated by the lanterns, dancing grotesquely as the flames flickered to their swinging, another level ledge stood knee-high, but revealing yet another formation which brought the professor abruptly to the rightabout, thrilled with a new and overwhelming ecstasy.

"Giant's Causeway!" he ejaculated, and ignored Jambi and his scowling face in the enthusiasm of his new discovery. The ledge was perfect in proportion, as if designed by man; the boulders which gave rise to his exclamation might have been placed there and carved by a sculptor, so regularly cylindrical and uniform were they; and the whole formation shone with the sheen of mother-o'-pearl, enchantingly lovely.

"Come, look for gold!" growled Jambi, and now other men stepped up to them and muttered darkly. But John Hollis was intent upon a calculation, and gave them no attention. He considered awhile, recalling the turnings and number of steps in his progress to that point; then began chipping at a corner of the ledge, reaching bare, black rock in a few deft hammer strokes and putting a piece of the stalagmite into his pocket. His arm was seized by fierce

hands in a moment, and the Malay snarled in his ear:

"Show me that! What you find, hey?"

The demand brought him back to earth, and he laughed happily, like a boy, producing his specimen without hesitation.

"This?" he smiled. "Look at it. Isn't it glorious?"

Three dark faces scowled over the piece of calcium, then were thrust close to his, and Jambi grated bitterly.

"You think you fool us, hey? What for I bring you here?"

Hollis laughed again, but now a trace of nervousness was in his laugh, for the Malay's knife began to slide subtly from its sheath, and the scientist's ecstasy had passed, leaving him once more among sordid company in sordid surroundings.

"Oh, I had forgotten your treasure," he replied. "Come, let us look further."

Grumbling but eager, the Malays followed him with the lights; into the deepest recesses they walked, Hollis chipping rock here and there and explaining his reasons.

He explained to his uninformed guards that anything which might have been deposited there a century ago must surely by now be covered by the shining armor they saw everywhere, unless it were buried underwater. And gradually they were animated by some of his quiet enthusiasm; by slow degrees even Jambi ceased to suspect him, and to follow his movements with interest. In an hour they had examined the cavern throughout; then Hollis saw the time was ripe to make a report.

"Where do you men live?" he asked casually. So far had he succeeded in pacifying the men that Jambi answered him civilly; "We live sometime here, sometime over on little island. 'Nother cave there, a big one, but not like this."

"Well, I tell you what you want, Jambi. Picks, and crowbars, and dynamite. And food for many days, and water. Now, you go and get the stores and the tools, and I'll bring some dynamite. When can you get back?"

A noisy discussion ensued; and it was Jambi now who stoutly upheld the professor. Greed, and the prospect of speedily satisfying it, had driven all suspicion from his mind; and his control over his men was thorough. He nodded eagerly, when he had silenced his men's arguments, and replied:

"We verry short of stores. I take boat and go along town. To-night we come back. When moon come up over the eastern hill you be here, and we have everything ready."

"Good. I'll have the dynamite here. Have you money?"

If any distrust of him lingered, his question dispelled it. Another sibilant chattering ensued, and Jambi admitted that funds were as short as the stores. Hollis produced money and tendered it; the Malay uttered a growl of acknowledgment, and in the same breath barked a short command. A man slipped like a shadow into the darkness, and in five minutes more his voice came softly down from overhead, announcing the coast clear.

"Come!"

Jambi took the professor's arm, and led him into a narrow, black passage, which somehow seemed vaguely familiar. And the shimmering of the lantern-light revealed the lines of a boat, barely afloat, its gunwales a scant three inches above water.

"Come!" said Jambi again, and Hollis followed, shivering at the prospect of entering that black water, wondering at the state of the water-logged boat. He was speedily to see the cunning arrangement invented by the secrecy-seeking mutineers.

The men entered the water, ranging themselves along the gunwales of the boat, Jambi took a place at the stern, and placed Hollis's hand beside his own. The boat moved sluggishly along, impelled by the swimming crew, until presently the water was lighted vividly from the outside by the high sun. Into the arch they propelled it, until the bows emerged into open day, then the stern, and the boat swam clear, but awash.

A barked order, and a man climbed gingerly aboard, and the rest of the mystery was clear. A powerful stake-sinking pump was fitted amidships in the boat, and a dozen swift strokes brought the gunwales another six inches clear, allowing another man to put his weight aboard. With two pumping, others climbed in as the boat rose, until, in ten minutes, the craft floated buoyantly and the full crew took their places.

Hollis watched in wonder until the crew took to their oars; then he climbed up the rocks and, once out of sight, sat down suddenly and shook with the revulsion of his emotions. The whole of the time he had been in Jambi's company, he had lived under a terrific stress in order to preserve a calm and fearless front; now he was free, and his nerves went slack.

For an instant he felt impelled to run to Lascelles and blurt everything to him, begging for protection; the next moment he cursed himself for a weakling, and rose to his feet, striding off in the direction of Paul's shack, determined to follow the thing through as he had silently planned it.

His preparations were few; simply the collection of some sticks of dynamite and fuses, and—so deeply rooted was his professional enthusiasm—some small sacks for possible specimens. He looked at his watch, and noted that he had many hours to wait before keeping his appointment at the rocks. And the natural thought occurred to him that he should pay a visit to the other house; for, whether Paul wanted to see him or not, he felt a deep interest in the welfare of the man who had twice saved him—and a deeper interest, perhaps, in the girl who was now nursing that man. Besides. he now had something to tell her.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE PROFESSOR ASKS A QUESTION.

IN the little garden behind the bungalow he found her. She was intent upon her thoughts, and he reached her side before she saw him; then, as he accosted her, her face brightened for an instant, only to resume immediately an expression of mental pain which went straight to his heart. The words he had meant to say were stayed; he inquired simply:

"How is Rollins now?—better I hope."

The nurse rose superior to the woman for a moment, and she smiled as she replied: "Oh, yes, he's much better. He's fast asleep, and "—a faint tremor shook her—"I think when he wakes up he'll be little the worse, except for soreness."

Hollis detected the note of discomfort, and, while incapable of divining the cause, saw the need of diversion.

The day was brightness and balm in perfection; fleecy clouds and wheeling birds speckled a sky of purest azure; the sea stretched from foreshore to horizon in a shimmering sheet like polished steel, dappled as in some immense heraldic shield by cloud shadows and the multicolored patches of the reefs and rocky-heads. About them a soft breeze crooned, and brought upon its wings the savor of the ocean itself—clean, exhilarating, inspiring to forgetfulness.

"Shall we walk down the shore? Have you time?" he asked softly. She leaped at the suggestion, offering as it did distraction.

"I'd like to. I can spare half an hour, and it will do me good," she said. "The past few hours have shaken me more than I care to confess."

"Then let us visit the rocks again," he suggested, and she smiled brightly at the thought of his enthusiasm which would not permit him to desert his precious rocks even after such an experience as had recently been his.

"Another discovery?" she jibed. He laughed appreciatively, and in her rejoinder her gloom was dispelled, and, at least for the time, she was her own bright self. When they reached the ridge she had become the cheery companion, finding sport and mirth in the professor's incessant interruptions to their progress while he expounded deep theories concerning his beloved pursuit.

"You are an enigma to us, professor," she laughed. "Are you still trying to convince us that your life is bound up in sacks of rocks? That you have no other motive in life, no other motive in coming here?"

"By Jove, no!" He faced her suddenly, as if unexpectedly reminded of something he had in mind besides geology. "Am I boring you with my dry theories?

"No, of course, I am not a cold, stony, unfeeling geologist, although that is my absorbing hobby. I have much the same internal composition as other men—er— that is, you know, except perhaps in physical courage or recklessness. I believe I have a heart, for instance, which is susceptible to emotions just as other more physically capable men's hearts."

"But about the rocks?" she interrupted hurriedly, and avoided his gaze with lowered eyes. He sensed her intention to break off his train of thought, but wilfully misunderstood her meaning.

"Yes, the rocks, of course. How silly of me to talk anatomy. I know nothing about that study, naturally." He stole a glance at her face, and his eyes twinkled brightly at sight of the telltale flush that warmed her cheeks. "But the rocks, I believe you said.

"Well, I have made another discovery, and one which may concern all of us. You see, I secured before coming down here the survey of various leases along shore, and since last night I have established the fact that the great cave from which Rollins rescued me is not on the land leased by your folks—"

"But that does not concern us, surely? If there is no entrance—oh, but, of course, there is. You were taken in there, and didn't you say you heard a boat? Do you think there's a possibility—"

"Of treasure?" he smiled, taking up her question. "Frankly, I believe those kegs of dollars are right down under our feet."

"Oh! Then it is ours!"

"Hardly. You see how this ridge trends? Your property ends at the westward line of the rocks. The cave is entirely outside of it. In fact, I hold the lease myself of land which embraces every part of this cavern except the entrance—and that, being between high and low-water marks, is, of course, no-man's land."

Dormur stared at the calm face, utterly lacking in expressed emotions of money-lust, and cried unbelievingly: "You can stand here and tell me you have found a fortune and yet look like that? I don't know what to think of you, Mr. Hollis.

"Do you still insist that your errand here was geology? Can you still deny that you came here, spying on us, seeking for what you must have learned in your first hours here was the aim and chief object of our work?"

"That's scarcely fair," Hollis smiled. "I did not say I had found anything. I have not. But I said the truth when I told you I believed the treasure you speak of is here. It has yet to be found.

"I simply use my eyes, and what little knowledge I have acquired; and I have seen no other spot anywhere near here which is likely to ever have been a suitable hiding-place for kegs of money.

"But if I found this fortune, if fortune it is, I believe it would make small difference to me. There are other things in life far worthier of a man's ambitions than amassing wealth. The good opinions of valued friends, for instance.

"I am very sorry you think me capable of lying. My sole object in coming here was as I stated it. I did hope to discover one of these amazingly wonderful caves; but had not the slightest idea of treasure until I heard your men speak of it. Of course, I know the stories that are current about such things; but even if I am fortunate enough to stumble on this one I am not sure that I want it. I am not without sufficient means for all my simple wants."

"I beg your pardon for what I said," Dormur murmured after a pause, in which she was awkwardly aware of his intent gaze. "I think the idea of treasure has the property of heating the blood. You are fortunate in having blood so precisely balanced to your scientific needs that it is incapable of heating."

The moment the words left her lips she knew that her last sentence was untrue. They stood side by side against a steep boulder, facing the open sea; her hands were suddenly taken in his; she thrilled to the unexpected strength of their grip, and his voice sent the blood surging to her finger-tips with the soft intensity of it.

"Dormur, my blood fires as readily as Paul's, but perhaps not to the same impulses. I cannot thrill to the thought of money, or conflict, or anger. I can thrill to love, and love of you has—" She shivered slightly, and he paused, seeking her eyes, fearful that he had offended her beyond recall. "Look in my eyes, Dormur," he said, "and tell me I must not continue. Can you? Dare you?"

"Why do you mention Paul?" she demanded, and he saw pain in her eyes again. Then she suddenly drew her hands away, covered her face with them, and her body shook pitifully as she answered him: "I

wish you had never come here! I do! Why had you to come here, with your—oh, you must not say another word to me about this. Please never mention this subject again."

"Very well," he replied soothingly. "I am sorry I have pained you. I was foolish to imagine you might care for me."

"But I do!" she cried vehemently, then confusion covered her at the realization of what she had said. In a moment he had taken her hands again.

"You do? Then why must I not speak—"

"Oh, won't you understand? Must I tell you in words that wrack my soul that I am promised to Paul?"

Hollis gazed at her with all his clean, compassionate nature in his eyes. She turned from him with bowed head, and walked away without another word. He stood for a moment, then concealing beneath a softly sunny smile the pain that wrung his heart, he followed her and overtook her as she reached the sand.

"One moment, Miss Lascelles," he said, with no hint of what he suffered in his voice. "I ask you to forget what I have said. As soon as I can clean up my work here I shall leave.

"In the mean time, cannot we remain friends? There may be matters in which I can help you, or all of you, you know; and I want to feel that should you need help of any kind you will permit me to render it if I can."

The face she turned to him was the face he had seen when he first saw her in the garden: pained and somber; at his words a wan smile struggled to brighten her features, and she held out her hand impulsively.

"I will come to you, my friend, first of all," she said. "I believe in you now, and if ever a girl needed a friend it is I. You, too, forget what has passed, please; and don't let this drive you away from your work."

Then, herself again, she smiled as of old and said: "I must go in now and see to my patient. I have a double interest in Paul now, you know."

She entered, and Hollis walked slowly down the beach to the smoking-sheds. He knew now what a price those last cheerful words must have cost her; and inexperienced as he was in affairs of the heart, he could not decipher the riddle she had read him.

In his simple code, betrothal presupposed affection, and the affections of such a woman as Dormur Lascelles surely could never be so irresponsibly bestowed as to be capable of transference to another object. Yet she had thrilled him with the belief that she cared for him; cared for him, yet forbade him to speak because she was promised to Paul.

"I must argue this thing out with Dick Lascelles," he concluded, and was not in the least aware of the interdiction placed by custom on such arguments. He only knew that his good friend was in trouble, that he had seen her weeping and trembling, and that it was but friendship for him to endeavor to unravel the tangled skein.

He found Dick in the smoke-house, grumbling and swearing at the smokers over unsatisfactory work. He called him outside, and Dick joined him, looking savage, with no promise of being a good listener to the argument the professor was preparing.

"Cut it short, whatever it is, Hollis," growled Lascelles. "This confounded business is going to the damnation bow-wows since that crew cleared out. They were our smokers. These lunatics don't know how to do the work. Can't your business wait until I come to the house?"

"Hardly worth while, old chap. Matter of a few words. You have a sister, she is betrothed to Rollins, isn't she?"

"Yes," nodded Dick surlily. The question brought to his mind vividly his own part in the engagement. Hollis's next words set his blood raging in shameful fury.

"Then tell me, why does she hate the notion?"

CHAPTER XVII.

DICK FINDS A FRIEND.

THE quietly spoken query, accompanied by the mild, steady stare of the frank blue eyes, struck Lascelles with the force of ten harshly barked demands. The

natural reply to such a question, that it was no concern of the inquirer's, was halted in his throat by the swift realization that he, the brother, was ill-fitted to pose as his sister's champion. But the words had induced hot anger, and Dick choked down his mortification and replied curtly:

"I ought to knock you down for your confounded impudence, Hollis. I have not invited you to meddle in the affairs of my sister. Dormur is of full age. Mind your own business."

Hollis colored slightly. He knew instinctively that he had intruded on forbidden ground; in what manner he could not at the moment see. But Dick's tone warned him to caution, while it did not divert him from the subject, which lay very near his heart. He apologized quietly:

"I beg your pardon, Lascelles. I am ignorant of custom in such matters. I simply noticed Miss Lascelles was in mental trouble, and I like to think of her as a friend—of all of you as friends—so I came to you, her brother, to ask if I could be of any help. I know your sister is of age; that is why I surmised there must be something underneath her obvious lack of enthusiasm in the matter of Rollins."

Dick was silent. The professor's mild manner and transparent simplicity disarmed his anger; it left him wide open to the attack of his uneasy conscience, and forced him to review his own part in his sister's proposed sacrifice. And since knowing Hollis, seeing his behavior in several trying situations, noticing the unruffled calm of the man after each succeeding tempest, he had been forced to concede both harmlessness and sincerity of purpose to the stranger who had been cast up at his door by the storm.

His own troubles, both with the men and himself, combined to make him, while irritable, susceptible to sympathetic help; and his first rage passed, he gave Hollis a reply which dismissed the subject and raised another one.

"Hollis, old chap, there is a sort of family skeleton. That's all I can tell you. If you take my advice, you'll keep off Paul's metaphorical corns. We're hardly intimate enough, y'know, for me to confide private matters in you, particularly those which concern my family affairs."

Then, in direct contrast to his denial of intimacy, Dick burst into a recital of business worries which seemed scarcely more Hollis's affair than Dormur's trouble appeared to be.

"But this business has got me hamstrung! We should have heard by now from the agent who took our first shipment of slugs. We shall soon be stumped for funds; and on top of everything Paul's confounded temper drove away our smokers, and we've spoiled every smoking we've tried since Jambi's crew ran." He finished gloomily: Dormur's money is all sunk in this thing—practically lost—; I have nothing, and now we're dependent on Rollins for everything until funds come to hand for goods shipped—and that may be never!"

"Haven't much confidence in the agent, eh?"

"Not much. We don't know him. Paul engaged him by letter, saying he knew him years ago in the East."

"Is he out there now?" asked Hollis, mildly interested.

"No. He's in New York. If I had funds I'd go right there by the next steamer and hunt him up."

Hollis spoke in his usual mild way, and there was no trace of emphasis to his offer; but the cool manner could not hide from Dick the tremendous possibilities opened up to him when he heard, quietly:

"I thought perhaps I could help, Lascelles. Draw on me for funds, if you will. Either for passage to New York, or to carry on here. And, if you think it advisable, I can bring back Jambi and his crew to their smoking. This business ought not to be allowed to die now."

"D'you mean it?" gasped Dick. Then, remembering: "Oh, confound it! It can't be done. At least, I can't go to New York. There's nobody here to control these ruffians and take care of Dormur."

His disappointment was so keen, so utterly unconcealed, that it was easy to detect where his chief expectations had lain. The trip to New York appealed to him strongly.

"I think it can be managed, Lascelles,"

the professor said easily. " Rollins will be about by to-morrow, so your sister says. I believe most of the men can be depended upon to behave themselves; and I will take care of Jambi. I see nothing to prevent you taking advantage of my offer."

" Perhaps not—but, Jambi! You take care of him? By jove, Hollis, what sort of a man are you? Or—er—perhaps you've been in with him all the time."

His voice hardened as he recalled Paul's early hint regarding the professor's connection with that crew, and now for the first time really harbored a germ of suspicion that it might be true.

" Not at all," Hollis laughed, and his blue eyes twinkled amusedly. " But I have a scheme for keeping them harmless, at least for a while. They seem to believe that I hold the key to that treasure you were speaking about.

" If Paul can take care of the work, I can keep the workmen up to the pitch—Jambi's crew, that is. Miss Dormur and her dogs should be able to manage some of the rest, unless Rollins breaks out again. How much cash do you need?"

" Oh, a few hundred dollars, I suppose," said Dick eagerly. Then he seemed to feel that his eagerness was too pronounced. " I can manage on five hundred, old chap, but, I say, this is awfully sporting of you—I—oh, dammit! I can't take it, you know."

" Then let me buy a share in the business. I'd like to try that anchovy fishery I spoke of."

With an alternative put squarely up to him, Lascelles saw that much desired voyage to the City of Bright Lights threaten to go a-glimmering, and his rather weak nature was not proof against it.

" I don't believe Paul would agree to that," he replied in haste. " Er—I think if you take my note, I will accept your offer." Then, recollection strong upon him, he laughed harshly: " My note!"

" I'll take your note, gladly," agreed Hollis. " Or you may have the loan without a note. I'd prefer that, you know. Notes are not for friends."

The phrase struck Dick right to the heart. It was a note between friends which had brought him down so far as to lend himself to the shameful compact between Paul and Dormur. But his desires were stronger than his shame. He cast off his reluctance, and seized his opportunity while yet it availed.

" Never mind the note, then. Let me have five hundred—or—er—"

" More if you say so, Lascelles. Be on the safe side."

" Well, say a thousand, eh. Is that too much?"

" Not at all, old chap. Are you sufficiently well known in town to cash my check?"

" Oh yes. I'll run into town right away and inquire about passages and so forth."

" But the bank is closed now, surely. Why not wait until the morning?"

" I want to go in, anyhow. I'll be back this evening. Can you give me the check now?"

Hollis bowed, and led the way to his shack, Dick stepping beside him in silence, a furrow deeply-ruled between his eyes giving a hint of his soul's unrest. He said no word until the check was placed in his hand; then a load seemed to be lifted from him, and he gave his hand boisterously.

" I'm a thousand times obliged, Hollis," he said gaily. " I won't disturb Dot or Paul now. Can I bring my things down here to dress?"

Hollis agreed, the more readily because he wanted big Paul Rollins to remain quiet until his own little adventure developed later in the evening. Dick departed for the larger bungalow, to return in fifteen minutes with a suitcase, stepping elatedly with now and then a glance behind him, like a boy running from home who has made his departure clear without interference, yet fearing it.

He dressed, and Hollis watched him until he reached the road and started towards the town; then the professor became amazingly busy for so quiet a man. Gathering up the necessary things for the night's exploit, he separated a half-dozen sticks of dynamite from the supply he had placed in his bag, and put them in his pocket. He walked along to the rocks, peeping once in precaution at the open door of the bungalow; then, depositing his bag among the rocks, he gave

a last, keen look around, and proceeded carefully down to the edge of the ridge, where the submerged entrance lay.

Now the man's natural inaptitude for physical adventure was manifest. He went about his business with every appearance of nervous dread, ever looking up and to seaward, alongshore, and athwart the ridge as if in deadly fear of interruption. Yet his fears did not cause him to hesitate.

Shrewdly selecting a site, where his knowledge told him a disruption among the rocks would best accomplish his design, he placed his dynamite, leaving the end of the bunched fuse hidden beneath a stone, readily accessible to his hand.

When he had finished, he found he had yet some hours to wait before Jambi and his crew would return. Going up to the bungalow, he quietly inquired after Paul.

"I don't know what to think," Dormur told him, seriously. "I thought he was almost fit again, but he seems to be talking a lot of nonsense that I don't like at all. He's wandering. Rambles on about New York and agents, and all sorts of things."

"Can't I do anything? Shall I stay here with you?"

"Oh, I wish you would, Mr. Hollis," she whispered eagerly. "Just for an hour or so. I daren't leave him, and I have lots to do before night to have him comfortable."

Hollis sat down and watched the wounded man, keeping his own face shaded in case those fierce eyes opened. There was little room for mistake. Rollins looked a very sick man then. He had a fever, and his lips chattered ceaselessly, on every subject from hectic days in the East to agents and New York shipments.

Hollis scarcely noticed time pass, so absorbed was he in the patient's condition, until Dormur entered again, looking fresher and less tired after her short breathing space on the beach. Her greeting brought him back to the present sharply.

"Mr. Hollis, have you seen Dick?"

"Er—yes," he replied, haltingly. "I saw him going up to the road. Why?"

"Oh, I thought perhaps something had occurred with those horrid men again. I'm nervous to-day."

"I think I may assure you he's all right," Hollis smiled. "He said something of walking to town."

"Dick's a fool!" she cried in annoyance. Then fell silent and went to the couch, permitting the professor to seize the chance to leave without facing further awkward questions.

Returning to the ridge, he sat down and waited for Jambi. The crew appeared with muffled oars at the appointed time, and without preamble took charge of their white mentor and ushered him into the cave along with the boat.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HOLLIS SPRINGS HIS TRAP.

THE Malay's first action on reaching the supposed treasure location was to present Hollis with a crumpled, sea-stained sheaf of papers. The professor looked at it without interest for a minute; then, aware of eighteen glittering eyes fixed full on him, he looked up.

"I don't think I want this," he said, indifferently, and took hold of both sides of the sheets to tear them up. Jambi uttered a shout of anger and alarm, and seized his hands.

"Fool!" he shrieked. "Do not tear! They are your papers—treasure papers!"

Then Hollis remembered his sheets of notes, stolen in the collision of the boats. He had told Dormur that he had a copy of all those indecipherable notes in his brain; it was true; he laughed softly at the agitated Malay and freed his hands, tearing the papers with a deliberate action.

"These are nothing," he said, and tore them across again, while his companions glared at him in helpless amazement. He flung the hundred or so fragments of paper into the pool, and with a slight shrug of his shoulders remarked boredly:

"Shall we begin to dig, or sleep first?"

"Dig! Dig quick!" came the hoarse response from many throats, and the crowbars and picks rang and rattled on the rocks as they were unpacked.

"Why you tear paper?" demanded Jam-

bi, standing before him, bar in hand, looking threatening. "You fool us, hey?"

Swiftly came the notion to actually fool these men as they seemed to fear he was doing. It would make no difference to the outcome of his original plan; but it might help in controlling the crew afterwards. The professor took his small hammer, and beckoned to the leader.

"Come. I will show you why I tore those papers. I ask the Djinn who lives in the rocks for all my knowledge. Listen!"

Jambi followed him into a dark recess with obvious uneasiness, yet cloaking his superstitious awe with an assumption of boldness. Hollis went, as if aimlessly, yet with keen selection, to one end of a horse-shoe-shaped curtain of embryo stalactites which ran almost around the cavern, and bade the Malay place his ear to the other end.

"Listen!" he ordered in a stern voice, and Jambi's mates stood silent, open-eyed, not daring to approach. Hollis tapped sharply with his hammer, and the strokes rang clearly on the still air. Then, assuming the deepest voice he was capable of, he called out, with his lips close to the rock: "Oh Djinn, where is this gold?" and faintly to Jambi's ears came the answer, spoken immediately in lower tone by the professor: "Seek! Dig!"

Jambi's face went livid with fright. He sprang back, ignoring all Hollis's gestures to listen for more, and when safely away from the vicinity of the talking rock—the poor savage had never heard of whispering galleries—he cried harshly for the white man to leave his magic and get on with the work.

Hollis laughed easily, and made an elaborate show of calculating. He had thrashed over the whole matter thoroughly during the hours since his last visit, and was satisfied that only one possibility lay in the cave, and that was a tremendous one though the most obvious to a man of his geological perception.

He covertly watched his companions as they followed his movement, and discarded the intention he had half-formed to delay the actual search with deliberately false directions. They were restless, and regarding him with more fear than affection since Jambi's experience; he gave them one false clue, to gain time for his own little investigation, then, while they sweated and labored to uproot a rock cemented by time and lime in front of a low, dark crevice, he fell to work with his hammer on the first of those cylindrical boulders which had recalled so vividly to his mind the Giants' Causeway.

For ten minutes he chipped, and the cavern resounded with the clink of hammer and bars, the clatter of rock, and the panting breath and hoarse ejaculations of the men. Then his hammer knocked away a sliver of glistening calcium deposit, and revealed wood—the wood of a keg; and in spite of his preparedness for just such a discovery, his eyes widened, and his lips parted in a suppressed whistle.

Beneath his brows he peered at the others, and saw they had failed to move the rock they toiled at, and more than one was sending scowling, questioning glances his way. He decided they needed to be impressed still more.

"Wait!" he cried. "We'll move that with dynamite."

Swiftly he went to work and planted explosive beneath the big rock, and ordered them to stand clear, and lit the fuse. With exaggerated fear he ran to the farthest corner of the cavern, followed by the others as sheep follow their leader, and waited with upraised hand for the upheaval.

It came—an awe-inspiring, cataclysmic sound—and from roof and walls the glistening stalactites showered and flew like great diamonds amid the gasping exclamations of shivering men. And when the shower ceased, he stepped out, beckoning to them, and they again followed him sheepishly to see what result awaited them.

He made a great play of examining the displaced rock, showing a disappointed face, and his disappointment was reflected in every face around him. From the great rock he wandered gradually along the walls, until he reached the row of cylindrical boulders, and, when he saw his men ready for the revelation, he uttered a shout:

"Here, Jambi! Here men! See?"

They crowded about him, eyes staring,

mouths open, as he showed them the wood of the keg he had uncovered. Then, roaring like beasts, they hurled him aside and fell to work in frenzy with bars and picks while he stood and regarded them curiously.

For a few minutes he watched them, toiling fruitlessly to dislodge bodily that which might only be chipped by degrees or hurled out of place by explosives. Then he touched Jambi on the arm, and said: "I'll get more dynamite. Stay here."

The Malay snarled at him inarticulately, never halting his frenzied efforts, and Hollis realized that he had conquered. They made no attempt to stop him when he went straight to the winding entrance; no eye left those treasure kegs to follow him; and he waded out into the open thrilled with elation.

Now he experienced none of the reaction that had come upon him before when leaving the cave. He worked deliberately yet quickly, produced his tinder-box, and made a light. Uncovering the fuse he had concealed under a stone, he lit it, saw it burning safely, then ran to the aperture above the cavern, sheltering himself from flying fragments when they should come, and glued his face to the hole.

Beneath him the lanterns cast a dancing light on toiling demons; men fought for a place at the bars, the cavern rumbled with the sound of growling voices, laboring breath, and clanking iron. Then for the second time the great chamber reverberated with an awe-inspiring roar, and pieces of stone flew about the professor's ears above.

Now when he looked down he saw the frightened men standing aghast, staring towards the entrance whence that awful roar had come, and Jambi, quickest witted of them all, darted out of sight towards the outlet.

Hollis ran there too, uncertain yet that his charge had done its work. One glance satisfied him. A mass of rock of five tons weight had fallen squarely across the entrance; the men in the treasure cave were prisoners.

"By Jove, old chap, the shrimp is as strong as the giant, with dynamite!" he chuckled, returning to his spy-hole. The cavern resounded with the din of savagemen just coming out of their stupefaction, and he called down many times before his voice reached them through the clamor of their own. At last they heard, and looked up, to immediately renew their outcry, but at him.

"Don't make such a bally row," he called down. "Can't you keep quiet? You've got what you wanted, haven't you? And d'you think I want you to have it all? Have a sleep, and some grub. I'll have you out in plenty of time."

Jambi, returning, heard him, and saw the logic in the suggestion. Besides, had he not those precious kegs? He spoke to his men with vicious emphasis, and soon calmed them; but far from seeking sleep, or food, the greedy ruffians went to work with renewed ardor at the kegs, and Hollis left them plying pick and bar with little thought of the prison they were in.

A glance at the moon showed him that daylight was not far away, and he thought of the weary girl keeping her watch over Paul. It had been his intention to keep his discovery secret until Dick came back; and even then he only proposed to tell of the capture of Jambi's crew, for he had not been sure about the kegs, although satisfied in his mind that if anywhere they were there. But, thinking of Dormur, he went to her house now instead of going to rest in Paul's shack; and he found her sleeping fitfully in a chair, her closed eyes dark with weariness, deeply shadowed under the lowered lamplight.

His soft entry awakened her, she sprang up in alarm, stepping to Paul's couch instinctively. The wounded man tossed and moaned in his uneasy sleep, and she tenderly adjusted his pillow and coverings. The action thrilled Hollis with its sheer womanly solicitude, for he knew well enough what her feeings were toward the patient. He stepped beside her and whispered:

"I came to take your place. Won't you lie down? I have rested, and will remain awake now until daylight. Do, please."

She glanced uncertainly at Paul; then a soft, thankful smile lighted her tired face, and she nodded as much with sleepiness as obedience and lay down on Dick's couch.

And during the hours before day, Hollis

sat and kept watch over the man who, having twice saved his life, would as readily have seen him die. Paul would remain an enigma to him as long as acquaintance lasted.

To a mind more accustomed to the evils of life than John Hollis, Paul's unconscious mutterings might have led to a train of thought bound to bring conviction that all was not well with the wounded giant's conscience; but the silent watcher only wondered curiously about the vagaries of sickness when Rollins babbled incessantly about agents, and funds, and New York, and the East.

The monotony made him drowsy, for he had lied kindly to the girl when he told her he had rested; and a shaft of sunlight entering the window surprised him out of a deep doze to leap to his feet in angry remonstrance with himself for his weakness.

He made amends by quietly preparing tea before Dormur awoke, and then, Paul awakening, he found occupation in ministering to him, which found him alert and useful when the girl left her couch with a little cry of annoyance that she had slept so long.

Hollis stood aside while she took over the duties of nurse, receiving a glorious reward in the warm, soft smile she gave him; but a pang shot through his heart at the change that came over her fair face the moment she turned from him to Paul. It was the transition from the tenderness of a woman to the tenderness of a nurse, and in spite of the pang the change gave him John Hollis felt the thrill of consciousness that the tenderness of the woman was for him alone.

Paul's hurts were healing now with the sureness of healthy flesh, only hindered by the slight fever which was induced as much by his fiery temper as by his experience. He was able to eat and drink, and when his nurses sat down to their own breakfast he was able to make their meal unpleasant by his continual revilings of Hollis and grumbling at his own enforced idleness. Twice during the meal he tried to get up and join them, his eyes ablaze with jealousy; and twice the professor's weak arm forced him to recline again amid furious protests not remarkable for choice of words.

Several times Dormur had remarked on Dick's absence, but with a suggestion of knowledge as to the reason. She hinted that one of her brother's chief weaknesses lay in the direction of convivial companionship; and Hollis, remembering the incident of the brandy, well understood her thoughts. It remained for an outsider to supply the answer; and the answer brought unlooked for results.

At eight o'clock a boy came along the road from town, and stood beyond the fence shouting in fear of the dogs. Dormur ran out to him, and soon returned bringing a note, which she had read as she walked. Her face was white and drawn, full of surprise and fear.

"Dick's gone to New York!" she gasped, giving Hollis the note. "Sailed by the steamer at seven this morning!"

The professor was mildly astonished. He knew that Dick was to go; but never dreamed that his decision could coincide so alarmingly with a steamer's sailing, or that a departure could be taken at so short a notice. But after all, he thought, it was all perfectly feasible, and he saw nothing disquieting about it. It was from the couch the eruption came.

"New York? Dick?" Paul's rasping voice was charged with fury. The sick man, a few minutes earlier unable to stand, staggered from his couch, lurched to the table, and snatched the note from the professor, holding it close to his own blazing eyes, read it eagerly.

"Gone—New York—see agent—!" he barked, his eyes glaring hideously out of his rugged face. He crushed the note in his great fist, and his companions powerless to stop him, his will triumphant over his bodily weakness, he rushed from the house and down the shore, tumbling headlong into a boat and seizing the oars before Hollis could reach within twenty yards of him.

Then, ever looking down the channel towards the point whence the steamer must come, he rowed with the frenzied power of a madman.

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.

A Buccaneer in Spats

by

Achmed Abdullah

Author of "The God of the Invinclbly Strong Arms," "Backing the Tiger," "The Master of the Hour," etc., etc.

PRECEDING CHAPTERS BRIEFLY RETOLD

LANGLEY DE WITT HUDSON, a young New York society hanger-on, of the best of family and charming manners, but no money, while at a dance at Mrs. Cornelius Van Kraaft's, overheard a remark made by Lady Violet Frayne, to the effect that he was a rotter. Then and there he made up his mind to marry her. The girl, he knew, was the daughter of the Earl of Knuteswold, a recently created peer and a shrewd and unscrupulous financier, a self-made man wielding a mighty power in the business world. Her mother, it was rumored, was the daughter of a small hill rajah in India.

Hudson, pursuing his plan, called upon Lady Violet and after boldly accusing her of being as much or more of a rotter than himself, asked her for a letter of introduction to her father, who was then in Calcutta. She gave it, promising also to see him off when he sailed that afternoon on the freighter Marylin Martha Hicks, commanded by his staunch friend, Captain Jeremiah Hicks.

While hustling his things together, and also giving large and rather curious rush orders to be delivered on the ship, Langley was approached by Adrian Van Kraaft, a nephew (of rather shady reputation) of the society leader, with a proposition to deliver a sealed envelope to one Sayyid Ali Abdelkader Jangi-Dost, in Tunis, for a consideration of ten thousand dollars. Puzzled, and somewhat suspicious, Hudson hesitated, but finally consented.

When Lady Violet and her Hindu maid, Masamdansena, arrived at the steamer, Hudson proceeded to lock them in the stateroom he had previously outfitted with all they might need, and swamped in flowers, under the impression that he was kidnaping them (though for what purpose he had not paused to consider); but he soon discovered that far from being kidnaped Lady Violet was acting directly on instructions from her father to sail on the Marylin Martha; that, indeed, the old earl owned the ship and Captain Hicks was in his employ.

In the meantime in Tunis, and a small town just outside that city, things were developing between the earl and his royal henchman, Wali al-Din, son of the Sultan of Fulahistan on one side and the former's bitter enemy and trade rival, Sassoon ben Yakoub Sami and *his* henchman Ali Abdalkader Jangi-Dost. Plot and counterplot were being hatched, and the blow Sassoon ben Yakoub was aiming at the English financier was nearly ripe for launching.

Back on the ship, however, Langley, in utter ignorance of what he was involved in, was appalled by the sudden realization that he was in actual fact deeply in love with the Lady Violet, the more so when it became evident that some great trouble was hanging over her. That there was something seriously the matter was only too plain, and one night Lady Violet broke down.

She told him that, in order to obtain full power and control of the great caravan trail through Fulahistan, which was enormously valuable and the main source of Sassoon ben Yakoub's vast wealth, it was her father's intention to marry her to Waly al-Din, and, for reasons which she would not state, she felt it her duty to obey. Langley was at first nonplused, but he soon devised a plan, and, getting his automatic, proceeded to force Captain Hicks to perform the marriage ceremony making Violet Mrs. Langley De Witt Hudson. For, as he explained, since they were forced at the point of a gun, no blame could attach to Violet or Hicks, and while, of course, it was entirely illegal, it would take at least six months for the earl to have the marriage annulled, during which time much might happen.

Meantime, in Tunis, Sassoon ben Yakoub Sami, through his agents, particularly Bibi Zaida, was trying his best to tempt Waly al-Din from his allegiance to the Earl of Knuteswold with the most beautiful dancing girls she could procure, but so far without avail. Then one day came sweeping slowly athwart the crescent inland horizon a long, lean, clipper-built cargo ship, fluttering her house-flag from the royal truck, her name and home port—Marylin Martha Hicks, New York—standing out in bold relief, almost like a challenge in the west against this stinking, flaccid Africa and the white city that impearled the far hillside in truculent Moslem manner.

This story began in the All-Story Weekly for November 29.

CHAPTER XX.

AN ORIENTAL BUSINESS MAN.

BIBI ZAIDA joined the seething crowds that pressed from all directions to watch the Marylin Martha Hicks move down the ship canal to the wharf. With her sharp eyes she scrutinized the crew that was ranged to the starboard, since business was business, and there might be a more or less honest penny to be picked or, perhaps, an old debt to be dunned for and collected; and, a few minutes later, nowise hypocritically, she declared that Allah was indeed most great.

For, up on the ship's deck, between a girl who was obviously Western and a man even more obviously so, she had espied—almost in answer to her prayer—a Hindu girl, tiny, lithe, with one golden-brown hand on the quarter-deck railing, a picture of all India with her demurely parted, raven-black hair and her *sari,* the robe which the Hindu woman drapes about her with a deft art undreamed of by Fifth Avenue and the Rue Royale, of pale, rose-colored silk, shot with orange and deep royal purple and glaucous green, and bordered with gold and seed pearls—a robe of state which Masamdansena, in spite of Violet's good-natured, joking protests, had put on for the landing; very much like the transatlantic traveler who wears a rough norfolk, deck shoes, and soiled ducks all the way from Liverpool home to New York, but sports the most glaringly British Harris tweed suit, the most extravagantly Burlington Arcade four-in-hand, the most aggressive cap, and the most audaciously checkered Tattersall waistcoat when he sees the Statue of Liberty jutting into the focus.

"Allah be praised!" ejaculated Bibi Zaida, running as fast as she could toward a ramshackle victoria that had pulled up at the edge of the crowd, tossed a coin to the languid driver who was studying his naked toes, and dived into the dusty conveyance that sank beneath her weight with a click of flattened springs.

"Off—the Grand Hotel!" she cried to the Arab Jehu; for it was there, doubtless, that the travelers would put up.

And, half an hour later, she was deep in conversation with Jorge d'Sousa, the Portuguese head steward of the hotel, a tall, sallow man, with a taste for the wine when it is red, and a belief in the sacred prerogatives of graft that was so strong as to be almost beautiful, while, at about the same time, Sassoon ben Yakoub Sami was giving certain parting instructions to Mr. McDonald, whose ship was due to sail in a couple of days.

"Results!" he said. "Results—that's what I am after, sir!"

He excused himself to answer the ring of the telephone.

"Yes—this is Sami," he spoke into the receiver. "What? She's here? About to dock? Good — good — all right — what's that? Oh, yes—I'll attend to it."

He turned to Mr. McDonald, an expression on his vulpine features like that of the cat that has stolen the cream—guilty, but serenely happy in the feeling of possession.

"Mr. McDonald," he said, winking an elderly, steel-blue eye. "I am a religious man. Bound to be so — part Jew, part Scotch, part Hindu—the three most religious races in the world. Yet—I do not believe in *all* the miracles."

"No?" asked McDonald, slightly bored, but wondering what was in the wind, since he had found out that Sassoon was not like an American man of affairs who, even at a business luncheon, will interrupt the hieratic solemnity of dollars and cents to tell or listen to the latest joke, but a single-minded man whose every word held an ultimate, commercial meaning.

"Especially," went on the financier, "do I doubt the authenticity of that story about the Prophet Elijah having been fed by the ravens."

"Well?"

"In other words, I believe in—oh—" he chuckled—"feeding myself, instead of relying on ravens or any other disinterested outside parties to feed me. In still other words"—and a look of triumph came into his eyes—"would it help you in that little deal you're going to fix for me in America, if I should get you a chance to read the original contracts which the earl of Knuteswold had drawn up?"

"You mean—the contracts with the American manufacturers?"

"Yes. Typewriters and ice-cream freezers and sewing-machines and all the rest of the truck!"

Mr. McDonald laughed.

"You can't do it," he said. "Granted that you are the Asiatic John D. Even so—why, man, such contracts, such figures, are most carefully guarded. They are the vulnerable spot in the manufacturer's armor. They are as important as—well—let's say, some secret steel making or dyeing process which for some legal or technical reason can't be patented!"

"Granted! But—"

"But?"

"*Would* you like to look at the contracts?"

Mr. McDonald raised his eyebrows.

"When am I supposed to register amusement?" he inquired mildly.

"Amusement?"

"Yes. At the joke you're trying to pull, Mr. Sami."

"I am not joking. I'm dead serious."

"Impossible."

"Not at all. Come back here in about an hour. Or"—he considered—"no. I may not be back. I have some matters to attend to. Go, in an hour, to my confidential agent, Sayyid Ali Abdelkader Jangi-Dost—you have met him—in the Street of the Grain Merchants. I'll instruct him to turn over the contracts to you."

And he hurried out of the room, leaving the American in a brown study.

"Why," he soliloquized, "I used to imagine that we Yankees had all the business smartness monopolized. But—for a real, honest-to-God Euclidian problem in thimble rigging—I wonder—" he mused. "I just wonder how he got a hold of those contracts!"

CHAPTER XXI.

TUNIS.

WHEN, bullied and elbowed by a couple of wheezy little tugs and an emphatically hirsute Franco-Sicilian pilot who tangoed up and down the captain's bridge shouting unintelligible commands through a brass speaking trumpet, the Marylin Martha Hicks was warping into her dock, Langley Hudson's careless soul was busy leaping to opposite poles of sensations—the result of that eternal, sphinxlike mystery called the psychology of woman: woman who, if the truth be fearlessly told, knows neither feelings nor emotions, but only more or less charmingly and, by the same token, dangerously pathological moods; woman who, continuously occupied in trying to save her face, makes a point of forgiving man after she herself has obviously and flagrantly been in the wrong; woman whose occasional stillness is but the crass rest of infinite, nervous motion; woman who, having after all a sublimely and ruthlessly practical mind and a brutally egotistic realization of values, bases everything, including the salvation of the soul, on her special prejudices and prerogatives; woman to whom the whole world is nothing except a manifestation of her own sex—and the advantages accruing therefrom—

"Woman," thought Hudson, a little bitterly and, too, puzzled, looking at Violet who was a charming picture in her rather mannish suit of navy-blue twill with a decidedly nautical pea-jacket that flared audaciously at the bottom, and a plain sailor hat of rough straw, "woman whose character is a shifting thing, like sand, running through your fingers, and resting nowhere."

"My dear," he turned to her, "I don't get you. Not—at—all."

"What don't you—'get'?"

"Your sudden refusal to—"

"Sudden? I've been thinking about it for days—in fact ever since the day when you—" she paused.

"Well?"

"When I asked you to kiss me, after the wedding ceremony, and you refused."

"Of course I refused. I had to—"

"Rather. You are nobble—with a double *b*, aren't you?"

"Never mind that," he replied. "As I started to say, I can't understand your refusal to acknowledge that you are my wife."

"Oh?" —very Britishly.

"Yes. I don't understand. Why—we had arranged the whole thing—"

"*We?*"

"All right. I! Though you didn't kick much. That forced marriage was the only way of putting a spoke in your esteemed dad's wheels, of saving you from becoming the wife of that Waly person."

"Well—" she said perversely, with a sidelong glance at him, "Sultana of Fulahistan isn't such a bad title. Royal honors, I s'pose! Precedence over half a dozen Duchesses at court! Twenty-one salute guns, I fancy—"

"Twenty-one fiddlesticks!" Langley Hudson cut in, indignant; and Violet's heart gave a pleased little thump when she noticed that he was getting excited. "Anyway—you *are* my wife, if you own up to it or not!"

"I know," she admitted with a yawn.

"Then why do you insist on—"

"Langley," she interrupted him, "I have made up my mind. I am not going to acknowledge that I am your wife. Not to a soul."

"Not even to your father?"

"No."

"But—I have proof. The ceremony! The captain! The witnesses!"

"That won't help you. I have sworn them all to secrecy."

"But why? Tell me—why? For the love of green apples!"

"Don't you know?" she demanded.

"I do not."

"Really?"

"I haven't the faintest!"

"Then think about it a little," she said, smiling a Mona Lisa smile. "Perhaps you'll find out—all by your lonely."

"It isn't because—because"—he was on the verge of losing his temper—"because—Waly al-Din—"

"Silly boy! On the contrary. That's where I am going to hold you to your promise—your promise to help me. But you'll have to try something different than say that I am your wife."

"Which you are!"

"But which I sha'n't admit, Langley!" He shook his head, despairingly.

"But what 'll I do?" he asked. "How can I help you? I—I—" he stammered; then returned to his original proposition:

"I don't get you, Violet."

Quite suddenly, she flared up. She faced him, her eyes glistening, her cheeks flushed, her small hands gesticulating vividly.

"You are such a fool—such a short-sighted fool!" she said in a tense whisper. "Why—marriage isn't just a civil contract, or a religious ceremony. It also means—"

"What?"

"Nothing!" She was near crying. "You—oh—you have no soul, no heart, no imagination!"

And it was a sorely puzzled New Yorker who followed his young bride down the gangplank.

The landing pier was a panorama of all Africa. An unknown, bewildering world it seemed to Hudson, used though he was to the motley crowds of New York, the hectic, uncouth Hebrew sweatshop workers who throng lower Fifth Avenue at noon, the patch work of Harlem and the East Side, and, clear across the island, on Rector Street and Washington and West, stray bits of half the world, falling avalanches of all Europe's rotting racial and social strata—yes, somehow, digested; somehow, if with pain and suffering and cursing and occasional, unavoidable injustice, kneaded into a constructive whole: America.

Here it was different.

Here was no attempt at blending, at fashioning, at arriving at a sane if, necessarily, mediocre and monotonous, compromise. Here each racial and civilizational unit stood out separately, in bold relief, in its individual cap and bells and motley.

Of course, Frenchmen. In uniform, mostly: the black of the Foreign Legion, the blue of the tirailleur, the vivid crimson of the spahi. Too, bullet-headed Sicilians and Calabrians, bastard Maltese, Portuguese, Madeirans, Spaniards who features seemed like eternal protests against everything any body else believed in, and obese, haggling, laughing Djerba Jews.

And, all about them, like a sea on which these Europeans were but flotsam, the natives—every last racial strain of the littoral and the highlands, every last tint of the

ochre desert sun: Moroccan Moors with vindictive eyes and aquiline profiles that seemed like the sharp edge of some weapon, as if they were ready to cleave their way through life; other Moors, with a hint, in the blue and gray of eyes and their ruddy hair, of Goth and Vandal; Touaregs with veiled faces; a group of Tunisian dandies, with handsome, absolutely expressionless faces, sprays of jessamine behind their tiny ears to show that they were fast men-about-town, their well-cut burnooses of the most exquisite pastel shades, lemon and rose and heliotrope and pistache green; ragged Bedawin, clad in woolen earth-brown folds, stalking along as if all the world belonged to them; a few tall, gaunt, arrogant, unveiled women of the Ouled-Nail tribe — and, straight through, in pure bred and half caste, Arab tradition, Arab culture, Arab sensuality—the never ending Arab challenge to the Aryan's Western world—a voluptuous, racial cadencing to a monotonously responsive accompaniment.

Langley Hudson rescued Violet from an eddying stream of volubly gesticulating, brown humanity who were offering their services as native guides, cicerones, interpreters, coachmen, cooks, and house boys.

"Where's your father?" he asked.

"I don't see him anywhere."

"Funny. He must have known that the Marylin was due."

"Yes. In fact, Captain Hicks marconied him—he told me so."

"Why isn't he here then?" grumbled Hudson, glad of a lightning conductor for his, if not injured, then at least puzzled, feelings. "He seemed so darned anxious to get you here in record time—changing the route of the ship and all that, so as to—oh—swap you for that blessed overland caravan trail—"

"*Swap* me? Langley!"

"Well—that's what it amounts to!"

"I s'pose so," she replied stiffly, and she went on: "perhaps he was detained. He *is* a businessman, you know. He may have sent somebody."

"Let's find out."

But, though they asked right and left, there was nobody on the pier from the Earl of Knuteswold's household, and Lady Violet, undecided where to look for her father, in his town house or at the hotel, as he might be at either place, finally sent Masamdansena, in a victoria, to the hotel, while she and Langley Hudson would go to the town house.

"Very well," said the New Yorker, "I am quite willing to beard the lion in his den. But—say—first I'll have to deliver that sealed letter which Adrian Van Kraaft paid me such a thumping messenger's fee for."

"All right. I'll come with you."

"Care to walk? It's a bully day."

"Rather."

They left the pier and turned toward the heart of the town that raced away to the tightly stretched blue sky in cascades of white masonry; and when, shortly afterward, Mr. McDonald, on his way to get the contracts which Sassoon ben Yakoub Sami had promised him, stopped to ask a French blue-coat for directions to the Street of the Grain Merchants, it happened that the same policeman was being asked the same question by a young man who, from the top of his silver gray hat to his audaciously brogued low cordova shoes and silk clocked hose, seemed an epitome of Fifth Avenue on a spring day. He was accompanied by a very pretty English girl who, to judge from the curl to her upper lip, was in an exasperated frame of mind.

Of course, there were the freemasonic smiles of Americans who meet abroad and recognize each other by secret high-sign of Racial and Sartorial Lodge; and so, presently, the three were off side by side toward the Street of the Grain Merchants.

"Seems to be a popular neighborhood," remarked Langley Hudson.

"H-m!" agreed the other. "Like a private still after the portentous 1st of July."

"Sight-seeing?"

"No."

"Business?"

"Yes," smiled Mr. McDonald. He liked the young New Yorker, with his frank eyes, his frank questions. "Business! That's my middle name. I—" he slurred, and stopped. He seemed puzzled. "By the way," he went on, "I wonder how I'm going to find my party once I get to the

Street of the Grain Merchants. You know —they've a careless habit here of not numbering their houses."

"Oh—I guess they all know each other —very much like our cousins across the border in Canada. When we get to the street, just mention your party's name to one of these Chu-Chin-Chow gents. What *is* his name, by the way?"

"Something quite jaw-breaking—sounds like a Bolshevist mass meeting with a spice of local Oriental color. Sayyid Ali Abdelkader Jangi-Dost!"

"Oh—ah—" rapidly, Langley Hudson changed his exclamation of surprise into a cough, and, during the rest of the walk, it took all his social *savoir faire* to preserve his usual, smiling, easy ingenuousness.

For he was deep in doubt, deep in thought, and when they reached the Street of the Grain Merchants, passing the venerable Mosque of the Olive, then plunging into a narrow bazaar, where the sunlight sifted through old rafters on stained walls and worn stones and framed by rows of shallow shops, he had made up his mind and winked behind Mr. McDonald's back at his young bride—a wink which was received with contemptuous silence and a stony eye.

They found the house, and on the threshold Hudson faced his countryman.

"Look here," he said, "I just go you a little bet that you are working for a chap called Sami—Sassoon ben Yakoub Sami."

"Gee! How did you—" Mr. McDonald was dumfounded.

"Am I right?" insisted the New Yorker.

"You are. No use denying it."

"Not the slightest use in the world," agreed Hudson, somewhat boyishly, pleased at the other's evident consternation; pleased, too, that he had guessed right; and he continued, pursuing a deliberate course:

"I wager, furthermore, that you've come here to get some papers—some very important papers—" he thought of the ten thousand dollars which Adrian Van Kraaft had paid him, and added:

"Worth their weight in platinum!"

"In diamonds! Right again!" Mr. McDonald was frankly upset. "I thought you were just a—"

"A glittering Fifth Avenue butterfly, kicking about the world, sight-seeing, taking snapshots, joshing the natives, collecting hotel spoons and restaurant pepper shakers and similar souvenirs, making a comparative study of liquor in its various, international phases? A—" again winking at his young bride who, this time, could not prevent a smile from creeping into her eyes —"a—oh—how *shall* I put it?"

"A—rotter?" suggested the girl

"Exactly! Thank you!" He turned to Mr. McDonald. "A rotter! Is that what you thought me?"

"Well, yes. I did."

"I am glad."

"You are—what?"

"Glad. I think it's perfectly bully!"

"Bully? Why?"

"Because it proves that my disguise is perfection—absolute perfection!"

"Disguise? Who are you?"

"I am—" Langley Hudson coughed. He contrived a mysterious, tensely dramatic pause that was a pure art product.

"What are you? You've said either too much or not enough! Who are you?"

"I—" Again Hudson succeeded in being dramatic. "After all—we are both Americans—I—"

"Well?"

"I'll tell you after a while!"

By this time a sooty Soudanese servant had ushered them into a gloomy hall, had disappeared, had returned with word that his master would see Mr. Hudson first, and held up the woolen curtain that led to the inner apartments to let the latter pass.

Hudson stopped, walked close up to Mr. McDonald, and dropped his voice to a sepulchral whisper.

"Remember that street we passed a few minutes back?" he asked. "Where all the perfume sellers in the world seem to spread their scented wares?"

"Yes."

"Remember the little boxlike shop to the right where my—" He choked back the word "wife," and substituted: "my friend looked at those filagree bottles?"

"Yes. Why?"

"Meet me there as soon as you're through with your business here. And"—

mysteriously—"not a word to a soul! Chiefly not a word to—" He pointed his thumb at the inner room.

"Yes!" breathed the other.

"Don't forget! Mum's the word!"

"Mum she is!" agreed the prosy, rectangular man of affairs, excited at the romantic prospect, nor unpleasantly so; while Langley Hudson followed the servant from the room, and while Violet sat there in a brown study, wondering what rash, madly impulsive plan was germinating in the New Yorker's mind and wondering, too, why her father had not met her at the pier.

And her wonder would have changed to consternation if, just then, she could have seen the latter in the flesh.

For he was behind the stout iron bars of a Tunisian prison cell, exchanging extremely foul abuse with his business rival and arch-enemy, Sassoon ben Yakoub Sami, who was occupying the next cell.

"Pig!" screamed Sassoon, greatly to the amusement of the riff-raff of the littoral who were in prison for various crimes and misdemeanors ranging from drunkenness to piracy, and of the French jailer who, with cruel, typically Latin humor, had been responsible for the fact that the two were in cells side by side. "Son of a pig with a pig's heart! Father of uncounted, mangy piglings!"

"Great and lousy cockroach! Worthless commodity on which money is lost!" came the Earl of Knuteswold's reply courteous, in perfect, flowery Persian. "Abuser of the salt! Lean and unbeautiful camel spawn! O thou goat of a smell most goatish!"

Then, in his native Billingsgate:

"Aw—yer ruddy swine wot's myde 'is start in life by knockin' old wimmen on the 'ead and swipin' their coppers! W'y—stroike me pink—jest you w'yte till I gets out of 'ere and I'll give you wot's comin' to you—yer—"

"*Encore! Encore! Bravo!*" applauded a soldier of the Chasseurs d'Afrique, held until the provost guard should call for him.

"Right-oh! Give it to 'im good! That's the bleedin' ticket, old cockywax!" cried an unregenerate cockney sailor, awaiting sentence for assault and battery.

"*Ya bengo ke sardi?*" came the gliding, mirth-choked comment of a brown Lascar farther down the row.

And then the French jailer's appeal, between fits of laughter:

"*Messieurs, messieurs!* I implore you! You cause me to blush! *Enfin*—silence, *messieurs!*"

And he rattled his keys authoritatively.

CHAPTER XXII.

MOUSTOFFA AZIZ AL-AJAMA.

LANGLEY HUDSON'S interview with Sayyid Ali Abdelkader was of short duration, and, in a way, it disappointed him.

He knew that the Touareg was Sassoon ben Yakoub Sami's confidential agent. He knew, furthermore, that the Hindu-Hebrew-Scot, in spite of the thick coating of romance that overlay his name and ancestry and the roots of his far-flung trade which rested on a fantastic overland caravan trail and the superstitious reverence of a Moslem sect, was a competent man of affairs.

Thus he had expected that his agent would be a suave businessman, enthroned amidst the ultra-efficient modernity of steel filing cabinets, typewriters, adding machines, secretaries, loose-leaf ledgers, dictionaries, card indexes, and similar patented Asses' Bridges on the road to success, and that he would be greeted in the approved down-town manner; with a handshake, a cigar, and an invitation to take the chair near the window where the full sunlight would strike, and therefore embarrass, him.

Instead, the room where the interview took place was a mass of coiling shadows, and the whole scene, in his remembrance, semed to be composed of a strong smell of acrid, hasheesh-cut tobacco, a voice saying in broken, guttural French: "The letter? From Adrian Van Kraaft? Thank you, *effendi,*" a brown lean, high-veined hand coming mysteriously out of the gloom, catching some forgotten sun rays, and taking the sealed envelope, and a very courtly, very final:

"Thank you again. Good morning, *effendi.*"

A second later, Hudson was back in the outer hall and whispered in passing to his countryman not to forget their rendezvous, and went out into the street by Violet's side.

To the latter's rather supercilious remark that now, she supposed, he was ready to accompany her and to see if her father was in his town house, he replied, smilingly, in the negative.

"Oh—but you must, Langley!" she said. "You promised me you'd help me!" And she put her red lips together in a way which—so he told her—made her look very determined and very adorable.

"It goes, somehow, with that mannish blue suit you're wearing," he added. "Quite corkingly appropriate, you know."

"Never mind your silly compliments," she rejoined chillily.

"I don't mind making them, if you don't mind hearing them."

"But I *do* mind." She stamped her foot. "Oh—you make me so dreadfully impatient. You're such an annoying person. I —why—I—"

"Well?"

"I could swear!"

"Do!" he laughed, feeling, and resisting, the temptation of taking her into his arms and kissing her full on the mouth, in spite of the half dozen ragged little Arab children who trailed behind them, stridently asking for *bakshish*.

She swallowed hard, was silent, and then went on:

"Why won't you come with me? You know very well you promised you'd help me."

"Sure. How could I resist you when you dropped into my arms and shed tears all over me?"

"I didn't!"

"Oh, yes, you did! I dried your tears—with my own handkerchief—let Allah and the Marylin Martha Hicks be my witnesses!" he said, deciding to pay her back for her cold-blooded refusal to acknowledge that she was his wife.

"Have it as you wish," she replied. "There's no arguing with a man."

"Nor with a woman."

"Adam!"

"Eve!"

"But you did promise you'd help me," she reiterated, after a pause. "Though, I s'pose, you have reconsidered a little—aren't quite as keen about meeting dad as you were aboard ship—"

"Your father doesn't scare me worth a hang!" he replied, rather heatedly; and Violet, seeing that she had got beneath his skin, asked gently, maliciously, and laconically:

"Oh—doesn't he?"

"He does *not!* I'm about as afraid of him as I am of—well—Mexico!"

"Then why won't you come with me?"

"I will—after a while!"

"You must come straight off! If I don't go and find dad as quickly as possible, he'll think it doubly suspicious and—"

"First I have something else to do. It's quite important, Violet."

"Something about that silly meeting you arranged with our countryman?"

"Yes."

"What?"

"Lend me your pretty, rosy little ear, unacknowledged wife o' mine!" he smiled, and he whispered a few rapid words which caused her to stop short and to look at him with incredulous amazement.

"Langley—are you mad?"

"I am not."

"But—what you propose—it is—"

"Well?"

"It isn't possible! It can't be done!"

"Can be done! Should be done! Will be done! Consider it done!" he replied. "With your help—and—I am afraid," he added ruefully, "with the help of a great deal of these perfectly good ten thousand simoleons"—he tapped his breast pocket—"which Adrian Van Kraaft gave me as messenger fee."

"But—"

"You want me to help you, don't you?" he asked; "And you insist on denying that you are my wife—which *would* have helped you—"

"Exactly!" she said, defiantly.

"All right. That's why you'll have to kick in and assist me with this new plan of mine!"

"Langley—listen!"

"It's very important that I should be

ace high with old Sir Do-'Em-Brown, isn't it?"

"Rather."

"And he'll think it suspicious—as you thought it suspicious and old Jerry—that I should have had dealings with Ali Abdel-kader, Sasson's confidential agent—isn't that so?"

"Why—yes—"

"Very well—here's where I turn the tables—a whole lot of tables—"

"But, what you propose is a—a crime!"

"What of that? The law is only the conscience of the majority, and I do not belong to the majority! The son of a gambolier—that's what I am—an entirely reckless, entirely careless, entirely impulsive minority of one—two, rather!"

"Two?" she asked, well knowing the answer.

It came:

"You bet. You and I. Come on, Violet. You are a bully little sport—and you know you are."

"Oh, very well," she agreed, shrugging her shoulders. "You have a terrible way of sweeping people off their feet."

"Haven't I, though? I learned that trick doing the fox-trot in the best houses of the Avenue and the Upper West Side. And now—" as they turned into the street of the perfume sellers, heavy with the scents of rose and violet, of geranium and jessamine and sandal wood—"let's find out how many of my hard earned ducats it'll take to sweep that turbaned gent in there off *his* feet!"

They stopped in front of the shadowy, alcoved shop, bright with merchandise, twinkling, faceted bottles, curiously shaped, iridescent glasses, gold and silver filigree, ivory eggs, and mysterious green boxes, where he had given rendezvous to Mr. McDonald; and he smiled ingratiatingly at the proprietor, a dark, thin-featured, large-eyed young man, placidly seated on a neat, yellow mat—grave and languid and dignified.

For this was the East. Here buying and selling was an art, a proper pastime for leisurely gentlemen, and not mere crude business.

"How are you going to talk to him?" inquired Violet, a little maliciously. "Very few of these bazaar traders, outside the European quarter, talk English, and they haven't more than a smattering of French—just enough to haggle over their wares. And the particular thing you are going to ask him—well—I fancy it needs rather delicate phraseolgy, what?"

"Oh—I'll get away with it all right," smiled the New Yorker. "Why—I can even understand the fellow who calls out the trains at the Long Island Station"—and, as people will for some hidden philological reason when they talk to foreigners, he addressed the merchant in a loud voice, in a mixture of baby talk and pidgin English, and gesticulating freely.

"Hey;" he began, raising both hands and spreading the ten fingers like the sticks of a fan, then, for no earthly reason, shrugging his left shoulder while with his right thumb and index he blew a kiss into the air. "Money? Heap big money, eh? Make him nice great big juicy heap money, savvy?"

He waited expectantly, rather proud of his linguistic performance, and was utterly taken aback when he heard the Arab's drawling reply:

"G'wan, kid. Cut it out. Forget the camouflage. Talk straight American, and I'll get you all right, all right."

Langley Hudson made a quick and brilliant recovery. He leaned across the counter.

"Say," he demanded. "Your name isn't Patrick O'Connor by any chance—or McCaffrey—or Schmidt—or Tompkins—or Levinsky?"

"No," came the imperturbable reply. "My name is Moustaffa Aziz al-Ajami."

"Then—why—how—" went on Hudson, feebly, gasping for breath.

The other's explanation was crisp and to the point—containing, in a way, a modern odyssey as stirring as that of Homer's conceited hero.

"Madison Square Garden!" he announced. "Then the Big Top; Then Coney Island!"

"Oh—C-Coney Island?" echoed Langley Hudson. "Bully. Then—" he lowered his voice—"I take it that you're not above earning an honest penny?"

"Sure."

"Nor a—" he coughed—"a *dis*honest penny?"

"Well that depends on its size," came the unsentimental reply. "Slip me the good word, kid, and I'll see what I can do you for."

And, for about two minutes, Hudson talked to the other in a rapid whisper, to receive the answer:

"Put it here, bo. It's a pipe—a regular pipe, see?"

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE PERFUME SHOP.

"YES," said Ali Abdelkader to Mr. McDonald. "Sassoon ben Yakoub Sami *effendi* has notified me that you would be coming for these—"; and he opened the sealed envelope which Langley Hudson had brought from New York and took out a number of official looking, blue backed documents.

He clapped his hands and ordered the servant to light the great cluster of colored candles which overhung the centre of the room.

"Sunlight annoys me," he explained, indicating the drawn window curtains. "It reminds me of the desert—my home—where I used to live—"

"Don't care much for the desert?" Mr. McDonald asked, in want of something else to say, and rather ill at ease.

The reply was grave:

"On the contrary. I care for it too much— The papers are right, aren't they?" he went on.

"You bet!" the American agreed, enthusiastically. "You just bet they are! Why —with these contracts I'll—"

"Guard them well, *effendi*," said the Touareg, dismissing him as abruptly as he had dismissed Langley Hudson a few minutes earlier.

Mr. McDonald went out into the street, elated, but, too, slightly perturbed.

Of course, possession of the contracts, which set forth in detail the prices, approximate costs of shipping, and dates of delivery of the different articles, meant practically a guarantee for the success of the task which the financier had entrusted to him. On the other hand, he was nervous when he thought of the mystifying remarks which his young countryman had made.

How had Sami got hold of these contracts—a very ticklish, possibly indelicate question!

Had he bribed one of the Earl of Knutesold's New York agents?

Or—had the documents been stolen?

Too, what had the stranger to do with it? The man had known that he was working for Sami; known, furthermore, that he was going to get some important papers from Sami's confidential agent.

Was he, perhaps, a detective?

Well, thought Mr. McDonald, as he turned the corner of the Street of the Perfume Sellers, it was his duty to find out, without compromising himself — careful man! A McDonald indeed—*and* without giving up the contracts. There were several methods of handling his countryman if he should turn out to be a detective. The easiest way, he considered out of the depths of his callous experiences, would be to grease his palm.

At all events, he'd take care of it somehow. He was a successful, middle-aged businessman who had been up against all sorts of deals in the course of his career, and so he entered the little shop prepared for all eventualities—except one.

The crudely logical, crudely effective one!

For, just inside the shop, dimly outlined in the flickering half light that drifted and danced through the fretted rafters and mat coverings of the bazaar, stood the pretty English girl who had accompanied his countryman.

As he crossed the threshold, she dropped her handkerchief. He bent to pick it up; and, at exactly the same moment, she closed the heavy palm wood door, shutting off the bustle and noise of the crowded bazaar, the door giving him a glancing blow in the small of the back and precipitating him into the room, and, at still exactly the same moment, there was the whirlwind rush of two lithe, well-muscled bodies

hurtling themselves upon him from both sides and bearing him to the ground.

He turned, twisted, fought, recognized his young countryman as one of the assailants. But the odds were against him. Twenty years steady desk work, with no exercise except nine leisurely golf holes on a Saturday afternoon, had successfully scotched three terms of 'Varsity football, the more so as the emeritus Coney Islander used tactics not contained in the rules of gentlemanly combat as codified by the late, lamented Marquis of Queensbury.

He was roped securely, hand and foot, gagged with the impromptu help of a glove that tasted unpleasantly of tannic acid and an embroidered handkerchief that smelled, just as unpleasantly, of all the many floral extracts for sale in the shop, pulled down a flight of cellar steps unceremoniously, and deposited in a farther corner.

There, struggling madly to burst his bonds, purple in the face with abortive attempts to shout for help, the veins on his temples standing out like thick red ropes, he had to submit to his countryman's hand going through his pockets and abstracting the sheaf of contracts.

"Terribly sorry, old chap," said Langley Hudson. "But—necessity knows no law, you know."

And, over his shoulder, as he left the cellar, he added—the which seemed a gratuitous insult to the other:

"Make yourself as comfy as possible. See you anon."

Mr. McDonald did not say: "Damn!" nor anything of that sort.

He couldn't very well with the gag biting into the corners of his lips and sickeningly drying his palate.

But he thought far worse words than that simple Saxon expletive, and he had the melancholy satisfaction of flattering himself, as he lay there, that in all the universe, at that moment, he was the most sorely troubled in spirit.

But in that he was mistaken.

For, at the other end of town, not far from Sidi-bou-Said, with its flaunting gardens, its entangled, exuberant mingling of leaves and spiky creepers and waxen, odorous flowers, in a little exquisite Moorish building of fretted white marble and Andalusian majolica which, back in the sixteenth century, had been built by Spanish Moors for the harem of a Bey of Tunis, but which, stout and solid for all its delicate traceries, was to-day being used as a jail by the materialistic French conquerors, the Earl of Knuteswold, too, was railing at the dictates of that wilful and sardonic hussy called Fate.

It was not the thought that he had been unable to meet his daughter on her arrival. He said to himself, with a grim chuckle, that she was flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone, and would be able to take care of herself, and he was convinced, furthermore, that, by the token of a never-to-be-forgotten tragedy which harkened back to the dim, romantic figure of his wife, the hill raja's daughter, by the token of a never-to-be-forgotten heartbreak, Violet would keep her promise to him.

Nor was it the fear that, during his enforced absence, his prospective son-in-law, Waly Al-Din, might be getting into trouble —of the amorous, Don Juanesque sort. For not only was there his knowledge of the scandalous tale which was being whispered about the festive regent of Fulahistan in the bazaars—the scandalous tale which had caused Bibi Zaida to fail in her appointed task, to search through the quarter of the Lascars for a lithe, golden-skinned Hindu girl, and finally to praise Allah when, high on the deck of the Marylin Martha Hicks, she had seen the tiny figure of Lady Violet's maid in her rose-colored *sari;* but, too, that very morning, Waly Al-Din had asked him for money with his customary, nonchalant aplomb, had been promised it after a homeric struggle, but had not as yet received it—and, without money, the gay young Arab's fangs, if not drawn, were at least temporarily dulled.

The real root of the earl's railing at the harsh decrees of fate, which made him pour forth into the echoing corridors of the jail a stuttering volley of unprintable curses some of which were peculiar to his native slums, others — purloined these — having more the acrid flavor of Glasgow's Kelvinside, while still others he owed to youthful intercourse with the red-coated aborigine

called Thomas Atkins; the real root of the trouble, including the original cause why he found himself in prison, in the cell next to the man whom he hated—and respected, if the truth be told—most in all the world, was the startling news that had come to him from America an hour or two earlier. Just a cable from his New York agent, Mr. A. Lincoln Tubbs, 23a Broad Street, which read:

Venality Requiem Kraken Dine With Duke Humphrey Osculation Cheese Parings Terra-cotta Abattoir Glyptotheca.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE REGENT OF FULAHISTAN.

"HEART of me! Heart of me! Oh, dear, dear heart of me!" screamed Habeebah, the old Persian nurse, as, looking from the kitchen window of the earl's town house, she saw Lady Violet coming down the street by the side of Langley Hudson.

The next moment her head was withdrawn, and she could be heard inside, dragooning the servants, in a mixture of Persian, Arabic, and Hindustani, to prepare a meal, at once; a meal worthy of her whom, in spite of all the laws of physiology and common logic, she declared to be her father and mother and son and daughter, her brother and sister, the soul of her soul, the medulla of her bones, and the blood of her liver.

"Away!" she cried. "Away with you to the cook pots, the stew pots, the sauce pots, O ye daughters of skillets! The turmeric—where *is* the turmeric, in the name of eleven thousand first-class devils? And where are the crimson spices from China? Out—out to the yard, Ibrahim, and catch me a chicken, and see to it that the blood runs freely! And the brinjals, green and purple and fat and lordly—kings, they, among vegetables! Stuff well the brinjals—my lady likes brinjals!

"*Yah! Subhan Allah!* What words are these, O almost entirely destitute of shame!"—the exclamation-mark being supplied by the sound of her bony hand coming into violent contact with solid, bare flesh. "*Nak na kan, bali ke arman*—even such a fool art thou, like the noseless and earless one who yet desires ear and nose rings!"

Another slap, a whining, sniffling, indistinct reply, the rattling of pots, and once more Habeebah's shrill admonitions:

"The sweetmeats—the pink ones and the green ones! And the chutney! Where is the sweet Lahore chutney which I brought all the way from Hindustan for just such a day as this? And a bottle of be-randy for the foreign lord who walks by my lady's side as a lance rides next to a sword!"

"That's her way of welcoming people," smiled Violet, interpreting for Hudson's benefit, as they came up the veranda steps. "with food. Dear old soul!"

"The prodigal's return," Langley Hudson laughed. "Have a heart and tell her to soft-pedal on the garlic when it comes to the slaughter of the fatted calf."

"It won't be garlic. I'm afraid it 'll be much worse."

"Worse?"

"Rather."

"What?"

"Asafetida—the favorite spice of Asia!" He sighed.

"Like the pies mother used to make," he commented. "Personally I have always preferred the pies the Ritz-Carlton used to make. Sentiment and condiment don't blend worth a hang, you know."

A second later, Habeebah rushed from the house and up to Violet. She hugged her to her heart with all the strength of her withered old arms, tears streaming down her face, her language becoming more extravagant the harder she wept.

"*Allah Karim!*" she cried. "Long has my old heart waited for the coming of thy little white feet, Moon of Delight! And now I hold thee in my arms, and my heart is like a garden—a garden of glad jessamines and troops of riotous, red roses! Allah's heaven is fulfilled in thy sweet body, child, in thy sweet soul"—here a rapid succession of tiny, birdlike kisses—"and thy voice is like the summer mirth of ripening rice!"

"What's the old girl saying?" asked

Langley Hudson, eagerly, boyishly, enjoying every last second of the exotic scene; and, just then, Habeebah turned to him and addressed him with words which Violet refused, blushingly, to interpret.

"Orientals are rather—oh—indiscreetly direct in their praise," she said, "and they don't exactly suffer from shame—false or otherwise."

"But—she *is*—saying nice things about me?"

"Well—yes."

"Tell me!"

"No."

"Afraid of making me conceited?"

"No. Not that—but—oh—"

Again she blushed, and added, maliciously:

"I fancy, though, that you'll need all your conceit—*and* something rather a bit more solid to back it up—for your interview with dad."

Hudson whistled the opening notes of the "Dead March" from Saul, and made a downward stab with his thumb, like a Roman patrician condemning a gladiator to death.

"Consider your dad sat upon," he said calmly. "Lead me to him. That's all I ask."

"All right. It's your own—"

"Funeral? Not on your life."

And again he whistled—but, this time, the dulcet, sugary opening of the "Wedding March" from Lohengrin.

Violet turned to the old nurse with the question if her father was home and why he had not come to meet the ship.

Habeebah was astonished.

"Hast thou then not yet heard?" she demanded.

"No. What?"

"*Firdousi mamend!*" The nurse's mouth split in a huge grin, showing her toothless, betel stained gums. "Why—" she exclaimed, "thy father—"

But before she could finish, a voice chimed in, deep, metallic:

"*Ahee!* Thy father, Rejoicer! Thy father—he! *Seikeli rui zemin*—the Hub of the Universe he thinks himself, like a dog of an infidel Bahai!"

And, immediately afterward, the owner of the voice came from the house, smiling, bowing from the hips, touching heart and forehead and breast with two fingers in the courtly Meccan manner, showing six feet two of good-looking, though dissipated, Arab manhood dressed in a burnouss of peach-colored silk striped with purple and maroon over a muslin underrobe of spotless white, grass sandals on his bare feet that proved his pure, ancient breed in high instep and a smallness almost absurdly out of proportion with the rest of his body, an immense, green turban crowning his head and trailing one fringed end foppishly over the left shoulder to below the waist.

"Waly al-Din, the regent of Fulahistan," Violet explained to the New Yorker in an undertone, adding, cruelly: "your rival, you know—and rather a stunning rival, what?"

Then, with a loud voice:

"Your royal highness, permit me to present Mr. Langley DeWitt Hudson."

"Charmed!" said the Arab.

"How-de-do?" growled the American; but, ready to hate the other, he found himself disarmed almost at once.

For, jealous, thus keenly perceptive of emotional undercurrents, he noticed that the way in which Waly al-Din regarded Violet was not at all that of the eager, impatient lover. There was real, honest friendship and liking in his expression, and, too, quite naturally, an appreciating admiration of the girl's charm and beauty. But, deep in the man's great, dark eyes, lurked a certain something—slightly melancholy, slightly sardonic—which said more plainly than words:

"Here we are, we two. You and I. Tied to the same wheel of Fate, with your father playing at Deputy Providence. And you don't care for me—that way. And Allah knows that I don't care for you. Too bad, isn't it?"

He shook Hudson's hand.

"English, are you?"

"No. American."

"What city?"

"New York."

"Oh—that's perfectly corkin';" exclaimed the Arab, in his amazingly mixed British slang. "New York—no end of a

jolly old whirlwind of a town, eh what, old chap?"

"What's the big idea?" Hudson countered, unbending a little as people will when they hear their native heath praised. "Why the enthusiasm about little old Gotham?"

"Why—New York!" Waly al-Din chanted the name as if it were the response in some mystic and exalted litany. He slapped the other on the back so that he winced. "Great White Way—eh, what? Delmonico's! George M. Cohan! Al Jolson! Florrie Ziegfeld! Jack's—"

"Say—you've all the passwords down pat!"

"Charlie Chaplin!" continued Waly al-Din. "The Avenue! Broadway Brevities! Luna Park!"

"Put on the brakes, Mr. Mohammed Baedeker!" implored Langley Hudson, laughing. "Say—you seem to know more about my home town than's good for a young fellow your age. How come? What were you doing there? Selling rugs—or doing the hoochie-kooch with three yards of muslin wrapped round your midriff?"

"I was never in New York."

"What? You've never been there?"

"Exactly"—regretfully.

"Then—for the love o' Mike—how—?"

"I have read. Countrymen of yours I met on the continent told me—lots! My word—I am rather bally frightfully keen about it. Always did want to go there."

"Why don't you then? What is preventing you? You would be a notable addition to Rector's and the Rialto."

Waly al-Din sighed.

"Money!" he replied laconically, yet pathetically.

"You mean—the lack of it?" There was brotherly sympathy and understanding in the American's question.

"Jolly well right-oh!"

"But—look here—surely a chap like you—an autocrat of sorts who controls the taxes and all the rest of the regally anointed graft—can afford to—"

The Arab shook his head.

"Whenever I save a few thousand pounds in the sweat of my brow—"

"The sweat of your subjects' brows," interjected the American.

"Possibly!" Waly al-Din winked unashamedly. "Whenever I save a few thousand pounds and am off to your country, I spend it all on the way, in London or Paris, don't you know. Money"—he shrugged his shoulders—"it flies away—on golden, frivolous wings—"

Hudson held out his hand.

"Put it here, old socks!" he said to the Oriental potentate. "I hail you brother-rotter! Why—let me tell you—"

"Please, please!" Violet cut in impatiently, Habeebah having returned to the kitchen to supervise the preparation of the meal. "I want to know about dad."

Waly al-Din turned. He burst into riotous laughter.

"Oh, yes," he said. "Your guv'nor. He is in—"

He paused, chuckled, and gave the next word the emphasis of a suddenly lowered voice:

"Jail!"

Then, childishly pleased with the sensation his news had caused, Violet's stammered, incredulous: "Wh-wh-wh-wha-at? J-ja-jail?" and Langley Hudson's "Say! You're kidding us, aren't you?" he roared with glee. "Like a turbaned and burnoosed Fee-faw-fum," the New Yorker described it afterward—and added, with that drawling matter-of-factness that, more dramatic than raised voice and vivid gestures, would have been worthy of a distinguished British actor-knight:

"And so is Sassoon ben Yakoub Sami!"

"In—jail—too?"

"Right-oh! They're both in the bally old jug! What, what?"

"Why?"

"Assault and battery."

"Assault and battery—against whom?"

"The earl because he hit Sami on the jolly old bean."

"And Sami?" asked Violet, laughing in spite of herself.

"Because he did not turn the right cheek? Not at all. He rather hit your guv'nor no end of a perfectly sizzlin' whirlwind of a wallop. Then, shortly afterward, the police arrived, and took them to jail. I saw them there myself, not so long ago."

And he described to his dumfounded

hearers how the two rivals were occupying cells side by side, and how the Earl of Knuteswold's language and temper were steadily growing worse.

Indeed—he said—it appeared from last accounts that the earl's curses had become so loud that they had drifted, through the prison walls, out into the open, toward Sidi-bou-Said, where they had caused the peaceful Tunisian dandies who were sitting there, smoking their narghiles, sipping their fig water, and holding in their hands little bouquets of jonquils in sign of joy and gallant intentions, to snap their fingers rapidly so as to ward off the black jinn of misfortune.

"Your guv'nor received a cable from New York," he explained in answer to the English girl's question: "What had been the root of the trouble?" "I was there when it arrived—talking over with him"—he coughed—"oh—some financial details. He read the cable and—my word—you should have heard his language, old dear. Rather no end spiffin'! Bally well top-hole! He telephoned at once to Mr. Sami, and Mr. Sami came—and then both the jolly old jossers had rather a few corkin' words. And then your guv'nor hit Sami—and Sami hit back—and then—"

"Well?"

"Habeebah called the police!"

CHAPTER XXV.

THE TELEGRAM.

LANGLEY HUDSON had a fantastic vision of Mr. J. Pierpont Morgan and Mr. John D. Rockefeller assaulting each other and being arrested, on complaint of the latter's cook, by a burly New York policeman. He could imagine the Black Maria clanking off toward the Tombs with its, indeed, precious load, and a lucky cub reporter, who happened to be on the spot, thinking out the size of the head-lines and of the raise for which he would strike the city editor as he ran to the nearest elephone station.

Of course, it was possible.

Everything is possible in life—chiefly the impossible.

But, even granted the assault, the cook's complaint, the arrest, and the ignominious scene in the magistrate's court, Mr. Morgan was still Mr. Morgan and Mr. Rockefeller was still John D. And here, in Tunis, the Earl of Knuteswold was the Earl of Knuteswold and Mr. Sami was Mr. Sami—men of millions, men of power and influence.

Why, then, had they not been released at once on their own recognizance?

Why were they being held in jail like vulgar pot-house brawlers?

But when he asked Waly al-Din the question, the Arab shook his head. He did not know. Nor did he greatly care. For he was an Oriental. Sufficient to him the fact. Enough for him the satisfaction, and the mirth, which the fact implied. Let the self-harrying, self-involved man of the Occident worry about the reasons.

"I don't know," he said.

And he added, piously and hypocritically:

"Allah knows."

Allah did know, no doubt.

So did Monsieur Toussaint Marie Lamoureux, second deputy assistant French resident, accredited to His Royal Highness the Bey of Tunis.

Years earlier, M. Lamoureux had been a North African trader, dealing in tropical fruits and vegetables which he sold in the wholesale produce exchanges of Paris, London, and Marseilles, and taking an occasional flier in more expensive commodities.

Then, in one of the homeric battles bebetween the two rivals, the Earl of Knuteswold and Mr. Sassoon ben Yakoub Sami, he had played the involuntary rôle of buffer. Being a weak buffer, he had been crushed in the process and declared a bankrupt by a pompous French provincial judge with a stony eye and an Assyrian beard.

This had caused him to swear off forever the tortuous paths of barter and trade and to take, instead, to the comparative ease of a political career—not hard to achieve since he had an uncle who was a deputy with whiskers reminiscent of the Second Empire and a Bryanesque method of delivering oratorical daily inanities, a brother who was editor of an opposition daily and wielded the most vitriolic pen in Paris, and

a second cousin who was the mistress of the permanent secretary to the permanent secretary of the subdivision in the ministry for the colonies.

He had, therefore, been appointed second deputy assistant resident at Tunis, with seven thousand five hundred francs a year, a pension to look forward to, the hope of a red ribbon—and a carefully nurtured grievance against the earl and Mr. Sami.

When Habeebah had come to him, with stammered words about the scene in her master's house, he had considered it a direct sending of Providence, and when the two rivals, their differences temporarily forgotten in their common predicament, had said that it was ridiculous, that they were rich men, important men, the most important in commercial circles on the North African littoral, he had replied, with a great deal of sanctimonious satisfaction, that—alas!—he had a duty to perform.

He had pointed at the tricolor sash of office which was drawn from stout right shoulder to stout right hip.

"France, *messieurs!* I represent France—and the dignity of France—the dignity of the white man!"

Even after the two rivals had refused to prefer charges against each other, he had remained adamant. They had created a public scandal—he had said—they! rich men!—the which was bad for the prestige of the republic among the natives.

"*Messieurs,*" he had wound up, redundantly and mendaciously, "I regret. I regret infinitely. My heart pains with pity and sympathy to see you in such a disagreeable situation. But I am servant of the republic. Off—to jail! And remember, everything you say will be used against you. Yes—name of a little sky-blue rabbit! — everything you say *will* be used against you!"

"What now?" asked Hudson, turning to Violet.

"We must get dad out of prison."

Hudson coughed.

"I say," he rejoined, "you don't imagine that a few days behind the bars will sort of—oh—"

"What?"

"Humanize your father? Make a regular fellow of him?"

"No."

"But—"

"He *is* my father. And I am fond of him—very, very fond."

"In spite of the promise he forced from you—to marry—his nibs?"

He indicated Waly al-Din who had wandered off toward the garden gate where he had begun a whispered conversation with an immensely stout Arab half-caste woman, dressed in bright yellow gauze which gave a generous glimpse of the brown flesh beneath.

"Bibi Zaida!" Waly al-Din was saying. "If thou has really found such a one, I shall fill thy lap with seven times seventeen bundles of gold."

"Of promises," smiled Bibi Zaida. "But—never mind"—she thought of Sassoon ben Yakoub Sami—"it is not a question of money—"

"In spite of—that?" repeated the New Yorker.

"Yes," Violet replied. "I love my father in spite of the promise he forced from me. There were reasons — things which had to do with my mother. My father is not altogether to blame. Come. You must help me getting him out of jail."

"He is a rich man. Why doesn't he put up bail?"

"I don't know. We'll see when we get there. Come."

Then, suddenly reconsidering, and calling to the Arab who was about to walk away with Bibi Zaida:

"Waly!"

"Yes, Rejoicer?"

"Did you by any chance read the cable from New York?"

"No. But you will find it in your jolly old guv'nor's library. He forgot pocketing it when they led him off to jail. I noticed it in there, on the table."

"Thanks." She turned to Langley Hudson. "Let's have a look at it. Perhaps it 'll help us."

They went inside and found the blue-and-white slip on the table. But when

Hudson picked it up and read it, he shook his head and said it was in code.

"Listen. It says: '*Venality Requiem Kraken Dine with Duke Humphrey Osculation Cheese Parings Terracotta Abattoir Glyptotheca.*' Sounds like a cubist poem," he added.

"Let me have it," she said. "Father and I always wire to each other in code. I have a copy of his private code in my pocketbook."

She took it out and worked for several minutes with pencil and paper.

Finally she looked up.

"Langley," she said, "it seems that my father's agent in New York had some very important contracts in his possession."

"Well?"

"Somebody stole them. A private detective agency caught the thief. His name is Adrian Van Kraaft."

The New Yorker chuckled.

"That's funny," he said.

"It isn't as funny as you think," the girl rejoined. "For the police are also looking for another man—who seems to be badly implicated. And his name is—"

"Well? Go on. Don't be so mysterious about it."

"His name is Langley de Witt Hudson!" the girl wound up. "My husband."

CHAPTER XXVI.

MASAMDANSENA RESIGNS.

LANGLEY HUDSON shook his head.

"Why—" he said in a low, but emphatic voice, "the confounded, measly, no-good, second-hand half-brother to a cockroach!"

"Langley!" exclaimed the girl. "What extraordinary language!"

"Sorry—but cannot be helped," replied the New Yorker. "I am a bully little mixer, and a regular bear at getting acclimated. Here I am in the Orient—and I am going to speak the language of the Orient to the best of my ability. Therefore I repeat—and I mean it—the confounded half-brother to a cockroach! The great-grandson of a neurotic wart! The unwashed Trotzkyite! The left-handed descendant of a New Jersey mosquito! The—"

"But— Oh!"

"The three-times-removed cousin of a patent-medicine-soaked prohibitionist!" Langley Hudson wound up in a final, magnificent effort, looking rather pleased with himself.

"Whom are you talking about?" laughed Violet.

"Mr. Adrian Van Kraaft!"

"Oh—your brother in crime—your fellow cracksman! Didn't you tell me once that there's s'posed to be honor among rotters—"

"Well?"

"And—thieves?"

"You know very well that I had nothing to do with the whole thing—except—well—as a cat's-paw," he said a little heatedly. "We threshed all that out aboard the Marylin, didn't we? I had no idea that Adrian—"

"My word, Langley!" she interrupted. "Where is your famed American sense of humor?"

"In abeyance, I'm afraid," he said. "Heavens above!" He sighed. "I was all sorts of a donkey!"

"Were you?" she inquired sweetly.

He looked at her reproachfully, but did not reply.

Obeying the suggestion of the chair behind him, he sat down, lit a cigarette, kicked his right shin savagely with his left foot, threw his cigarette away, lit another one, burned his fingers, and swore under his breath.

"What *are* you doing?" asked Violet.

"I—oh—ah—"

Again he kicked himself.

"Well?" she insisted.

"I am going through that pleasant process called locking the stable after the horse has run away—of being extremely wise after the event! Oh—for the love of the Board of Health!"

And he looked at her with eyes that claimed her tender sympathy, but received nothing except mocking amusement.

"I see it all!" he said, in rather a declamatory voice, like the abused hero at the first act-drop of a melodrama.

For the events which had so mystified him at the time of his departure from New York, nearly two weeks earlier, puzzled him no longer. They were now quite clear to him, linked up perfectly.

"Don't you see, dear?" he said. "I'm like the poor peasant who plows his fields and gets caught between the artillery fire of two opposing armies. Yes. I got caught between your honored dad's forty-fives and old Sassoon's heavy howitzers."

"And Adrian Van Kraaft—"

"Well—we know that he's in Sassoon's employment."

"But—this cable—"

"Judging from this cable, your dad's New York representative had in his safe-keeping certain very valuable contracts—valuable to Sassoon at least—and—"

"And?"

"Adrian Van Kraaft swiped them! That's all!"

"Sassoon wouldn't—"

"He would! You bet your life he would! And so would your father if he had the chance!"

"Hudson!"

"You know yourself he would! Why—from all I hear—your dad's, and old Sassoon's business methods are such as to cause even a corporation lawyer, a Chicago ward heeler, and a radical agitator to blush with impotent envy. Why — their business methods remind me of the green-goods man who, in the year of grace eighteen hundred and eighty seven, sold Brooklyn Bridge for spot cash to a Pennsylvania farmer!"

"Sassoon wouldn't be so foolish as to implicate himself, Langley."

"Nor did he. You can bet on that. He simply gave Adrian Van Kraaft *carte blanche* to get a hold of those contracts—by burglary and theft, if need be. But not in writing—oh, no!—not in writing!"

He smiled, rather ruefully, as he thought of the contracts which, taken by him to Tunis, turned over to Sami's local agent, Ali Abdelkader, and by the latter to one of Sami's New York associates, Mr. McDonald, were once more safely tucked away in his breast pocket, next to the ten thousand dollars which Van Kraaft had paid him.

The ten thousand dollars!

The messenger fee which had seemed so out of proportion to the service rendered!

There had been a reason for it—he saw it now—as well as for the receipt which, unsuspectingly, he had given to the other. Ransacking his brain, he reconstructed, if not the actual wording, then at least the meaning of it—something about acknowledging the payment, delivering a sealed envelope to Ali Abdelkader immediately upon his arrival, and keeping quiet about the whole transaction.

At the time, it had vaguely intrigued him. But, careless, impulsive, glad of the money, he had seen no cause why he should have refused the offer. It was congenital with him never to look for reasons deeper than the passing pleasures and luxuries of each day.

But now—

"Geewhitacker!" he muttered as he visualized a drab, austere New York courtroom, a mixture of dust and despair and cuspidors.

He could imagine every last morbid detail: the benches filled with a fluttering, chiffonny crowd of smart society women, matrons and débutantes to whom he had danced attendance, who had once liked him for his charm and ease and who, faithful to their sex instincts, would feel a perverse thrill in seeing him baited and mauled; the gum-chewing reporters, their emotions atrophied by their anthropophagous profession; the saturnine district-attorney piling evidence on circumstantial evidence, cross-examining him, deviling his soul, confusing his mind, forcing lies between his lips; and the judge instructing the jury of twelve men good and true—

It was clear that, with vulpine cunning, perhaps to revenge himself on the young New Yorker who, during his social career, after the other had gone to the dogs, had snubbed him on more than one occasion, Adrian Van Kraaft had deliberately set his trap: had tired to implicate him as a confederate in his crime, with the help of a large amount of money and an ingeniously worded receipt.

On the other hand, the man must have had a more constructive reason. For he was always in debt, always hard pressed for

cash; and it was, therefore, not logical to assume that just for the sake of revenge—only a potential revenge at that, since he must surely have discounted the possibilities of the crime being traced back to him before committing it—Adrian Van Kraaft should have paid out ten thousand dollars which, although they came from Sassoon ben Yakoub Sami, he could doubtless have pocketed himself.

It did not take Langley Hudson long to figure out the real reasons why the other had tried to implicate him.

For he remembered that Van Kraaft had watched Lady Violet's comings and goings, and had even listened in on her telephone conversations, acting undoubtedly on the instructions of the Hindu-Hebrew-Scot, who was willing to use every weapon in his fight against his business rival, down to some possible, foolish indiscretion of the latter's daughter.

Thus Adrian Van Kraaft had found out that Hudson was in Lady Violet's rooms that afternoon, and that he was about to leave for the Orient aboard the Marylin Martha Hicks. Perhaps he had also heard some gossip about the younger man's rash remark to his friend, James Shuttleworth, the night of old Mrs. Cornelius Van Kraaft's ball, that he had made up his mind to marry Lady Violet. He must have put two and two together; must have imagined that Hudson and the English girl were really good friends, perhaps engaged, or about to be engaged—a supposition corroborated by the fact that Hudson was sailing on a ship which was the Earl of Knuteswold's property to all intents and purposes.

Evidently Van Kraaft had reasoned that by implicating the New Yorker in his crime he would, in case it was traced to him, have a lever on the earl through the latter's daughter's affection for his supposed accomplice—a lever that might possibly be powerful enough to have the whole indictment quashed.

Finally—it came to Hudson as an afterthought—using him as a messenger, was the safest way of delivering the contracts in Tunis. For the earl, given his tremendous, underground influence in the Orient, whose postal authorities are rather less conscientious and more venal than in other lands, might have some post official in Tunis in his pay who would steam open important looking letters addressed to Sassoon ben Yakoub Sami and copy their contents. But sending him, a friend of Lady Violet, and traveling, the contracts in his pocket, aboard a steamer belonging to the earl—why, it was very much like the familiar trick of the master criminal who, anticipating a search of his premises, places the article the detectives are after in plain view, on a table in his front room, which, being frankly unconcealed, is the last place where they will search for it.

But would the Earl of Knuteswold believe him?

"I wonder how I can convince your father," he began, "to—"

"The first thing is to get him out of jail," she interrupted. "I know him. He's frightfully choleric. He'll take his rage out on somebody—and I rather fancy it 'll be you. If I were you, I'd leave Tunis immediately. Don't lose any time. Take the first steamer—anywhere."

"I sha'n't," he replied. "You must remember that I'm your husband. I won't go without you."

She shrugged her slim shoulders.

"It may be that you consider yourself my husband, but I certainly do not consider myself your wife."

"But—why? Why?"

She gave him a slow, sidelong glance, without replying, and turned to go.

"Where to?" he demanded.

"To my father. To see what I can do for him."

"You stay right here," he said. "I'll attend to that little matter myself. I'll get him out, all right."

"Why? Is it for his sake that you are trying to plant the seeds of gratitude in his heart?"

Langley Hudson shook his head.

"No, my dear," he replied. "I'll do it for you."

"For—me?"

"Right. Because you are fond of your father. Hang his gratitude! I tell you I'll do it for you," he repeated, 'because I would—"

"Well?"

"Because I would do almost anything for you!"

She sighed.

"My dear boy," she drawled, "you evidently do not realize it, but you are insufferable. Quite."

"I—what?"

"Insufferable."

"But—why, Violet?"

"Because you said you would do almost anything for me."

"Well—what?"

"*Almost!* That little word spoils it, Langley. You have not the faintest idea how to make love."

"I wasn't trying to."

"Oh, weren't you?"

She looked at him chillily.

"Very well," she went on. "Go to dad. But take my advice—don't tell him who you are. He will remember your name from the cable he received, and then—he *is* choleric, you know."

"But he is bound to find it out sooner or later."

"Doubtless. But I shall talk to him myself as soon as he is out of jail, Langley, and I'll see if I can do anything for you. Go on now."

"Will you wait here?"

"I'll drive over to the hotel first and get Masamdansena."

"Why?"

"I wonder what can have happened to her. She should have been here by this time."

And in spite of Habeebah's shrill protestations—she had just come into the room, carrying a tray with glasses of anisette and mustik to be sipped as appetizers, and announcing that a meal worthy of the great moghul himself was steaming in the dining-room—they went their different ways.

Langley hailed a passing, dusty victoria that carried him on toward Sidi-bou-Said and the jail, while Violet had herself driven to the hotel where it bragged its crude, pretentious neo-renaissance bulk against a screen of haughty, blackish green oumach palms; and where, as she stepped from her carriage and entered the foyer, she was faced by yet another surprise on this day of many surprises.

"Good Heavens!" she said as she crossed the lobby on her way to the desk where she expected to make inquiries about her Hindu maid.

For, seated at a little marble-top table in the palm garden that opened into the foyer, sat Masamdansena; not her usual, golden-skinned, tiny, meek self, but supremely sure, her left leg cocked over her right in a decidedly unladylike manner and showing beneath the *sari* a generous length of the tight, black-and-gold brocaded trousers that the women of India affect, a tall, pink, frosted French drink in front of her, a cigarette rakishly poised in the left corner of her lips, while across from her sat an enormously fat Arab half-caste woman with whom she was evidently on terms of ribald familiarity.

The palm garden was crowded with people sipping their afternoon aperitifs—traveling Englishment in cobwebby Shetland tweeds and pith helmets, French officers in tight, braided tunics, Italians, Levantines, and Greeks—and the eyes of all of them were focused on the oddly assorted couple: the immense half-caste and the tiny Hindu girl, sitting there, without veils, bold-eyed, loud-tongued, drinking their liquor like bred-in-the-bone boulevardiers.

Violet took a step nearer, regardless of the staring, laughing crowd.

"Masamdansena!" she called sharply.

The Hindu girl looked up, saw her mistress, and waved a diminutive hand in a sweeping, lordly gesture of dismissal.

"Good-by, *mem-sahib!*" she cried. "I've quit!"

"But—I say—Masamdansena!" Violet repeated in some irritation.

"Be pleased not to bother me, *mem-sahib!*" came the impudent rejoinder, and she dipped her pretty little nose into the glass whose pinkish contents were steadily growing less, while a Marseillais commercial traveler at a near-by table winked a heavy-lidded eye to his companions and broke into a loud guffaw.

TO BE CONCLUDED NEXT WEEK. Don't forget this magazine is issued weekly, and that you will get the conclusion of this story without waiting a month.

The People of the Glacier

by Clyde B. Hough

SOMETHING over a month ago—in the November 1, 1919, issue, to be exact—we published a little story of life in the glacial period, under the title "The Great Cold." The story pleased us and our readers so much that we asked Mr. Hough to tell us more about "The People," and especially about *Lab* and *Wah*, and the other "Intellectuals" of the time. The second story of the series follows, and in the gradual unfolding of the human mind, the slow development of simple animal instinct to the beginnings of reason, in the first faint dawn of Earth life, is pure drama of the tensest and most appealing sort.

II—THE PASSING OF THE GREAT COLD

AT the time of the passing of the Great Cold there was in process of development the world's first love match. There had been mates and matings since the race began, of course, but little or no love had entered into these pairings. The male simply chose the female who appealed to him most and led her to his cave. If she resisted being led, he knocked her senseless, threw her across his shoulder and carried her to his cave. All that ever prevented the man of that far-distant day from mating with the woman of his choice was another man more powerful than himself—one who snatched the woman away, threw her across *his* shoulder and carried her to *his* cave. In either case, the woman's side of the situation remained the same, and her only possible consolation lay in knowing that she had become the property of the more capable of her suitors.

But these were mere matings, and this other was a love match, and not to be consumated through the agencies of force. The chief characters in this innovation were Wah and Ga. Had the reckoning of years been understood by the People, Wah would, no doubt, have taken great pleasure in the knowledge that he was eighteen years and some months old. And because Ga was not quite seventeen, she probably would have told you the truth about her age.

Wah was the son of Lab, and Lab, at that time, was foremost citizen of the world. Lab could think. Ga was the daughter of Obe, the crazy man. And her mother had been a strange female not of the People. She died when Ga was a baby, and her death was the foundation of Obe's insane hatred of Lab. But first you should know something of Ga's mother. Her story will help you to understand why Ga is so broadly different from her father's people.

Years before the passing of the Great Cold, when Obe was in the flush of early

manhood, he went foraging in the Deep Forest, and when night came he did not return. The People, if they thought about it at all, took it for granted that Obe had been eaten by one of the mighty man-eating cats. That was not an unusual occurrence in their day. Obe was gone a long time, but he had not been eaten, for one day he came bounding through the fringe of the Deep Forest with shouts of triumph. In the crook of his great, hairy left arm, he was carrying, as easily as if she had been a babe, a grown female the like of whom the People had never seen before.

Obe called her Yar, and she was much smaller than the females of the People. The hair on her body was thin, and the color of light ashes, while the hair of the People was dull brown. But her head hair differed most. It was unusually long, and lighter even than that on her body. Her limbs were somewhat fuller — not so stringy and flat as those of the People, and her arms were shorter. The People had no idea concerning Yar's origin, nor how far Obe had brought her, and Obe had no language to tell them.

Yar preferred trees to caves. In the trees she was swift, light moving, and sure of her holds, and she had prehensile great-toes longer than the thumbs of the People. But climbing the cliff wherein the People had their caves was difficult for Yar. It frightened her even to walk along the narrow ledge in front of the line of caves, though she would balance herself on a wind-swayed bough with uttermost unconcern. Also it was torture for her to live in a cave, the dampness, darkness, and the heavy air made her sick. At first, Yar would slip out of the cave toward evening and climb into a near-by tree for the night, but Obe was heavy-handed, and soon broke her of these digressions from the customs of his people.

Then Ga was born, and for long weeks Yar was too weak to leave the cave. But at last she found strength to drag herself into the sunlight out on the ledge in front of her cave. For a while she just sat still, taking in the pure air and sunny warmth, then she started to rise. Lab, lying in his cave, which was next to Obe's, heard a wild shriek and rushed out. It was late afternoon, and the sand, thirty feet below at the base of the cliff, was yellow with slanting sun rays. Lab peered down and saw Yar sprawled out and motionless, clearly lined against the yellow sand, her head twisted around in such a way as to leave no doubt that her neck was broken.

At that moment Obe, who had heard his mate's cry, came running along the ledge and found Lab peering down. Then he looked down also and saw Yar. It seemed exactly as if Lab had shoved Yar over the cliff, and Obe fully believed that he had. He sprang at Lab, who dodged away, ran into his cave and grasped two of the stones which he always kept there, one in each hand. Obe started to enter the cave. A stone whirred through the air and ended with a dull spat against Obe's head. He dropped unconscious and lay there a long time; then crawled away to his own cave. After that Obe wandered about, a strange, brooding figure, for the most part seeming to see nothing or no one.

The blow of the stone had partly paralyzed Obe's brain, but at the same time it had seared, forever on his numbed mind, the scene of Yar's death, and Lab on the ledge peering down. Obe often walked past Lab without seeing him at all. He might go for days without being aware of Lab's existence, but whenever his eyes did manage to convey the fact of Lab's presence to that smoldering spark at the back of his head, he would emit a ferocious yell and rush for the other's throat. Obe was a much larger and stronger man than Lab, therefore Lab's life was constantly menaced.

Meantime Obe fed the baby, Ga, whenever he wandered into his cave and saw her. Sometimes the child would go for two or three days without food, and at other times Obe would leave great chunks of raw meat for her to pick and claw over at will. Thus Ga passed through babyhood, through the little girl period, and on beyond her sixteenth birthday, an event of which she was totally ignorant.

At this time in her life Ga was not altogether unpleasing to look upon. She had the straight limbs and short, full arms of

her mother, but, unlike her mother, she was neither frail nor sickly. And though she was larger than Yar had been, she was yet smaller than the females of the People. She liked the outside and the sunlight on the ledge, but the cave had no ill effect on her health. Her face was round and fuller than the faces of the People—not so pushed in. Her nose had just the slightest hint of a bridge, and her movements were endowed with something akin to grace. But Ga's hair was most wonderful of all her attributes. It was neither the color of light ashes like her mother's, nor dull brown like her father's. On her body it was a deep, rich brown, soft and live, and on her head it grew in ropes and hanks which hung to her knees, dark red and gold in the sun.

It was her head hair that first changed Wah's attitude toward Ga. All his life he had run and romped with her, though never before had her hair interested him. Never before had she meant anything to him except a rough and ready companion whose style of play he liked. But on this afternoon, when they came from picking up nuts in the Deep Forest, Ga ran a ways ahead of Wah, stopped and stood on the brink of the cliff, just above the caves.

Then for the first time in his life Wah saw what the sun could do to Ga's hair; and the whole world changed in that instant. He had never seen any one stroke any one's hair. He had never seen the People, either old or young, touch or fondle one another. It was an unknown, an unprecedented desire. It had never been done before. Yet Wah knew very clearly, though he had no words to express it, just what he wanted to do. He wanted to stroke Ga's hair. He was seized by an overwhelming passion to know how those golden strands would feel against his hand. That wonderful hair of shifting, shimmering, changing colors had been under his eyes all the days of his life, and yet, not until within the last five minutes had he realized that it existed.

Wah moved swiftly toward Ga. She heard him and turned, and what she saw in his eyes, and the feeling that she caught from his feeling, both frightened and pleased her. Intuitively, she understood. She had seen other males seize females and take them away to their caves. Her heart beat wildly. She stood breathless for an instant. But Wah hesitated, unaggressive, and Ga sensed something different. Then she dodged away, ran to the head of the steplike trail which led down the cliff, and stood, tantalizing, her hair glittering in the sun. Then when Wah was almost to her again, she chattered gleefully, ran down the trail and into Obe's cave.

Wah had already left the cave of his father, Lab, and taken a cave for himself, and there is no telling how soon Ga might have become cooccupant had not a crisis come upon the People the next day.

It was the glacial period, and enormous glaciers from the north were moving down across the face of the world. In the dull minds of the People it was designated: "The Great Cold." For years on end the People had been pinched by this steadily increasing cold. Then of recent time they had been terrorized by perpetual roaring, crunching and grinding sounds, sounds that were pregnant with impressions of dire calamity. And now their fear had turned to panic. For the slow-moving wall of ice had, this morning, come within the scope of their vision; towering and majestic, it was a beautiful, a terrible, a God-awful sight to see.

This mountain of ice, aurora-hued in the early sun, stood thousands of feet in the azure blue and stretched away to unseen miles along the earth, something to be associated with cosmic force and planetary destruction. But the approach of the glacial ice brought its recompense. Its proximity froze the Broad River, thus making it possible for the People to cross that monster-peopled stream and flee to the southward.

Lab was the first to discover that he could walk across the ice-covered water, and the People were prompt to follow him; they instinctively recognized Lab as a leader. Though it was not physical qualities that set him above his fellows. He was the smallest male among the People, and likewise the weakest—physically. But his forehead was more than an inch high. Lab

could think, and not infrequently obvious facts forced their way into his mind.

All day the People, with Lab in the lead, ran southward along the narrow, rocky strip of sand which lay between the Big Water on their west hand and the clifflike ridge on their east hand. Their feet were cut and bleeding from continual battering on the sharp and jagged stones which thickly studded the sand. They had never encountered such stones as these before. The ground about their caves, on the north side of the Broad River, was either worn smooth by generations of feet, or covered with leaves. Up on the slope of the ridge, in the fringy edges of the Deep Forest, were numerous animals. Like the People, the animals were running from the Great Cold. And like the animals, the People had no idea where they were going nor how far they must run.

Could the People ultimately escape this moving wall of ice which they had seen that morning for the first time? It was a problem that had no terrors for them. They never thought of it. That is, none save Lab. He thought of it and it troubled him not a little. He knew that the People could not keep on running the rest of their days and he doubted if the ice would ever stop.

As the People ran, circulation increased, and they became warm and sometimes slowed up. But always the roaring and crunching, the eternal sounds were in their ears to reliven their fear. They would look back and see the great mass of ice glinting in the sun. Then they would run again in terror. So they ran on and on and night came. But there were no caves, and never in their lives had they slept outside of their caves. Some few of their fellows had been caught away from the caves at night and unable to get back, but the bones of these —all except Obe—lay picked in the Deep Forest.

Nevertheless the People could not run on forever. So they stopped and huddled together at the edge of the Big Water. The heat of circulation soon left their bodies, and the moisture of perspiration grew cold. They shivered and chattered in impotent protest. And while the People shivered and chattered, the staring eyes of Obe fell on the figure of Lab. And his eyes brought to Obe a message. To him it was the old, old scene—the scene that was seared and branded on his half-paralyzed brain. Without the aid of his eyes Obe saw it all again, just as clearly, just as vividly as he had seen it on that other day sixteen years ago. The narrow ledge in front of the caves, Yar sprawled on the yellow sand thirty feet below, and Lab peering down. Obe would avenge the death of his mate. Swiftly, stealthily as death itself, he crossed the space between and closed his great, hairy fingers on Lab's throat. They both went to the ground—Obe on top.

Wah saw the attack and promptly went to the aid of his father. His method was simple and effective; he made two long, springy leaps and landed with both feet, and all of his weight, on the middle of Obe's back. The shock was so great that it knocked Obe unconscious. Lab rolled the inert body to one side and stood up.

At this moment some one of the People pointed to the slope above and chattered fearfully. All eyes were instantly turned in that direction, and there they saw, in the moonlight, a long, slinking form. The People knew it to be a great, striped cat with rending claws and crunching jaws. The beast was creeping forward, belly down, under jaws on the ground, and its tail silently lashing. The People chattered wildly, shivered violently, and shrieked and screamed. But this did not deter the great, sleek cat; it kept coming. Also there were many others close behind the first.

The animals were quite a distance away, then, but Lab did not wait, he quickly began throwing stones at them. Meantime, clicking his teeth and chattering to his fellows in the hope that they would follow his example. But the People did not understand. Only Wah caught the idea. Lab had taught the boy to throw stones, though he had not yet acquired the deadly accuracy of his father. So Wah's help was not enough, and the ferocious man-killers were rapidly drawing near, their tails lashing, their malevolent eyes glowing along the ground with hypnotic, paralyzing effect. A

few minutes more and they would be close enough to spring.

Lab gathered more stones and forced them into the hands of those nearest him. The hungry beasts were crouching hard against the ground, their spines wiggling, their muscles gathering for the final leap. Lab flung his stones again and quickly touched the arms of one or two of the People, who held the stones he had given them. They looked at him and they looked at Wah, flinging stones as fast as he could pick them up.

At last they understood and threw their missiles. The People were unaccustomed to throwing stones and their marksmanship was poor. However, the animals were so close and so large that they were not hard to hit. The crouching beasts wavered for a space of seconds. The People had caught the idea, and with instant death to urge them, they applied the principle with energy. Every one in the tribe scrambled, and clawed, and dug for stones at once. There was a storm, a fusillade of missiles, whirring through the air with terrific force. Then thuds and snarls and the stalking animals turned and ran. The People had learned the strength of unity, the principle of combined effort.

But the People were too well acquainted with the man-eaters of their day to believe that these had been permanently frightened off. The great cats had turned and run under the hail of stones, but that was to escape immediate pain, and the moment they no longer felt pain, hunger would urge them to renew the attack. The People did not reason this out. They did not understand the situation as set forth in present-day style. They knew those things without the process of thinking, much the same as the flower knows it must turn to the sun.

Moreover, the cold in the open was unbearable. That is, it was unbearable if the People remained inactive. So they started again along the rock-strewn beach. This, also they had not analyzed or thought out. They simply knew that to move was to keep warm. Therefore, they moved.

Several times, as the People ran along at their slow trot, some of the bolder, or perhaps hungrier animals were seen sneaking toward them. But Lab, the leader, had not forgotten the success of concerted effort. He stopped, and once more the People pelted the stalking animals with stones. And once more the animals ran. Thus the People ran and fought all night, their feet bleeding and the menacing roar of grinding glaciers forever in their ears, literally following at their heels. And always Lab wondered if they would finally escape.

At last the moon waned, and the rising sun flared the eastern sky. The cold was intense. Frost was on the sand and in the sharp rocks that bruised and snagged the People's feet. The People suffered dreadfully from the cold, but of them all, Ga suffered most. That was because the hair on her body was so fine and thin. The others shivered and whimpered, but Ga fairly shook from head to heel, and her teeth rattled a continuous tattoo that she had no power to stop.

For twenty-four hours they had not eaten. Still they could not stop. The cold would not permit it, and they could not eat, for there was nothing to eat along the beach. And to go up the slope, into the Deep Forest for food, was to go among the hungry animals. So the People kept to the beach. But they no longer ran. They could not run. They trudged a slow, painful walk. Then the sun swung over to the west, and the sand and the rocks became somewhat warm. The towering mass of ice had been left behind, for the time, out of sight, and even the terrific sounds were a little softened by distance.

The People were, to some extent, reassured by the decreasing cold and sound. And because they were practically exhausted, they lay down on the sand and slept. But it was fitful slumber, and did them little good. Besides, the rocks were hard and painful against their sore muscles. Yet it was rest. So they remained there till the cold once more set them to shivering and darkness brought the hungry animals. Then they arose and started south again, always keeping close to the water's edge, with the man-killers slinking impudently near and kept from attack only by the fusillade of stones which fell upon them when they ventured too close. And so they

spent another night of walking—they no longer ran—of sore, bleeding feet and aching muscles.

Obe and Lab and Wah and Ga were all there with the rest and each other, but love and hate, alike, had been forgotten in the stress of fear and cold and hunger. Still this was only a temporary condition. It merely needed a night's sleep, a little to eat, and a message from Obe's staring eyes to set him at Lab's throat. While a short rest, a few nuts and a bit of sunlight on Ga's hair would have changed the suffering Wah to a throbbing lover.

Day came again, clear and bitter cold, and the roaring and the crunching seemed louder on the frost-laden air. The People trudged on and again, the sun swung over to the west, and they lay down on the sand and hard stones to snatch a little rest.

It was forty odd hours since they had eaten. And they were ferociously hungry. But it was not unusual for them to go two or even three days without food. When one battled in the prehistoric forest for food, the prospects were at least uncertain. So the People rose again at the end of the second day and began the travel of the second night.

By this time the ridge on their east hand began to rise, and as they moved southward it grew steeper. It had taken on the appearance of rock, perhaps some lava formation, and the trees were smaller here and scattered. This had its benefit for the People, because the animals, disliking open territory, ran farther east to get in the timber, thereby putting greater distance between them and the People.

All night the People moved southward, and the ridge grew steeper, and with the morning light the People saw ahead a tall, stark peak. It was like a lone finger reaching skyward. The ridge by that time had become exceedingly sharp—bladelike—at its summit and on the western side, facing the Big Water it was a sheer cliff similar to the one wherein the People had their caves before the Great Cold frightened them into flight. But they found no caves here—a solid abutment of brown rock.

At this point the strip of sand narrowed, and the rock cliff ran nearer and nearer to the water's edge. The ridge was still rising. Yet it was not at its highest. It grew and grew with its bladelike back reaching ever southward to the finger of a peak. And, as the People passed on, the sound of the crunching icebergs behind them reverbrated against the precipitous wall.

The bladelike ridge ended at the base of the peak. The sun was a little in the west, and the People came to an outjutting bulge in the cliff, where they had actually to wade in the shallow waves in order to pass. They were now directly opposite the peak. A few minutes and they rounded the bulge in the cliff and found themselves in a small basin.

It was as if some fabled monster had bitten a great gap in the mountainside. The floor of this basin was almost level with the surface of the Big Water. At the northern end was a sheer wall which raised from the ground to the top of the mountainous ridge and flattened out the face of the tall peak. Standing in the basin and looking up at the peak, it seemed to reach clear into the blue dome of heaven. Its base was acres large, and it was a solid mass of rock.

On the eastern side of the basin the ridge terminated in a perpendicular cliff. And in the face of this cliff were many holes—apertures of various sizes and varied shapes—caves. The cliff sloped away gradually to the south and finally merged into the Deep Forest which climbed up and covered it over.

By the time the People had looked over their little haven the sun was well over in the southwest, beating against the walls of solid rock, throwing back heat and making the basin the warmest, the most comfortable place the People had known for years. The cold wind off the glaciers was broken by the cliff wall and the peak. But comfortable as it was here, Lab still doubted that they had escaped the roaring menace behind them.

There were no animals in sight. These had gone far to the east in order to get around the great peak. The People lay down and slept, every last one of them.

At last the sun was low, and the People

began to awaken. Their feet were caked and clotted, bruised and grisly. Night was coming, and they dreaded to move on again. In fact, there were some who did not rise. These seemed stolidly resigned to whatever fate might be waiting them.

But Lab was not resigned. He climbed up to one of the holes in the cliff and cautiously crept in. But he promptly scrambled out again, and clinging to a crag by his hands, swung his body below the cave entrance and clung there while enormous bats made their exit above his head. A few minutes and the bats were all out. Apparently they had been more frightened than the man.

After a little, Lab ventured back into the cave, but it was only a matter of moments till he came out again, unceremoniously. It was a flying leap. Lab came through the aperture and landed in the soft earth some twenty feet below. Scarcely had he struck the ground when the cause of his haste also came forth. There were two beadlike eyes in the small, sinister head which was no larger than the neck. From the vivid, red mouth there flashed a double tongue like lurid lightning. The neck came farther and farther out and merged into a long, sinuous body, the head was held high, the body arching to a graceful curve until it reached the ground. Then the reptile slowly and carefully drew its entire length, some thirty odd feet, down from the cave.

The People shrank back to the edge of the Big Water. They were frightened. They had seen such monsters before. The snake reared its head eight or ten feet above the ground and swayed slowly from side to side, apparently deciding which one of the People should be its first victim. An instant more and some one would have been enfolded in the monster's bone-crushing coils. Lab snatched up a stone and flung it with all his strength. This missile glanced the swaying head and the snake was confused for a moment, and in that moment the People remembered what to do. As one, they bent for stones. Then they straightened up and the space between them and that glistening, beautiful, repulsive creature was roofed with whirring rock.

It was all new to the snake. It knew no way to meet this sort of attack, and besides it was hurt. It flattened its entire length on the ground and speedily disappeared in the Deep Forest.

After Lab's experience it would be natural to expect that the People would have kept out of the caves above them. But the pull of the caves was strong. There had been no real sleep for the People since they crossed the Broad River, and soon they were clambering up the cliff. The caves were cold and dark, and many of them very small, but they were far preferable to sleeping in the open. There were numerous bats and some small snakes, but no more large ones; and by dark most of the objectionable inhabitants had been routed out of the caves and the People themselves installed.

When the general rush for the caves started, Ga was one of the foremost, so she was able to secure a fairly comfortable cave for herself and her luckless father. But Wah found it necessary to share in with several other young males who were too near grown to sleep in the caves of their parents. Strange as it may seem, these matters always adjusted themselves without any management or directing on the part of the People.

The next day the People foraged in the Deep Forest to the south of their basin and found many nuts. Also some small animals that lived in shallow burrows. These little fellows could not run very fast, and the People caught a number of them. They were fat and tender. So with this meat and the nuts, the People gorged themselves. Then they went back to the caves and slept the night through.

Next morning the People were stiff and sore all over, but their feet were worst of all. However, they climbed down and limped painfully off to the Deep Forest for something to eat. And in three or four days their feet had somewhat healed and they began fetching dry leaves to the new caves.

Then, one afternoon, Wah and Ga were together in the Deep Forest south of the little basin where the People had found their new caves. The two wandered down

to the narrow strip of sandy beach. The wearying, fearsome noise of the moving ice was loud and harsh in their ears. The sun hung low beyond the Big Water and laid a path of gold across. Ga sat down on the sand, sidewise to the sun, and once more Wah felt the urge to stroke her glittering, red hair. He walked close and stood beside her, his hand went out to her head and moved tenderly down the soft, golden strands. Ga looked up at Wah and her eyes were soft as a caress.

Wah raised his hand and looked at it, gravely, reverently, perhaps. The sun dipped into the Big Water and the spell was broken. Ga sprang up with a frightened squeak and ran toward the little basin. Wah followed her. It would never do to let darkness find them in the Deep Forest.

When Wah and Ga emerged from the Deep Forest they saw that the shimmering ice-wall had reached the base of the tall peak. They could see the ice looming high on either side. It seemed on the verge of sweeping the peak away. There was panic in their hearts. Unconsciously Wah laid his arm protectingly across Ga's shoulders, and unconsciously they drew close together, sympathetic in mutual fear.

The People were huddled together in the little basin, chattering and fearful. They sensed a crisis, and looked, hesitating, first at their caves and then at the beach, but they did not move. Travel on the rock-strewn beach with no caves to sleep in at night held more terror for the People than did the tremendous glaciers. Or, perhaps, in some dim way, they may have realized that it was useless to run again from this glinting, colorful mass. At any rate, they stood awestricken and looked and listened.

And at this time of all times, when the People seemed on the verge of annihilation, Obe's eyes brought in the message of Lab's presence. And once more Obe reviewed the scene. The narrow ledge in front of the caves, Yar sprawled on the yellow sand thirty feet below and Lab peering down. Lab's eyes were set on the gigantic wall of ice. Obe sprang like an infuriated tiger, his great, hairy fingers clutched Lab's throat and they went down, unnoticed—Obe on top.

Then came a loud crashing and rending, a voluminous roar as if all the sounds of all the ages were combined in that one effort. Then, slowly at first, the great mass of ice began to part. It had struck the base of the fingerlike peak, and the peak did not go down before its weight. The ice split, and a great part of it rolled down to the west and into the Big Water, causing a terrific wave to rise and flood the basin wherein the People stood. But the wave did no damage, in fact it served a good purpose. It completely submerged Obe and Lab, who were still fighting on the ground, and the backward rush of the water, as it returned to its source, washed the combatants apart, and Obe's half-paralyzed mind was shaken from its aim for the time being.

Meantime the greater part of the glacier had fallen to the eastward, rolled down the incline at that side of the mountain ridge, and, crushing the forest before it, moved on its inexorable way. The high ridge on the eastern side had fended the glacier off, and the little basin was not touched.

The People did not understand what had happened. But by some instinct they were reassured. Their countenances cleared of fear and they felt joy, something they had never felt before, because they had never really suffered before.

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BUSY-NESS

BY W. J. LAMPTON

THE busy blacksmith in his shop
Shoes horses like the dickens,
While in the garden is his wife
As busy shooing chickens.

The Flying Legion

by George Allan England

Author of "Cursed," "The Shyster-at-Law," "The Brass Check," etc.

CHAPTER XLIII.

A BATTLE UNDERGROUND.

HORRIBLE, unreal as a fever-born nightmare in its sudden frenzy, the Arab's attack drove in at them. The golden passageway flung from wall to wall screams, curses in shrill barbaric voices, clangor of steel whirled from scabbards, echoes of shots loud-roaring in that narrow space.

Bara Miyan's pistol, struck up by the woman's hand, spat fire over the Master's head just as the Olema himself went down with blood spurting from a jugular severed by the major's bullet. The Olema's gaudy burnoose crimsoned swiftly.

"Got *him!*" shouted Bohannan, firing again, again, into the tangle of sub-chiefs and Maghrabi-men.. Adams pitched forward cleft to the chin by a simitar.

The firing leaped to point-blank uproar, on both sides. The men of Jannati Shahr numbered more pistols, but the legionaries had quicker firers. Arabs, legionaries, Maghrabis alike falling in a tumult of raw passions, disappeared under trampling feet.

Deafening grew the uproar of howls, curses, shots. The smell of dust and blood mingled with the aromatic perfume of the cressets.

The Master was shouting something, as he emptied his automatic into the pack of white-robed bodies, snarling brown faces, waving arms. But what he was commanding, who could tell?

Like a storm-wave flinging froth ashore, the rush of the Moslems drove the legionaries—fewer now—back into the treasure-chamber. The Master, violent hands on "Captain Alden," swung her back, away; thrust her behind him. Her eyes gleamed through the mask as she still fired. The Master heard her laugh.

From dimness of gloom, within the doorway, two vague figures rained dagger-blows. Janina, mortally stabbed, practically blew the head off one of these door-keepers. Cracowicz got the other with a blow from the butt of his empty pistol—a blow that crushed in the right temporal bone. Then he, too, and three others, fell and died.

Outside, in the passage, the Maghrabis were wringing the necks of the wounded white men. The dull sound of crushed and broken bones blent with the turmoil.

"*The door—shut the door!*"

The Master's voice penetrated even this hell-tumult. The Master flung himself against the door and others with him.

The very frenzy of the attack defeated the Arab's object. For it drove the survivors back into the treasure-crypt. And in the narrow doorway they could for a moment hold back the howling tides of fury.

With cold lead, butts, naked fists, the remaining legionaries smashed a little clearance-room, corpse-heaped. They stumbled, fought, fell into the crypt.

The heavy door, swung by panting, sweating men—while others fired through

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the narrowing aperture—groaned shut on massive hinges.

As the space narrowed, frenzy broke loose. Arabs and Maghrabis crawled and struggled over bodies, flung themselves to sure immolation in the doorway. As fast as they fell, the legionaries dragged them inside. The place became an infernal shambles, slippery, crimson, unreal with horror.

For one fate-heavy moment, the tides of war hung even. Furiously the remaining legionaries toiled with straining muscles, swelling veins, panting lungs, to force the door shut, against the shrieking, frenzied drive of Moslem fanatics lashed into fury by the *thar*, the feud of blood.

"Captain Alden turned the tide. She snatched down one of the copper lamps that hung by chains from the dim ceiling of the treasure-crypt. Over the heads of the legionaries she flung blazing sandal-oil out upon the white-robed jam of madmen.

The flaming oil flared up along those thin, white robes. It dripped on wounded and on dead. Wild howls of anguish pierced the tumult. In the minute of confusion, the door boomed shut. Bohannan dropped a heavy teakwood bar into staples of bronze.

"God!" he panted, his right eye misted with blood from a jaggard cut on the brow. Shrieks of rage, from without, were answered by jeers and shouts of exultation from the legionaries.

"*Nom de Dieu!*" gasped Leclair. His neck blackened with a powder burn, and the tunic was ripped clean off him. Not one of the legionaries had uniforms completely whole. Hardly half of them still kept their slippers.

Torn, barefooted, burned, bleeding, decimated, they still laughed. Wild gibes penetrated the door of the treasure-crypt, against which the mad attack was already beginning to clash and thunder.

"Faith, but this is a grand fight!" the major exulted. "It's Donnybrook with trimmings!" He waved his big fists enthusiastically on high, and blinked his one good eye. "If a man can die this way, sure, what's the use o' living?"

"Steady men! Steady!" the Master cautioned, reloading his gun. "No time, now, for shouting. Load up! This fight's only begun!"

Already, as they recharged their weapons, the door was groaning under the frantic attack of the Arabs and Maghrabis. Wild curses, howls to Allah and to the Prophet, came in dull confusion through the massive plates. A hail of blows beseiged them. The bronze staples began to bend.

"Come, men!" commanded the Master. "No chance to defend this position. They'll be in, directly. There are thousands of them, in reserve! Away from here!"

"Where the devil *to?*" demanded the major, defiantly. "Hang to it—give 'em blue hell as they come through!"

The Master seized and flung him back.

"If you're so keen on dying," he cried, "you can die right now, for insubordiation! Back, away from here!"

The major obeyed. The others followed. Already the door was creaking, giving, as the legionaries—now hardly more than a dozen in number—began the first steps of their retreat, that should rank in history with that of Xenophon's historic Ten Thousand.

The Greeks had all of God's outdoors for their maneuvers. These legionaries had nothing but dark pits and runways, unexplored, in the bowels of a huge, fanatic city. Thus, their retreat was harder. But with courage unshaken, they turned their backs on the yielding door, and set their faces toward darkness and the unknown.

Two of their number lay dead inside this chamber where the legionaries now were. Nothing could be done for them; the bodies simply had to be abandoned where they lay. Eight were dead in the passage outside the chamber, their corpses mingled with those of Arabs and Maghrabis.

In the chamber, as the Master glanced back, he could see a heap of bodies round the door. These bodies of attackers who had been pulled inside and butchered, made a glad sight to the Master. He laughed grimly.

"We're more than even with them, so far," he exulted. "We've beaten them, so far! The rest will get us, all right enough,

but Jannati Shahr will remember the coming of the white men!"

The survivors—the Master, Bohannan, "Captain Alden," and Leclair and nine others—were in evil case, as they trailed down the low-roofed chamber lighted with copper lamps. More than half bore wounds. Some showed bleeding faces, others limp arms; still others hobbled painfully, leaving bloody trails on the floor of dull gold. Curses on the Arabs echoed in various tongues. This first encounter had taken frightful toll of the Legion.

But every heart that still lived was bold and high. Not one of the little party entertained the slightest hope of surviving or of ever beholding the light of day. Still, not one word of despair or suggestion of surrender was heard.

Everything but a fight to the finish was forgotten. Only one man even thought of Nissr and of what probably happened out there on the plain. This man was Leclair.

"*Dieu!*" he grunted. "An accident, eh? Something must have gone wrong—or did the brown devils attack? I hope our men outside made good slaughter of these Moslem pigs, before they died. *Eh, mon capitaine?*"

"Well?"

"Is it not possible that Nissr and our men still live? That they will presently bombard the city? That they may rescue us?"

The Master shook his head.

"They may live," he answered, "but as for rescuing us—" His gesture completed the idea. Suddenly he pointed. "See!" he cried. "Another door!"

CHAPTER XLIV.

INTO THE JEWEL-CRYPT.

IT was time some exit should be discovered. The tumult had notably increased, at the barred entrance. The staples could not hold, much longer.

The legionaries pressed forward. At the far end of the chamber, another door was indeed visible; smaller than the first, low, almost square, and let into a deep recess in the elaborately carved wall of gold.

Barefooted, in their socks, or some still in slippers, they reached this door. A little silence fell on them, as they inspected it. One man coughed, spitting blood. Another wheezed, with painful respiration. The smell of sweat and blood sickened the air.

"That's some door, all right!" judged Bohannan, peering at its dark wood, heavily banded with iron. "Faith, but they've got a padlock on that, big enough to hold the Pearly Gates!"

"It is only a question, now, of the key," put in Leclair, with French precision.

"Faith, *here's* a trap!" the Irishman continued. "A trap, for you! And thirteen rats in it! Lucky, eh?"

"In Jannati Shahr," the memory of a sentence flashed to the Master, "we do not anoint rats' heads with jasmine oil!" But all he said was: "Light, here! Bring lamps!"

Three legionaries obeyed. The flare of the crude wicks, up along the door, showed its tremendous solidity.

"A little of our explosive would do this business," the Master declared. "But it's obvious nothing short of that would have much effect. I think, men, we'll make our stand right here.

"If we put out all lights, we'll have the attackers at a disadvantage. We can account for fifty or more, before they close in. And—Captain Alden, sir! Where are you going? Back, here!"

The woman gave no heed. She was halfway to the entrance-door, round the edges of which already torch-light had begun to glimmer as the attackers strained it from its hinges.

Amazed, the legionaries stared. The Master started after her. Now she was on her knees beside one of the dead Maghrabis —the one killed by Janina. She found nothing; turned to the other; uttered a cry of exultation and held up a clumsy key.

Back over the floor of gold she ran. Her fingers held a crimson cord, from which the key dangled.

"Those two—they were guardians of this vault, of course!" she cried. "Here is the key!"

A cheer burst from the legionaries. The Master clutched the key, pressed forward

to the inner door. A terrible intensity of emotion seized all the survivors, as he fitted the key to the ponderous lock.

"God!" the Irishman grunted, as the wards slid back. The padlock clattered to the floor. The hasp fell. In swung the door.

Through it pressed the legionaries, with lamps swinging, pistols in hand. As the last of them entered, the outer door collapsed with a bursting clangor. Lights gleamed; a white-robed tumult of raging men burst through. Shots crackled; yells echoed; and the sound of many sandaled feet, furiously running, filled the outer chamber.

"*Ah, sacrés cochons!*" shouted Leclair, emptying his pistol at the pursuers. The Master thrust him back. The door clanged shut; down dropped another bar.

Bohannan laughed madly. The fighting blood was leaping in his veins.

"Oh, the grand fight!" he shouted. "God, the grand old fight!"

Confused voices, crying out in Arabic, wheeled the Master from the door.

This inner chamber, very much small than the outer, was well lighted by still more lamps, though here all were of chased silver.

At the far end, four dim figures were visible. Black faces peered in wonder. The legionaries caught the giant simitars, the flutter of white robes as the figures advanced.

"By Allah!" a hoarse shout echoed. "Look, Mustapha! The Feringhi!"

In the shadows at the other end, the amazed Maghrabi swordsmen hesitated one precious moment. White-rimmed eyes stared, teeth gleamed through distorted lips.

These gigantic *mudirs*, or Keepers of the Treasure, had expected the opening of the door to show them the Feringhi, indeed, but preceded by Bara Miyan and surrounded by men of Jannati Shahr.

Now they beheld the dogs of unbelievers all alone, there, with guns in hands, with every sign of battle. They had heard sounds of war, from without. Their dull minds, slowly reacting could not grasp the significance of all this.

"The Feringhi, Yusuf," cried another voice. "And they are alone! What meaneth this?"

"*M'adri* (I know not)," ejaculated still another. "But *kill—kill!*"

Their attack was hopeless, but its bravery ranked perfect. Their shouting charge down the chamber, sabers high, ended in grunting sprawls of white. Not half-naked like the low-caste Maghrabi outside, but clad in Arab fashion, they lay there, with legionaries' bullets in breast and brain.

The Master smiled, grimly, as he walked to one of the bodies and stirred it with his naked foot. He swung above it a silver lamp he had pulled down from the wonderfully arabesqued wall.

"Four simitars added to our equipment will be useful, at close quarters," he opined very coolly, unmindful of the dull uproar now battering at the inner door. "Pick up the cutlery, men, and don't forget the admirable qualities of the *arme blanche!*"

Himself, he took one of the long, curved blades. The major, Leclair, and Ferrari—an expert swordsman he had been, in the Italian army—possessed themselves of the others.

Bohannan whistled his simitar through the air.

"Very fine I call it!" he exclaimed, with a joyful laugh. "Some little game of tag, what? And our Moslem friends are still 'it!' We're still ahead!"

"And likely to be, till our friends bring powder, mine that door and blow it in!" The Master added: "We've still a few minutes—maybe more. Now, then—"

A shrill cry in French, from Lebon, drew all eyes away to the left of the small chamber.

"*Voilà!*" the lieutenant's orderly was vociferating. They saw his distorted, torture-broken hand wildly gesticulating toward the floor. "My lieutenant, behold!"

"In the name of God, what now?" Leclair demanded, simitar in hand. The silver lamps struck high-lights from that gleaming blade, as he turned toward his orderly. Never had he seen the man seized and shaken by excitement as at this moment. "What hast thou found, Lebon? What now?"

"But behold—behold!" choked the or-

derly. Articulation failed him. He stammered into unintelligible cries.

The legionaries crowded toward him. And in the dumb stupefaction that overcame them, the roaring tumult at the door was all forgotten. The sentence of death hanging above them, faded to nothing.

Even the Master's cold blood leaped and thrilled at realization of what he was now beholding as the silver lamps swung from out stretched hands. Bohannan, for once, was too dazed for exuberance.

Only the Master could find words.

"Well, men," said he, in even tones. "Here it is, at last. We're seeing something no Feringhi ever saw before—the hidden treasure of Jannati Shahr!"

CHAPTER XLV.

THE JEWEL HOARD.

MEN do strange things, at times, when confronted by experiences entirely outside even the limits of imagination. At sight of the perfectly overwhelming masses of wealth that lay there in square pits chiseled out of the solid gold, most of the legionaries reacted like men drunk or mad.

Leclair began to curse with amazing fluency in French and Arabic, while his orderly fell into half-hysterical prayer. Bristol —stolid Englishman though he was— had to make a strong effort to keep his teeth from chattering. The two Italians, one with an ugly wound on the jaw, burst out laughing, waving their arms extravagantly. Simonds shouted jubilation and began to jump about in the most extraordinary fashion. Wallace sat down heavily on the floor, held his lamp out over one of the pits and stared with blank incomprehension.

As for the major, he dropped to his knees, threw down his weapons and plunged his arms up to the elbows in the sliding sparkle of the gems. To have heard him babble, one would have given him free entrance into any lunatic-asylum.

The only two who had remained appreciably calm were "Captain Alden" and the Master. But even they, as fully as all the rest, forgot the impending menace of attack. For a moment, even their ears were deaf to the muffled tumult outside the door, their senses dulled to every other thing in this world save the incredible hoard there in the golden pits before them.

Pain, exhaustion, defeat ceased to be, for the legionaries. Ruin and the shadow of Azrael's wing departed from their minds. For, bring what the future might, the present was offering them a spectacle such as never before in this world's history had the eyes of white men rested on.

Not even a man *in extremis* could have turned away his gaze from the unbelievable masses of shimmering wealth in those square pits of gold.

Fairy-tales and legends, "Arabian Nights," and all the mystic lore of the East never conjured forth more brain-numbing plenitudes of fortune, nor painted more stupefying beauty, than now gleamed up from those eight excavations chiseled in the dull, soft metal.

"*Nom de Dieu!*" Leclair kept monotonously repeating. "*Mais, nom de Dieu! Ah, the pigs—ah, the sacred pigs!*" Disjointed words from the others—cries, oaths, jubilations—filled the low-arched chamber, mingling in the stuffy air with lamp-smoke and the dull scent of blood and dust and sweat.

Wheezing breath, wordless cries, grunts, strange laughter sounded. And, withal, the major's hands and arms in one of the pits made a dry, slithering slide and click as he kneaded, worked, and stirred the gems, dredged up fistfuls and let them rain down crepitantly, again.

The sight was one very hard to grasp with any concrete understanding, harder still to render in cold words. At first, it gave only a confused impression of colors, like those in some vivid Oriental rug. The details escaped observation; and these changed, too, as the swaying of the lamps, in excited hands, shifted position.

A shimmer of unearthly light played over the pits, like the thin, colored flames at the edge of a driftwood fire. Soft, opalescent gleams were blent with prismatic blues, greens, crimsons. Melting violets were stabbed through by hard yellows and pene-

trant purples. And here an orange flash vied with a delicate old rose; there a rich carnation sparkled beside a misty gray, like fading clouds along the dim horizons of fairyland.

The Master murmured: "It's true, then —partly true. Rrisa knew part of it!"

"Not all?" asked the woman.

"I hardly think the Caliph El Walid's gold was ever brought to Jannati Shahr," he answered. "Coals to Newcastle, you know. And these jewels are not all uncut. Some are finely faceted, some uncut. But in the main Rrisa spoke the truth. He told what he believed."

"Yes," assented the woman. Then she added: "Spartan simplicity, is it not? No elaborate coffers. Not even leather sacks. Just bins, like so much wheat."

"The shining wheat of Araby!"

"Of the whole Orient!"

They fell silent, peering with fixed attention. And gradually some calm returned to the others. At the door, too, the turmoil had ceased. No doubt the Jannati Shahr men, baffled, had sent for much gunpowder to blow in the massive planking. That silence became ominous.

Still the legionaries could take no thought of anything but the Caliph El Walid's hoard. As they stood, squatted, or knelt about the pits—pits about two and a half feet square and deeper than the deepest thrust of any arm—it seemed to them that bottomless lakes and seas of light were opening down, down below them into unfathomed depths of beauty.

Such beauty caused the soul to drink nepenthes of forgetfulness. Hardships, wounds, blood, pain, menace of death faded under that spell. That the legionaries were trapped at the bottom of a vast rabbit-warren, with swarms of Moslem ferrets soon to rush upon them, now seemed to have no significance.

Tranced, "indifferent to Fate," the adventurers peered on greater wealth of jewels than ever elsewhere in this world's history had been garnered in one place. The liquid light of the hoard flashed strange radiances on their tanned, deep-lined faces, now smeared with sweat and dust, with powder-grime and blood. Their eyes were beholding unutterable rainbows, flashings and burning glows like those of the Moslem's own Jebel Radhwa, or Mountain of Paradise.

Each of these jewels — several million gems, at the least computation—what a story it might have told! What a tale of remotest antiquity, of wild adventures and romance, of love, hate, death! What a revelation of harem, palace, treasury, of cavern, temple, throne! Of Hindu ghat, Egyptian pyramid, Persian garden, Afghan fastness, Chinese pagoda, Burmese minaret! Of enchanted moonlight, blazing sun, dim starlight! Of passion and of pain!

On what proud hand of Sultan, emir, cadi, prince had this huge ruby burned? On what beloved breast or brow of princess, nautch-girl, concubine—yes, maybe of slave exalted to the purple—had that fire-gleaming diamond blazed?

From Roman times, from Greek, from ancient Jerusalem, from the fire-breathing shrines of Baal at long-dead Carthage, perhaps, this topaz might have come. This sapphire might have graced the anklet of some beauty of old Nile, ages before King Solomon wielded the scepter, ages even before the great god Osiris reigned.

That amethyst might have been loot of the swift black galleys of Tyre, in joyous days when men's strong arms took what they could, of women or of gems, and when Power was Law!

Imagination ran riot there, gazing down upon those jewel-pits. In them lay every kind of precious stone for which, from remotest antiquity, men had cheated, schemed, lied, fought, murdered. The jewels showed no attempt at sorting or classification. With true Oriental *laissez-faire*, they were all mingled quite at random; these gems, any chance handful of which must have meant a huge fortune.

CHAPTER XLVI.

BOHANNAN GETS RICH.

LIKE men in a dream, after the first wild emotions had died, the legionaries peered down into this sea of light. Smoke from the lamps rose toward the dim,

low-arched roof. Blood from the Maghrabi's wounds slowly spread and clotted on the golden floor.

Without, a confused murmur told of continuing preparations to smash in the door. And through it all, the dry clicking of the gems made itself audible, as the major sifted them with shaking fingers.

The Master laughed dryly.

"Well, men," said he, "here they are! Here are the jewels of Jannati Shahr. Old Bara Miyan would probably have given us a peck or two of them, for Myzab and the Black Stone, if those hadn't been destroyed—"

"How do you know they've been destroyed?" the major cried. "How do you know but what we'll be rescued, here?"

"If the bombardment had been going to begin, I think we'd have heard something of it, by now. My judgment tells me there'll be no explosive dropped on Jannati Shahr.

"We've got to fight this thing through, unaided. And at any rate, we don't have to limit ourselves to a peck or two of jewels. We've got them all, now—or they've got us!"

The irony of his tone made no impression on Bohannan. His mercurial temperament seemed to have gone quite to pieces, in view of the hoard. He cried:

"Come on, then, boys! Fill up!"

And with a wild laugh he began scooping the gems, haphazard, into the pockets of his torn, battle-stained uniform. Jewels of fabulous price escaped his fingers, like so many pebbles in a sand-pit, and fell clicking to the golden floor. With shaking hands the major dredged into the pit before him, mad with a very frenzy of greed.

"Stop!" cried the Master, sternly. "No nonsense, now!"

"What?" retorted Bohannan, angrily. His bruised, cut face reddened ominously.

"Drop those jewels, sir!"

"Why?"

"Principally because I order you to!" The Master's voice was cold, incisive. "They're worthless, now. No make-weights! We can't have make-weights, at a time like this. To think of jewels at such an hour! Throw them back!"

A flash of rage distorted the major's face. His blue eyes burned with strange fire.

"Never!" he shouted, crouching there at the brink of the jewel-pit. "Call it insubordination, mutiny, anything you like, but I'm going to have my fill of these! Faith, but I *will*, now!"

"Sir—!"

"I don't give a damn! Jewels for mine!" His voice rose gusty, raw, wild. "I've been a soldier of fortune all my life, and that's how I'm going to die. Poor, most of the time. Well, I'm going to die rich!"

His philippic against poverty and discipline tumbled out in a torrent of wild words, strongly tinged with the Irish accent that marked his passionate excitement. He sprang to his feet, and—raging—faced his superior officer. He shouted:

"Sure, and I've knocked up and down this rotten old world all my life, a rolling stone with never enough to bless myself with. And I've gone, at the end, on this wild-goose chase of yours, that's led you and me and all of us to a black death here in the bottom of a damned, fantastic, Arabian city of gold!

"That's all right, dying. That was in the bargain, if it had to be done. Two-thirds of us are dead, already, a damn sight better men than I am! We've been dying right along, from the beginning of this crack-brained Don Quixote crusade. That's all right. But, faith! now it's my turn to die, by the holy saints I'm going to be well paid for it!"

Bohannan, eyes wild, struck his heaving breast with a huge fist and laughed like a maniac.

"That's all right, you reaching for your gun!" he defied the Master. "Go ahead, shoot! I'm rich already. My pockets are half-full. Shoot, damn you, shoot!"

The Master laughed oddly, and let his hand fall from the pistol-butt.

"This," said he quite calmly, "is insanity."

"Ha! Insanity, it it? Well then, let me be insane, can't you? It's a good way to die. And I've *lived*, anyhow. We've all lived. We've all had a hell of a run for our money, and it's time to quit.

"Shoot, if you want to—a few minutes

more or less don't matter. But, faith, I'll die a millionaire, and that's something I never expected to be. Fine, fine! Give me a minute more, and I'll die a multi-millionaire! Sure, imagine that, will you? Major Aloysius Bohannan, gentleman-adventurer, a multi-millionaire! That's what I'll be, and the man don't live that can stop me now!"

With the laugh of a madman, the major fell to his knees again beside the pit, plunged his hands once more into the gleaming, sliding mass of wealth, and recommenced cramming his pockets.

The Master laughed again.

"It's quite immaterial, after all," said he. "I led you into this. And now it's very nearly a case of *sauve qui peut*. The sooner your pockets are full, to the extreme limit, the sooner something like reason will return to you. Jewels being of interest to a man at death's door—it's quite characteristic of you, Bohannan. Help yourself!"

"Thanks, I will!" Bohannan flung up at him, blood-drabbled face pale and drawn by the flaring lamp-light. "A *multi*-millionaire! Death? I should worry! Help myself? Faith, I just will, that!"

"Anyone else, here, feel so disposed?" the Master inquired. "If so, get it over and done with. We've got fighting ahead, and we'd better quench whatever thirst there is for wealth, first."

No one made any move. Only Bohannon's mind had been unsettled by the hoard, to the extent of wanting to possess it. Now that death loomed, empty pockets were as good, to all the rest, as any other sort.

"You're all a pack of damned fools!" Bohannan sneered. "You could die richer than Rockefeller, every man-jack of you, and you—you don't want to! Sure, it's *you* that's mad, not me!"

No one answered. They all stood peering down at him, their faces tense, wounded, dirty; their eyes gleaming strangely; the shadow of Azrael's wing already enfolding them. Then, a few detached themselves from the little group and wandered off into the gloom, away from the pits. Leclair muttered:

"*I* prefer my automatic, to loading my pockets! Odd, the major is, eh? Ah well, *à chacun sa chimère* (to each, his chimera)."

"Everybody's weapons fully loaded?" the Master demanded. "Be sure they are! And don't forget the mercy-bullets, men. These Arabs are rather ingenious in their tortures. They make a specialty of crucifying unbelievers—upside down. That sort of thing won't do, for us—not for fighting men of the Legion!"

Bohannan, laughing, stood up. Every pocket was a-bulge with incalculable wealth.

"Now I'm satisfied," he remarked in more rational tones. "I reckon I must be worth more money, as I stand here, than any human being that ever lived. You're looking at the richest man in the world, gentlemen! And I'm going to die, the richest. If that's not some distinction, what is? For a man that was bone-poor, fifteen minutes ago! Now, sir—"

A sudden cry interrupted him. That cry came from "Captain Alden."

"Here! Look here!"

"What is it?" demanded the Master. He started toward her, while outside the door sounded dull commands, as if the Arabs—now organized to effective work—were already preparing to blow open the last barrier between them and their victims.

"What now?" the Master repeated, striding toward her.

"*See! See here!*"

CHAPTER XLVII.

A WAY OUT?

THE woman stood pointing into a black recess at the far end of the crypt. All that the Master could discern there, at first, was a darkness even greater than that which shrouded the corners of the vault.

"Light, here!" he commanded. Ferrara swung a lamp, by its chain, into the recess. They saw a low, square opening in the wall of dull, gleaming metal.

"A passage, eh?" the Master ejaculated.

"Maybe a cul-de-sac," she answered. "But—there's no telling—it may lead somewhere."

"By Allah! Men! Here—all of you!"

The Master's voice rang imperatively. They all came trooping with naked or slippered feet that slid in the wet redness of the floor. Broken exclamations sounded.

Seizing the lamp, the Master thrust it into the opening, which measured no more than four feet high by three wide. The light smokily illuminated about three yards of this narrow passage. Then a sharp turn to the right concealed all else.

Whither this runway might lead, to what peril or what trap it might conduct them, none could tell. Very strongly it reminded the Master of the gallery in the Great Pyramid of Gizeh, which he had seen twelve years before—the gallery which in ancient days had served as a death trap for treasure-seekers.

That gallery, he remembered, had contained a cleverly-hidden stone in its floor which once on a time had precipitated pilferers down a vertical shaft more than a hundred feet, to death, in the bowels of that terrifying mausoleum.

Was this passage of similar purpose and design? In all probability, yes. Oriental ways run parallel in all the lands of the East.

Nevertheless, the passage offered a means of escaping from the crypt. And there, with the dead Maghrabi *mudirs,* the legionaries could not stay. In a few minutes now, at most, the men of Jannati Shahr would be upon them.

"Faith, what the devil now?" exclaimed Bohannan, now seeming quite rational, as he peered into the cramped corridor. "Where to hell does this lead?"

"Just where you've said, to hell, it's more than likely," the Master retorted. "Come, men, into it! Follow me!"

He stooped, lamp in one hand, scimitar in the other, and in a most cramped posture entered the passage. After him came Leclair, the woman, Bohannan and the others.

The air hung close and heavy. The oppression of that stooping position, the lamp-smoke, the unusual strain on the muscles, the realization of a whole world of gold above and all about them, seemed to strangle and enervate them. But steadily they kept on and on.

The turning of the passage revealed a long, descending incline, that sloped down at an angle of perhaps 30°. A marked rise in temperature grew noticeable. What might that mean? None could imagine, but not one even thought of turning back.

The walls and floor in this straight, descending passage were now no longer smooth, arabesqued, polished. On the contrary, they showed a rough surface, on which the marks of the chisel could be plainly seen as it had shorn away the yielding metal in great gouges. Moreover, streaks of black granite now began to appear; and these, as the legionaries advanced, became ever wider until at last the stone predominated.

The Master understood they were now coming to the bottom of part of the golden dyke. Undeviated by the hard rock, the tunnel continued to descend, with here and there a turn. Narrowly the Master scrutinized the floor, tapping it with the scimitar as he crept onward, seeking indications of any possible trap that might hurl him into bottomless, black depths.

Quite at once, a right-angled turning opened into a small chamber not above eight feet high by fiften square. In this, silent, listening, the sweating fugitives gathered.

The temperature was here oppressive, and the lamps burned blue with some kind of gas that stiffled the lungs. Gas and smoke together, made breathing hard. A dull, roaring sound had begun to make itself vaguely audible, the past few minutes; and as the legionaries stood listening, this was now rather plain to their ears.

"This is a hell of a place for a multimillionaire, I must say!" Bahannan exploded. Simonds laughed, with tense nerves. One or two others swore, bitterly cursing the men of El Barr.

The Master, "Captain Alden" and Leclair, however, gave no heed. Already they were peering around, at the black walls where now only an occasional thread of gold was to be seen.

Five openings led out of this singular chamber, all equally dark, narrow, formidable.

"This seems to be a regular labyrinth,

my captain," said Leclair, in French. "Surely a trap of some kind. They are clever, these Arabs. They let the mouse run and hope, then—*voilà*—he is caught!"

"It looks that way. But we're not caught yet. These infernal passageways are all alike, to me. We must choose one. Well—this is as good as any." He gestured toward an aperture at the left. "Men, follow me!"

The passage they now entered was all of rock, with no traces whatever of gold. For a few hundred feet its course was horizontal; then it plunged downward like the first. And almost immediately the temperature began to mount, once more.

"Faith, but I think we'd better be getting back!" exclaimed the major. "I don't care much for this heat, or that roaring noise that's getting louder all the time!"

"You'll follow me, or I'll cut you down!" the Master flung at him, crouching around. "I've had enough insubordination from *you*, sir! Not another word!"

The stooping little procession of trapped legionaries once more went onward, downward. The muffled roar, ahead of them, rose in volume as they made a final turning and came into a much more spacious vault where moisture goutted from the black walls. A thin, streamy vapor was rising from the floor, warm to the bare feet.

A moment the legionaries stood there, blinking in the vague lamplight, glad of the respite that permitted them to straighten up and ease cramped muscles.

"No way out of *here!*" Bohannan grumbled. "Sure, we're at the end o' nowhere. Now if we'd only taken another passage—"

Nobody paid him any heed. The major's exhibition of irrational greed had lost caste for him. Even Lebon, the orderly, curled a lip of scorn at him.

All eyes were eagerly searching for some exit from this ultimate pit. Panting, reeking with sweat, fouled with blood and dirt, the doomed men shuffled round the vault, blinking with bloodshot eyes.

No outlet was visible. The vault seemed empty. But all at once, Bristol uttered a cry. "Wine-sacks, by the living jingo!" he exclaimed.

"Wine-sacks,—in a Moslem city?" demanded the Master. "Impossible!"

"What else are these, sir?" the Englishman asked, pointing.

The Master strode to the corner where he stood, and flared his lamp over a score of distended goat-hides.

"Well, by Allah!" he ejaculated.

"Sacrificial wine," put in Leclair, at his elbow. "See the red seals, with the imprint of the star and crescent, here and here?" He touched a seal with his finger. "Rare old wine, I'll wager!"

"Wine!" gulped the major, whose excitable nerves had been frayed to madness. "Wine, by God! Faith, but it's the royal thirst I've got on me! Who's got a knife?"

The Master thrust him back with such violence that he slipped on the wet floor and nearly fell.

"You'll get no knife, sir, and you'll drink no sacrificial wine!" he cried, with more than anger in his voice than any of the Legion had yet heard. "The jewels—yes, I gave you your fool's way, on those. But no wine!

"We of the Flying Legion are going to die, sober men! There'll be no debauchery—no tradition handed down among those Moslem swine that they butchered us, drunk. If any of you men want to die right now, broach one of those wine-sacks!"

His scimitar balanced itself for action. The glint in his eye, by the wavering lampshine, meant stern business. Not a hand was extended toward the tautly distended sacks.

Bohannan's whispered curse was lost in a startled cry from Wallace.

"*Here's* something!" he exclaimed. "Look at this ring, will you?"

They turned to him, away from the wine-bags. Wallace had fallen to his knees and was scraping slime from the wet floor—the slime of ages of dust mingled with viscid moisture from the steam that, thinly blurring the dark air, had condensed on the walls and run down.

Emilio thrust down the lamp he held. There on the stone floor, they saw a huge, rust-red iron ring that lay in a circular grove cut in the black granite.

This ring was engaged in a metal staple

let into the stone. And now, as they looked more closely, and as some of legionaries scraped the floor with eager hands, a crack became visible in the floor of the vault.

"Look out, men!" the Master cautioned. "This may be a trap that will swing open and drop us into God knows what! Stand back, all—take your time, now! Go slow!"

The heeded, and stood back. The Master himself, assuming all risks, got down on hands and knees and explored the crack in the floor. It was square, with a dimension of about five feet on the edge.

"It's a trap-door, all right," he announced. "And we—are going to open it!"

"One would need a rope or a long lever to do that, my captain," put in Leclair. "It is obvious that a man, or men, standing on the trap, could not raise it. And it is too large to straddle."

The Master arose, stripped off his coat and passed it through the ring. He twisted the coat and gave one end to the lieutenant. Himself, he took the other.

"Get hold, everybody!" he commanded. "And be sure you're not standing on the trap!"

All laid hold on the ends of the coat. With a "One, two, three!" from the Master, the legionaries threw all their muscle into the lift. "Now, men! Heave her once more!"

The stone gave. The legionaries doubled their efforts, with panting breath, feet that slipped on the dank floor, grunts of labor.

"*Heave her!*"

Up swung the stone, aside. It slid over the wet rock. There, in its place, gaped a black hole that penetrated unknown depths.

Steam billowed up—or rather, vapor distinctly warm to the touch. And from very far below, much louder boomed up the roar of rushing waters. The legionaries knew, now, what had caused the dull, roaring sound. Unmistakable, a furious cascade was boiling, swirling away, down there at undetermined distances of blackness.

The boldest men among the little group of fugitives felt the crawl and fingering of a very great dread at their hearts. Behind them lay the labyrinth, with what pitfalls none could tell and with the Jannati Shahr men perhaps already penetrating into the crypt. Around them loomed the black, wet walls of this lowest stone dungeon with but one other exit—the pit at their feet.

The Master threw himself prone on the slippery floor, took one of the lamps and lowered it, by the chain, to its capacity. Smoke and vapor arose about his head as he peered down.

"Well, what is it?" demanded Bohannan, also squinting down, as he bent over the hole. "What do you see?"

"Nothing," the Master answered. "Nothing definite."

He could, in fact, be sure of nothing. But it seemed to him that, very far below, he could make out something like a swift, liquid blackness, streaked with dim-speeding lines of white that dissolved with phantasmagoric rapidity; a racing flood that roared and set the solid rock a-quiver in its mad tumult.

"Faith, an underground river of hot water!" ejaculated the Irishman with an oath. "Some river!"

"Warm water, at any rate," the Master judged, getting up again. A strange smile was in his eyes, by the smoky lamplight. "Well, men, this is our way out. The Arabs are not going to have any slaughter of victims, here. And what is more, they'll capture no dead bodies of white men, in *this* trap! There'll be at least ten skulls missing from that interesting golden Pyramid of Ayesha!"

"For God's sake!" the major stammered. "What—what are you going to—do, now? Jump down that shaft?"

"Exactly. Your perspicacity does you credit, major."

"Sure, you'll never catch *me* jumping!"

"Gentlemen," the Master said, in a low, quiet voice, "I regret to state that we have one coward among us."

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE RIVER OF NIGHT.

THE major's clenched fist was caught as it drove, by a scientific guard from the Master's right. The Master dropped his lamp, and with a straight left-

hander sprawled Bohannan on the slimy pave. Impersonally he stood over the crazed Celt.

"Will you jump, voluntarily," demanded he, "or shall we be under the painful necessity of having to throw you down that pit?"

Enough rationality remained in the major to spur his pride. He crawled to his feet, chastened. "You win, sir," he answered. "Who goes first?"

A dull reverberation shuddered the rock, the air.

"*Vive Nissr!*" exulted Leclair. "Ah, now our men, they attack the city!"

"I'm sorry to disillusion you," the Master answered, "but my explosive produces an entirely different type of concussion. What we have just heard is the blowing-in of the treasure-crypt door. There's no time to lose, now. Who jumps, first?"

"Wait a minute!" cried "Captain Alden." Her eyes were gleaming through the mask, with keen excitement. "Why neglect any chance of possibly surviving?"

"What do you mean?" the Master demanded.

"Those wine-sacks!"

"Well?"

"Emptied, inflated and tied up again, they'll float us! It's the oldest kind of device used in the Orient!"

"By Allah, inspiration! Quick, men, the wine-skins!"

Himself, he set the example. Knife in hand, while Emilio held the lamp for him, he crumbled the seals on one of the goatskins, then cut the leather thong that secured the neck, and quickly unwound it. He dragged the sack to the black pit and tipped it up.

With a gulp and a gurgle, the precious old wine, clear ruby under the dim light, gushed away down the steaming shaft that plunged to the River of Night.

"Oh, faith now, but that's a damned shame, sir!" Bohannan protested, rubbing an ugly welt on his brow. His voice was thick, dull, unnatural. Madness glimmered in his blinking eyes. "With the blessed tongue of me parched to a cinder! And wine like that! Here, sir—take a handful of diamonds, or whatever, and give me just one little drink!"

"Bristol! Restrain that man!" the Master ordered. "If you can't handle him, get help!"

As a couple of legionaries laid hands on the major, another voice spoke up. It was Ferrara's:

"The major is right, sir, in spite of all! Good wine in our throats would make death less bitter. 'We who are about to die, salute thee'—and ask wine!"

The Master peered sharply from beneath black brows. Discipline seemed crumbling. Now at what might be, perhaps, the last minute of his command, was the Master's word to be made light of? Were his orders to be gainsaid?

"No wine!" he flung at all of them, his voice tense as wire. "Who says we are about to die? Why, there may be a fighting chance, even yet! This underground river may come to light, somewhere. And if it does, it may bear us back to day, again.

"But the confusion of wine may just turn the scale against our getting through. No wine! We started on that basis. That's the basis we're going through on. No wine, I say—*no wine!*"

Murmurs answered him, but no man dared rebel. Discipline still gripped the legionaries. The Master drove them to labor. "Come, quick now! Prepare a sack, apiece! I'll show you how!"

He set lips to the emptied skin, and with many lungfuls of strong breath inflated it. The leather thong tightly wrapped the neck. He doubled that neck over, and took more turns with the thong, then tied it in a tight square knot.

"Get to work, men!" he ordered. "To work!"

They obeyed. Even the major, brain-shaken as he was, fell in with the orders. The floor, all round the black pit, ran red with precious wine, a single cupful of which would have delighted the heart of the world's most Lucullian gourmet.

Up from that floor and from the jetty, steaming walls of the pit drifted ambrosial perfume that evoked visions of ancient vineyards where, under the Eastern sun, bloomy clusters of grape—mayhap even the very grape sung by the Tent-maker—hung ripening.

Still, none stooped to the mouths of the wine-skins, to taste. None drank from cupped palm. Dry-mouthed, hot, panting, the legionaries still obeyed. And thus the rare wine of Araby ran guttering to the unseen blackness of the mystery-river far below.

The Master, hands on hips, watched this labor; and as he watched he laughed.

" Whatever comes to us, men," judged he, "we are here and now doing great evil to the men of El Barr. My only regret is that we haven't time to return up through the labyrinth, to the jewel-crypt, fill the skins with jewels and dump them all down this shaft like the wine. These Moslem swine would then remember us, many a long day. Ah, well, some day we may come back—who knows?"

He fell silent, while the last of the skins were being filled and lashed. The last, that is to say, needed by the legionaries. Ten in all, were now blown up and securely tied. But a good many more still remained full of the rare wine.

With his scimitar, the Master slashed these quickly, one by one.

" They took our blood," he cried. " We have taken theirs—and their wine, too. And Myzab and the Black Stone, no doubt. Well, it's a bargain!"

" *C'est égal!*" exclaimed Leclair. " More than that, eh, *mon capitaine?*"

The Master returned to the shaft, his bare feet red through the run and welter of the wine on the stone floor.

" Now men," said he, crisply, as he flung down the pit his simitar which could have no further use, " this may be the final chapter. Our Legion was organized for adventure. We've had it. No one can complain. If it's good-by, now—so be it.

"There may be a chance, however, of winning through. Hold fast to your goat-skins; and if the hidden river isn't too hot; and if there's head-room, some of us may get through to daylight. Let us try to reassemble where we find the first practicable stopping-place. If the Jannati Shahr men are waiting for us, there, don't be taken alive. Remember!

" Now, give me your hand, each one, and —down the shaft with you!"

Simonds went first, boldly, without a quiver of fear. Silently and with set jaw, he shook hands with the Master, clutched a distended wine-bag in both arms, and leaped.

His body vanished, instantly, from sight. Steam and darkness swallowed it. Far below, a dull splash told of his disappearance.

Lebon followed, after having given his torture-twisted hand to his beloved lieutenant, as well as to the Master.

" *Notre Père qui est aux cieux!*" he stammered, as the pit received him.

Then went Wallace, Ferrara and Emilio. Of these three, only the last showed anything resembling the white feather. Emilio's face was waxen, with staring eyes reflecting unspeakable horror, as he took the leap into the River of Night. But he went mutely, with no outcry.

Bristol, sheathed in imperturbable British aplomb, remarked:

" Well, so long, boys! This is jolly beastly, eh? But we'll meet out on that beautiful shore!"

Then he, too, jumped in the black.

Leclair, inappropriately enough, leaped with a shout of: " *Vive la France!*"

Now only Bohannan, " Captain Alden" and the Master were left.

" You're next, major!" the Master ordered, pointing at the inexorable black mouth of the pit, whence rose the thin, wraith-spirals of vapor.

" I'm ready!" exclaimed the major. " Sure, what's better than a hot bath after the heavy exercise we've been having?" His voice rose buoyantly over the drumming roar of the mysterious, underground torrent. " Ready, sir! But if you'll only give me one wee sup of good liquor, sir, I'll die like an Irishman and a gentleman—of fortune!"

" No liquor, major," the Master answered, shaking his head. " Can't you see for yourself all the wine-sacks are cut?"

" Cut, is it? Well, well, so they are!" The major blinked redly. Obviously his confused mind had not grasped the situation. " Well, sure, that's a pity, now." And he fell to gnawing that tawny mustache of his.

" Come major, you're next!" the Mas-

ter bade him. "Take your wine-skin and jump!"

Clarity of mind for a moment returned to Bohannan. Gallantly he shook hands with the Master, saluted "Captain Alden", and picked up his wine-sack.

"It's a fine whirl we've had," he affirmed, with one of his old-time smiles, his teeth gleaming by the light of the silver lamp in the Master's hand. "No man could ask a better. I'd rather have seen what I've seen, and done what I've done, and now jump to hell and gone, than be safe and sound this minute on Broadway.

"Please overlook any little irregularities of conduct, sir. My brain, you know, and —well, good-by!"

Calmly he picked up his sack and without more ado jumped into the void.

"Now," said the Master, when "Captain Alden" and he remained alone. "Now—you and I!"

"Yes," the woman answered. "You and I, at last!"

The Master set down his lamp on the floor all wet with condensed vapor and wine. He loosened the buckles of her mask, took the mask off and tossed it into the pit.

"Finis, for *that!*" said he, and smiled strangely. "You aren't going to be handicapped by any mask, in whatever struggle lies ahead of us. If you get through to the world, and to life again, you get through as a woman.

"If not, you die as one. But the disguise is done with, and gone. You understand me!"

"Yes, I understand," she answered, and stood peering up at him. Not even the white welts and ridges cut in her flesh by the long wearing of the mask could make her face anything but very beautiful. Her wonderful eyes mirrored far more, as they looked into this strange man's, than would be easy to write down in words.

"I understand," she repeated. "If this is death, I couldn't have dreamed or hoped for a better one. In that, at least, we can be eternally together—you and I!"

Silence fell, save for the shuddering roar of the black river, that rose with the vapors from the pit of darkness. Man and woman, they searched out each other's souls with their gaze.

Then all at once the Master took her hand, and brought it to his heart and held it there. The lamp-shine, obliquely striking upward from the floor, cast deep shadows over their faces; and these shadows seemed symbolic of the shadows of death closing about them at this hour of self-revelation.

"Listen," said the Master, in a wholly other voice from any that had ever come from his lips. "I am going to tell you something. At a moment like this, a man speaks only the exact truth. This is the exact truth.

"In all the years of my life and in all my wanderings up and down this world, I have never seen a woman—till now—whom I felt that I could love. I have lived like an anchorite, celled in absolute isolation from womankind. Incredible as it may seem to you, I have never even kissed a woman, with a kiss of love. But—I am going to kiss you, now."

He took her face in both his hands, drew it up for a moment gazed at it with a fixity of passion that seemed to burn. The woman's eyes drooped shut. Her lips yearned this. Then his stern arms in-drew her to his breast, and for a moment she remained there, silently.

All at once he put her from him.

"Now, go!" he commanded. "I shall follow, close. And wait for me—if there is any waiting!"

He picked up one of the two remaining wine-sacks, and put it into her hands.

"Cling to this, through everything!" he commanded. "Cling, as you love life. Cling, as you share my hope for what may be, if life is granted us! And—the mercy-bullet, if it comes to that!

"Now—good-by!"

She smiled silently and was gone.

The Master, now all alone, stood waiting yet a moment. His face was bloodless. His lower lip was mangled, where his teeth had nearly met, through it.

Already, a confused murmur of sound was develcping, from the black opening of the passage that had led the legionaries

down to this crypt of the wine-sacks and the pit.

He smiled, oddly.

" Many a corpse has been flung down this oubliette," said he. " I hate to go, without emptying my pistol into a few more of the Moslem swine, and dropping them down here to join my people. But—I must!"

He bent, gathered together the silver lamps left by his men, and threw them all into the abyss. Blackness, absolute, blotted the reeking chamber from his sight.

The faintest possible aura of light began to loom from the mouth of the passage. More distinctly, now, the murmur of Arab voices was becoming audible.

Far below, at the bottom of the pit, sounded a final impact of some heavy body striking swift water that swept it instantly away.

Then silence filled the black, rock-hewn chamber in the labyrinthine depths of Jannati Shahr.

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE DESERT.

THE Desert.

Four men, one woman.

Save for these five living creatures, all was death. All was that great emptiness which the Arabs call " *La Siwa Hu* "—that is to say, the land " Where there is none but He."

Over terrible spaces, over immense hearkening silences of hard, unbroken dunes extending in haggard desolation to fantastic horizons of lurid ardor, hung a heat-quivering air of death-like stillness. Redder than blood, a blistering sun-ball was losing itself behind far, iron hills of black basalt. A flaming land it was, naked and bare, scalped and flayed to the very bones of its stark skeleton.

Heavily, and with the dazed look of beings who feel themselves lost yet still are driven by the life within them to press on, the five fugitives—pitiable handful of the Legion—were plodding southwest, toward the sunset.

The feet of all were cut and bleeding, in spite of rags torn from their tattered uniforms and bound on with strips of cloth; for everywhere through the sand projected ridges of vertical, sharp stone—the black basalt named by the Arabs *hajar Jehannum*, or " rock of hell." As for their uniforms, though now dry as bone, the way in which they were shrunken and wrinkled told that not long ago they had been drenched in water of strongly mordant qualities.

Each figure bore, on its bent back, a goatskin bag as heavily filled with water as could be carried. Strongly alkaline as that water was, corroding to the mouth and nauseous to the taste, still the refugees were clinging to it. For only this now stood between them and one of the most hideous deaths known to man—the death of thirst in the wilderness.

The woman's face, in spite of pain, anxiety, weariness, retained its beauty. Her heavy masses of hair, bound up with cloth strips, protected her head from " the great enemy," the sun. As for the others, they had improvised rough headgear from their torn shirts, ingeniously tied into some semblance of cherchias. Above all, the legionaries knew that they must guard their heads from the direct rays of the desert sun.

In silence, all plodded on, on, toward the bleeding sphere that, now oblate through flaming mists, was mercifully sinking to rest. No look of surprise marked the face of any man, that " Captain Alden" was in reality a woman. The legionaries' anguish the numbing, brutalizing effects of their recent experience had been too great for any minor emotions to endure. They had accepted this fact like all others, as one of a series of incredible things that had, none the less, been true.

For a certain time the remnant of the Legion dragged itself southwestward, panting, gasping, wasting no breath in speech. Leclair was first to utter words.

" Let us rest a little while, my captain," said he in a hoarse, choking voice. " Rest, and drink again. I know the desert. Many hundreds of miles lie between us and the coast. Nothing can be gained by hastening, at first. All may be lost. Let us rest, at all events, until that cursed sun has set!"

In silence the Master cast down his water-bag, at the bottom of the little, deso-

late valley of gravel through which the fugitives were now toiling. All did the same, and all sat down—or rather, fell—upon the hot earth.

Very different, now, this land was from what it had seemed as they had soared above it, at cool altitudes, in the giant air-liner; very different from the cool, green plain of El Barr, behind the grim black line of the Iron Mountains now a dim line off to eastward.

The sprawling collapse of the legionaries told more eloquently than any words the exhaustion that already, after only four hours' trek, was strangling the life out of them.

For a while they lay there motionless, unthinking, brutalized by fatigue and pain. With their present condition as an earnest of what was yet to come, what hope had any that even one of them would live to behold the sparkle of the distant Red Sea? Even though unmolested by pursuit from Jannati Shahr or by attack from any wandering tribes of the Black Tent people, what hope could there be?

Gradually some coherence of thought returned to the Master. He sat up, painfully, and blinked with reddened eyes at the woman. She was lying beside her water-bag, seemingly asleep. The Master's face drew into lines of anguish as he looked at her.

With bruised fingers he loosened the thong of his own water-bag, and tore still another strip from his remnant of shirt. He poured a little of the precious water on to this rag, lashed the water-sack tight again, and with the warm, wet rag bathed the woman's face, brow and throat.

Her closed lids did not open. No one paid any attention. No one even stirred. The cloth grew dry, almost at once, as the thirsty air absorbed its moisture. The Master pocketed it. Elbows on knees, head between hands, he sat there pondering.

In thought he was living over again the incredible events of the past hours, as they had been presented to his own experience. He was remembering the frightful, dizzying plunge down the black pit into the steaming waters of the River of Night—waters which, had they been but a few degrees hotter, would incontinently have ended everything on the instant.

He was recalling, as in a nightmare, his frenzied battle for life, clinging to the inflated goat-skin—the whirl and thunder of unseen cataracts in the blind dark—the confusion of deafening, incomprehensible violences.

He was bringing back to mind the long, swift, smooth rushing of mighty waters through midnight caverns where echoes had had told of a rock-roof close above; then, after an indeterminate time of horror that might have been minutes or hours, a weltering maelstrom of leaping waters—a graying of light on swift-fleeing walls; a sudden up-boiling gush of the strangling flood that whelmed him—and all at once a glare of sun, a river broadening out through palm-groves far beyond the Iron Mountains.

All these things, blurred, unreal, heart-shaking as evil visions of fever, the Master was remembering. Then came other happenings: a long drift with resistless currents, the strange phenomenon of the lessening stream that dwindled as thirsty sands absorbed it, and the ceasing of the palms.

Last of all, the river had diminished to a shallow, tortuous delta, where the Master's numbed feet had touched bottom. There he had dragged himself ashore, with his goat-skin, far more dead than living. And there, for a time he knew not, consciousness had wholly ceased.

A dull, toneless voice sounded in the Master's ears. Bohannan was speaking.

"Faith, but it's strange how even the five of us found each other, out there in the sand," said the major. "What happened to the rest of us, God knows—maybe!" He choked, coughed, added: "Or to the boys with Nissr. God rest their souls! I wish I had a sackful of that wine!" After a long pause: "Don't you, now? What?"

The Master gave no heed. He was trying to ease the position in which the woman was lying. His jacket was off, now, and he was folding it to put under her head.

At his touch, she opened vague eyes. She smiled with dry lips, and put his hand away.

"No, no!" she protested. "No special favors for me! I'm not a woman, remem-

ber. I'm ' Captain Alden,' still—only a legionary!"

"But—"

"If you favor me in any way, to the detriment of any of the others or your own, I won't go on! I'm just one of you. Just one of the survivors, on even terms with the rest. It's give-and-take. I mean that! You've got to understand me!"

The Master nodded. He knew that tone. Silently he put on his jacket, again.

The lieutenant's orderly, Lebon, groaned and muttered a prayer to the Virgin. Leclair sat up, heavily, and blinked with sand-inflamed eyes.

"Time to drink again, *n'est-ce pas,* my captain?" asked he. "Drink to the dead!"

"I hope they *are* dead, rather than prisoners!" exclaimed the Master. "Yes, we'll drink, and get forward. We've got to make long strides, to-night. Those Jannati Shahr devils may be after us, to-morrow. Surely will, if they investigate that delta and find only a few bodies. They'll conclude some of us have got through. And if they pick up our trail, with those white dromedaries of theirs—"

"The sacred pigs!" ejaculated Leclair. "Ah, *messieurs,* now you begin to know the Arabs as I have long known them." With eyes of hate and pain he peered back at the darkening line of the Iron Mountains.

Bohannan, already loosening the neck of his goat-skin, laughed hoarsely.

"No wine!" he croaked, "and the water's rationed; even the stinking water. But the food isn't—good reason, too; there isn't any. Pockets full of gems!" He slapped one hard pocket. "I'd swap the lot for a proper pair of shoes and a skin o' that wine! Faith—that wine, now—"

The woman suddenly sat up, too, one hand on the hot gravel, the other raised for silence.

"Hark!" she whispered. "Sh!"

"What now?" demanded the Master.

"Bells! Camel-bells!"

"*Nom d'un nom!*" the lieutenant exclaimed, as he drew his gun.

The five fugitives stiffened for another battle. They looked well to their weapons. The Master's weariness and pain were forgotten as he crawled on hands and knees up the side of the little wady. The sound of distant camel-bells, a thin, far quiver of sound, had now reached his ears and those of the other men, less sensitive than the woman's.

Over the edge of the wady he peered, across a *wa'ar* or stony ground covered with mummified scrub. Beyond, a blanched salt-plain gleamed hoar-white in the on-coming dusk; and farther off, the dunes began again.

Strangely enough, the Master laughed. He turned and beckoned, silently. The others joined him.

"From the west!" he whispered. "This is no pursuit! It is a caravan going to Jannati Shahr!"

Bohannan chuckled, and patted his revolver. "Faith, but Allah is being good to us!" he muttered. "Now, when it comes to a fight—"

"Ten dromedaries—no, nine—" Leclair judged.

"And six camel-drivers," put in the woman, gun in hand. "A small caravan!"

"Hold your fire, all!" commanded the Master. "They're headed right across this wady. Wait till I give the word; then rush them! And—no prisoners!"

CHAPTER L.

"WHERE THERE IS NONE BUT ALLAH."

AN hour after sundown, four legionaries pushed westward, driving the gaunt, mange-stained camels. In the sand near the wady lay buried Leclair and all the camel-drivers, with the sand smoothed over them so as to leave as little trace as possible.

Leclair had come to the death of all deaths he would have most abominated, death by ruse at the hands of an Arab. Not all his long experience with Arabs had prevented him from bending over a dead camel-driver. The dead man had suddenly revived from his feigned death and driven a *jambiyeh* into the base of the lieutenant's throat. That the lieutenant's orderly had instantly shattered the cameleer's skull with a point-blank shot had not saved Leclair.

The four survivors, in addition to burying all the bodies, had buried the copper bars the caravan had been freighting to Jannati Shahr. They had saved the scant food and water of the drivers, also their clothing, slippers, daggers, long rifles, and ammunition.

Now, dressed like Arabs—the best of all disguises in case of being sighted by pursuers or by wandering Black Tent tribes, from far off—they were trekking westward again, riding four of the camels and leading the others.

For a week of hell the failing beasts, already half-dead of thirst when captured, bore them steadily southwest, toward the coast. Twice there rose spirals of smoke, in the desert distances; but whether these were from El Barr pursuers or were merely Bedouin encampments they could not tell. Merciless goading kept the camels going till they dropped dead, one by one.

By the end of the fourth day only three remained. Lebon methodically cut up every one that perished, for water, but found none in any stomach.

The fugitives sighted no oasis. They found no wady other than stone-dry. By day they slept, by night pushed forward. Day by day they grew weaker and less rational. The increasing nerve-strain that possessed them was companioned by the excruciating torture of their bodies racked by the swaying jolt of camel-riding.

But they still kept organization and coherence. Still, guided by the stars that burned with ardent trembling in the black sky, they followed their chosen course.

Morning heat-mist, noontide glare, wind like a beast with flaming breath, a sky terrible in its stainless beauty, an inescapable sun-furnace that seemed to boil the brains in their skulls—all these and the mockery of mirages that made every long white line of sal[illegible]orescence a lake of cooling waters, brought the four tortured legionaries close to death.

Awaking toward evening of the fifth day, the Master discovered one of the three camels gone—the one on which he had been riding with the woman, lest she fall fainting to the sand. With this camel, Major Bohannan had likewise disappeared. His big-shouldered, now emaciated figure in its dirty-white burnoose was nowhere visible. Only prints of soft hoof-pads, leading off to northeastward, betrayed the line of flight.

The Master pondered a while as he sat there, dazed, blinking at the desert all purple, gold, and tawny-red. His inflamed eyes, stubbly beard and gaunt cheeks made him a caricature of the man he had been, ten days before. After a little consideration, he awakened the woman and Lebon.

The verdict of Bohannan was madness, mirage, desertion. For two days the major had been babbling of wine and water, been beholding things that were not, been hurling jewels at imaginary vultures. Now, well, the desert had got him.

To pursue would have been insanity. They got the two remaining camels up, by dint of furious beating and of hoarse eloquence in Arabic from the Master and Lebon. Once more, knowing themselves doomed, they pushed into the eye of the flaming west, over the savage gorgeousness of the Empty Abodes. In less than an hour the double-laden camel fell to its knees and incontinently died.

Lebon dismounted from the one surviving animal, and stepped fair into a scorpion's nest. The horrible little gray creature, striking up over its back with spiked tail, drove the deadly barb half an inch into the orderly's naked ankle.

The Master sacrificed, sucked, and cauterized the wound. Nothing availed. Lebon, in his depleted condition, could not fight off the poison. Thirty minutes later, swollen and black, he died in a frothing spasm, his last words a hideous imprecation on the Arabs who had enslaved and tortured him—a curse on the whole race of Moslems.

Shaken with horror, the woman and the man buried Lebon, loaded the remaining water-bags, the guns and food onto the one camel and dragged themselves away on foot, driving the spent beast. Obviously this camel could not go far. Blindness had stricken it, and its black lips were retracted with the parch of thirst.

They gave it half a skin of water, and goaded it along with desperation. Everything now depended on this camel. Even though it could not carry them, it could

bear the burden of their scant supplies. Without it, every hope was lost.

All that night they drove the tortured camel. It fell more and more often. The Master spared it not. For on its dying strength depended the life of the woman he loved.

The camel died an hour before dawn. Not even vultures wheeled across the steely sky. The Master cut from its wasted flanks a few strips of meat and packed them into one of the palm-stick baskets that had held the cameleers' supplies. With them he packed all the remaining food—a few lentils, a little goat's-milk cheese, and a handful of dates fried in clarified butter.

This basket, with a revolver and a handful of cartridges, also the extra slippers taken from Leclair and the orderly, made all the burden the woman could carry. The Master's load, heavier far, was one of the water-skins.

This load, he knew, would rapidly lighten. As it should diminish, faster than the woman's, he would take part of hers. Thus, as best they could, they planned the final stage of their long agony.

Before starting again, they sat a while beside the gaunt, mangled camel, held council of war and pledged faith again. They drank a little of the mordant water that burned the throat and seemed in no wise to relieve the horrible thirst that blackened their lips and shriveled all their tissues.

"I think," the Master gasped, "we can make an hour or two before the sun gets too bad." He squinted at the crimson and purple banderoles of cloud through which, like the eye of a fevered Cyclops, the sun was already glowering. Already the range of obsidian hills ahead of them, the drifted sands all fretted with wind-waves, the whole iron plain of the desert was quivering with heat. "Every hour counts, now. Before we start, let us agree to certain things."

She nodded silently, crouching beside him on the sand. He drew an emaciated arm about her and for a moment peered down into her face. But he did not kiss her. A kiss, as they both were—some fine delicacy of the soul seemed telling him—would have been mockery.

"Listen," he commanded. "We must strictly ration the food and water. You must help me keep to that ration. I will help you. We must be careful about scorpions. Above all, we must beware of mirages. You understand?"

"I understand," she whispered.

"If either of us sees palms or water, that one must immediately tell the other. Then, if the other does not also see them, that is a mirage. We must not turn aside for anything like that, unless we *both* see it. I am speaking rationally, now that I can. Remember what I say!"

Silently she nodded. He went on:

"Now that we can still think, we must weigh every contingency. Our only hope lies in our helping each other. Alone, either of us will be led away by mirages in a little while. That kind of death must be spared us. We both live or die, together."

She smiled faintly, with parched lips.

"Do you think I would leave you," she asked, "any more than you would leave me? The pact is binding."

He pressed her hand.

"Come," said he. "Let us go!"

Once more they got to their feet, and set out to southwestward, over a scorching plain of crumbling, nitrous mud-flakes. Laden as they were, they could barely shuffle one foot after the other. But blessed lapses of consciousness now and then, relieved their agony.

Conscious or not, the life within them drove them onward, ever onward; slow, crawling things that all but blindly moved across the land of death, *La Siwa Hu*—"where there was none but God."

CHAPTER LI.

TORTURE.

HOW that day passed, they knew not. Nature is kind. When agony grows too keen, the All-mother veils the tortured body with oblivion.

Over blood-covered stretches swept by the volcano-breath of the desert, through acacia-barrens and across basaltic ridges the two lonely figures struggled on and on. They fell, rested, slept a nightmare sleep

under the furious heat, got up again and dragged themselves once more along.

Now they were conscious of plains all whitened with saltpeter, now of scudding sand-pillars—wind-jinnee of the Empty Abodes—that danced and mocked them. Again, one or the other beheld paradisical, gleaming lakes, afar.

But though they had lost the complete rationality that would have bidden them lie quiet all day, and trek only at night, they still remembered the pact of the mirages. And since never both beheld the same lake, they held each other from the fatal madness that had lured Bohannan.

Their only speech was when discussing the allurements of beckoning waters which were but air.

At nightfall, toiling up over the lip of a parched, chalky nullah that sunset turned to amethyst, a swarm of howling Arabs suddenly attacked them. The Master flung himself down, and fired away all his ammunition, in frenzy. The woman, catching his contagion, did likewise.

No shots came back; and suddenly the Arabs vanished from the man's sight. When he stumbled forward to the place where they had been, he discovered no dead bodies, not even a footprint.

Nothing was there but a clump of acacias, their twisted thorns parched white. They had been shooting at only fantasms of their own brains. Now, even the mercy-bullets were gone.

Bitterly the man cursed himself, as he thrust the now useless pistol back into its holster. The woman, however, smiled with dry lips, and from her belt took out a little, flattened piece of lead—the bullet which, fired at Nissr from near the Ka'aba, had fallen at her feet and been picked up by her as a souvenir.

"Here is a bullet," said she chokingly. "You can cut this in two and shape it. We can reload two shells with some of the Arab powder. It will do!"

They laughed irrationally. More than half mad as they now were, neither one thought of the fact that they had no percussion-caps.

Still laughing, they sat down in the hot sand, near the claw-like distortions of the acacias. Consciousness lapsed. They slept. The sun's anger faded; and a steel moon, long after, slid up the sky.

Next day, many miles to southwestward of the acacias, Kismet—toying with them for its own delectation—respited them a little while by stumbling them onto a deserted oasis. They turned aside to this only after a long, irrational discussion. The fact that they could both see the same thing, and that they had really come to palm-trees — trees they could touch and feel—gave them fresh courage.

Little enough else they got there. The cursed place, just a huddle of blind, mud huts under a dozen sickly trees, had been swept clean some time ago by the passage of a swarm of those voracious locusts known as *jarad Iblis,* the locusts of Satan.

Nothing but bare branches remained in the *nakhil,* or grove. Nothing at all was to be found in the few scrubby fields about the well now choked with masses of the insects. Whoever the people of this squalid settlement had been, all were gone. The place was almost as bare as if the sun's flames had themselves flared down and licked the village.

All the sufferers found, of any worth, was a few handfuls of dry dates in one of the hovels and a water-jar with about two quarts of brackish water.

This water the Master discovered, groping half-blind through the hut. Stale as it was, it far surpassed the strongly chemicalized water of the River of Night, still remaining in the goat-skin. It smote him with the most horrible temptation of his life. All the animal in his nature, every parched atom of his body shouted:

"Take it! Drink, drink your fill! She will never know. Take it, and drink!"

He seized the water-jar, indeed, but only to carry it with shaking hands to her, where she lay in the welcome shadow of the hut. His lips were black with thirst as he raised her head and cried to her:

"Here is water—real water! Drink!"

She obeyed, hardly more than half-conscious. He gave her all he dared, having her drink at once, nearly half. Then he set down the jar, loosened the sack from

his shoulders which were cut raw with the chafing of the thongs, and bathed her face with a little of that other water which, though bad, still might keep life in them.

"This may be an insane waste," he was thinking, "but it will help revive her. And —maybe—we shall find another, better oasis."

Out across the plain he peered, over the sun-dried earth, out into the distances shrouded with purple mists. His blurred eyes narrowed.

"Why, my God! There's one, now!" he muttered. "A green one—cool—fresh—"

The Master laid the woman down again in the shadow, got up and staggered out into the blinding sun. He tottered forward, laughing hoarsely.

"*Cool—fresh—*" The words came from between parched lips.

All at once the oasis faded to a blur in the brilliant tapestry of the desert that beckoned: "Come to me—and die!"

The Master recoiled, hands over eyes, mouthing unintelligible words. Back, beside the woman he crouched, fighting his own soul to keep it from madness. Then he heard her voice, weak, strange:

"Have you drunk, too?"

"Of course!"

"You are not—telling me the truth."

"So help me God!" His fevered lips could hardly form the words. "There, in the hut—I drank. All I needed."

She grew silent. His conscience lapsed. They lay as if dead, till almost evening, under the shelter of the blessed shadow.

The rest, even in that desolation, put fresh life into them. At nightfall they bound up their feet again, ate the dry dates and a little of the cheese, and once more set their blistered faces toward the Red Sea.

The woman's basket was now light, indeed, across her shoulders. Not all her begging had induced the Master to let her carry the water-jug there. This, too, he was carrying.

All night long, stopping only when one or the other fell, they ploughed over basalt and hornblende schist that lacerated their feet, over blanched immensities under the steel moon, across grim black ridges and through a basin of clay circled by hills.

Strange apparitions mocked and mowed before them, but grimly they gave no heed. This, they both realized in moments of lucidity, was the last trek. Either they must find the sea, before another night, or madness would sink its fangs into their brains. And madness meant—the end.

Their whole consciousness was pain. This pain localized itself especially in their heads, round which some jinnee of the waste had riveted red-hot iron bands. There was other pain, too, in the limping feet cased in the last of the babooches, now stiffened with blood. And in the throat and lungs, what was this burning?

CHAPTER LII.

"THALASSA! THALASSA!"

ANOTHER of those horrible, red mornings, with a brass circle of horizon flaming all around in the most extraordinary fireworks topped by an azure zenith, found them still crawling southwestward, making perhaps a mile an hour.

Disjointed words and sentences kept framing themselves in the man's mind; above all, a sentence he had read long ago in Greek, somewhere. Where had he read that? Oh, in Xenophon, of course. In "*The Retreat of the Ten Thousand.*" The Master gulped it aloud, in a dead voice:

"Most terrible of all is—the desert—for it is full—of a great want."

After a while he knew that he was trying to laugh.

"A great want!" he repeated. "A great—"

Presently it was night again.

The Master's mind cleared. Yes, there was the woman, lying in the sand near him. But where was the date-stick basket? Where was the last of the food? He tried to think.

He could remember nothing. But reason told him they must have eaten the last of the food and thrown the basket away. His shoulders felt strangely light. What was this? The water-bag was gone, too?

But that did not matter. There had been only a little of that chemicalized water left, anyhow. Perhaps they had drunk it

all, or bathed their faces and necks with in. Who could tell? The water-sack was gone; that was all he knew.

A great fear stabbed him. The water-jar! Was that still on his back? As he felt the pull of a thong, and dragged the jar around so that he could blink at it, a wonderful relief for a moment deadened his pain.

"*Allah isélmak!*" he croaked, blessing the scant water the jar still held. He realized the woman was peering at him.

"Water!" he whispered. "Let us drink again—and go on!"

She nodded silently. He loosed the thong, took the jar and peered into its neck, gauging the small amount of water still there. Then he held it to her lips.

She seemed to be drinking, but only seemed. Frowning, as she finished, he once more squinted into the jar with bleared eyes. His voice was even, dull, ominous as he accused:

"You drank nothing. You are trying to save water for me!"

She shook her head in negation, but he penetrated the lie. His teeth gleamed through his stubble of beard, and his eyes glinted redly under the hood of his ragged burnoose as he cried:

"Will you drink?"

"I tell you—I have drunk!"

Slowly he tilted the jar toward the thirsty sands.

"Drink, now, or I pour all this on the ground!"

Beaten, she extended a quivering hand. They shared the last of the water. The man took less than a third. Then they set out again on the endless road of pain.

Was it that same day, or the next, that the man fell and could not rise again? The woman did not know. Something had got into her brain and was dancing there and would not stop; something blent of sun and glare, sand, mirage, torturing thirst. There was a little gray scorpion, too—but no, *that* had been crushed to a pulp by the man's heel. Or had it not? Well—

The man! Was there a man? Where was he? Here, of course, on the baked earth.

As she cradled his head up into her lap and drew the shelter of her burnoose over it, she became rational again. Her hot, dry hand caressed his face. After a while he was blinking up at her.

"Bara Miyan! Violator of the salt!" he croaked, and struck at her feebly. And after another time, she perceived that they were staggering on and on once more.

The woman wondered what had happened to her head, now that the sun had bored quite through. Surely that must make a difference, must it not?

A jackal barked. But this, they knew, must be illusion. No jackals lived so far from any habitation of mankind. The man blinked into the glare, across which sand-devils of whirlwinds were once more gyrating over a whiteness ending in dunes that seemed to be peppered with camel-grass.

Another mirage! Grass could grow only near the coast. And now that they had both been tortured to death by Jannati Shahr men and been flung into Jehannum, how could there be any coast? It seemed so preposterous.

It was all so very simple that the man laughed—silently.

Where had that woman gone to? Why, he thought there surely had been a woman with him! But now he stood all alone. This was very strange.

"I must remember to ask them if there wasn't a woman," thought he. "This is an extraordinary place! People come and go in such a manner."

The man felt a dull irritation, and smeared the sand out of his eyes. How had that sand got there? Naturally, from having laid on one of those dunes. There seemed to be no particular reason for lying on a dune, under the fire-box of an engine, so the man sat up and kept blinking and rubbing his eyes.

"This is the best mirage, yet," he reflected. "The palms look real. And the water—it sparkles. Those white blotches —one would say they were houses!"

Indifferent, yet interested, too, in the appearance of reality, the man remained sitting on the dune, squinting from under this torn burnoose.

The mirage took form as a line of dazzling white houses along a sea of cobalt and indigo. And to add to the reality of

the mirage, some miles away, he could see two boats with sails all green and blue from the reflection of the luster of the water.

The man's eyes fell. He studied his feet. They were naked, now, cut to the bone, caked with blood and sand. Odd, that they did not hurt. Where were his babooches? He seemed to remember something about having taken some ragged ones from the feet of some woman or other, a very long time ago, and having bound his own upon her feet.

"I'll ask the people in those houses, down there," thought he; and on hands and knees started to crawl down the slope of the dunes toward the dazzling white things that looked like houses.

Something echoed at the back of his brain:

"*You must ask her if this is real! Unless you both see it, you must not go!*"

He paused. "There *was* a woman, then!" he gasped. "But—where is she now?"

Realization that she had disappeared sobered him. He got up, groped with emaciated hands before his face as he turned back away from the white houses and stumbled eastward.

All at once he saw something white lying on the sand, under a cooking glare of sunlight. Memory returned. He fell on his knees beside the woman and caught her up in quivering arms.

After a while, he noticed there was blood on her left arm. Blood, in the bend of the elbow, coagulated there.

This puzzled him. All he could think was that she might have cut herself on her *jambiyeh* dagger, when she had fallen. He did not know then, nor did he ever know, that he himself had fallen at this spot; that she had thought him dying; that she had tried to cut her arm and give him her blood to drink; that she had fainted in the effort. Some last remnants of strength welled up in him. He stooped, got her across his shoulder, struggled to his feet and went staggering up the dune.

Here he paused, swaying drunkenly.

Strange! The very same mirage presented itself to his eyes—blue sails, turquoise sea, feathery palms, white houses.

"By God!" he croaked. "Mirages—they don't last, this way! That's real—that's real water, by the living God!"

Up from dark profundities of tortured memory arose the cry of Xenophon's bold Greeks when, after their long torment, they had of a sudden fronted blue water. At sight of the little British consular station of Batn el Hayil, on the Gulf of Farsan:

"*Thálassa!*" he cried. "*Thálassa, thálassa* (The sea, the sea)!"

CHAPTER LIII.

THE GREATER TREASURE.

NEW YORK, months later.

Spring had long departed—the spring of the year in which the Eagle of the Air had flung itself aloft from the Palisades, freighted with such vast hopes.

Summer was past and gone. The sparkling wine of autumn had already begun to bubble in the cup of the year.

Sunset, as when this tale began. Sunset, bronzing the observatory of Niss'rosh, on top of the huge skyscraper. Two of the legionaries—a woman and a man—were watching that sunset from the western windows of that room where first had been conceived the wonder-flight which had spelled death for so many a stout heart.

You could see great changes had come upon the man, as he paced slowly up and down the singular room, hands deep in the pockets of his riding-trousers. His hair was grayer, for one thing, his face leaner; a certain sinewy strength had come to him that had not been there before.

Some marks of suffering still remained on him, that not all of life could take away. His eyes looked deeper and more wise, his mouth more human in its smile. That he had learned to smile, at all, meant much. And the look in his eyes, as he glanced at the woman, meant vastly more. Yes, this man had learned infinitely much.

From a big, bamboo Chinese chair the woman was watching him.

Her eyes were musing, reminiscent. Her riding costume well became her; and by the flush on her cheek you might have guessed they had both just come in from a long gallop together.

The costume gave her a kind of boyish charm; yet she remained entirely feminine. A kind of bronze mist seemed to envelop her head, as the dull-tawny sunset light fell on her from those broad windows. Near her riding-crop stood a Hindu incense-holder, with joss-sticks burning. As she took one of these and twirled it contemplatively, the blue-gray vapor spiraling upward was no more dreamy than her eyes.

"The invincible Orient!" she said, all at once. "It absorbs everything and gives back nothing. And we thought, we hoped, we might conquer part of it! Well—no—that's not done."

The man stopped his slow pacing, sat on the edge of the table and drummed with his fingers on the teak.

"Not at the first attempt, anyhow," said he, after a little thought. "I think, though, another time—but there's no use dreaming. Of course, it's not the treasure I'm thinking about. That was just a detail. It's the men. Good men!"

She peered into the incense-smoke, as if exorcising the powers of darkness.

"They're not dead, not all of them!" she exclaimed with conviction.

"I wish I could believe you!"

"But you *must* believe me! Something tells me some of our good chaps are still alive. All of them perhaps."

"Impossible!" He shook his head. "Even if they escaped the explosion, the Jannati Shahr devils must have massacred them." He shuddered slightly. "That's the worst of it. Death is all right. But the crucifixion, and all—"

"Cold reason paints a cruel picture, I know," the woman answered, laying a hand on the man's. "But you know—a woman's intuition. I don't believe as you do. And the major—and that rumor we got from old Nasr el Din, the Hejaz rug-merchant down on Hester Street, how about that?"

"Yes, I know. But—"

"How could a rumor like that come through, about a big, white-skinned, red-haired Ajam slave held by that tribe near Jeddah? How could it, unless there were some truth back of it?"

"He wandered away into the desert, quite insane. It's not impossible he might have been captured. By Allah!" And the man struck the table hard. "If I really believed Nasr el Din—"

"Well?"

"I'd go again, if I died for it!"

"The pronoun's wrong. *We'd* go!"

"Yes, *we!*" He took her hand. "We'd trail that rumor down and have Bohannan out of there, and the others too, if—but no, no, the thing's impossible!"

"Nothing is impossible, I tell you, in the East. And haven't we had miracles enough? After we were judged pirates and condemned to die, by the International Aero Tribunal, wasn't it a miracle about that pardon? That immunity, for your vibratory secrets that have revolutionized the defensive tactics of the League's air-forces?"

She smiled up at him, through the vapor. "It's the impossible that happens, these days! The soul within me tells me some of our chaps are still alive, out there!"

She waved the smoky wand toward the large-scale map of Arabia on the wall.

"But Rrisa," said she. "About the others, there's no sense of guilt. I feel, though, like a murderer about Rrisa."

"Rrisa still lives!"

He shook his head. "The incense tells me. My heart tells me!"

"Allah make it so! But even if he is dead, he died like the others—a man!"

"In pursuit of an ideal."

"Yes. It wasn't the treasure, of course." he mused. "It wasn't material things. It was adventure. Well—you and I have had that, at all events. And they had it too. They and we—all of us—we changed the course of history for more than two hundred million human beings. And as for you and me—"

He turned, peering at the map. Then he got up from the table, went to that map and laid a hand on the vast, blank expanse across which was printed only "Ruba el Khali"—the Empty Abodes.

"It would wreck the whole structure of civilization if we told," said he. The woman put back the incense-stick into its holder, got up and came to stand beside him. "Imagine the horrible, vulturelike scramble of capitalism to exploit that dyke of gold! There'd be expeditions, pools, com-

bines, wars—we'd have the blood of uncounted thousands on our heads!

"It's not the treacherous El Barr people I'm thinking of. If they perished, as they would to the last man defending their gold, all well and good. But in case any of our men are still alive there, *they'd* be butchered. And then, the destruction of gold as a medium of exchange, by its gross plenty, would wreck the world with panics. And the greatest catastrophe of history would lie on our shoulders. That is why—"

"Why the secret must remain here," she said, touching her breast.

"*But!*" he exclaimed, and turned and took a pencil from the table.

In a bold hand he wrote, across the blank white spaces of the map, these characters in Arabic:

"*Nac'hna arivna!*" he exclaimed. "'*We know!*'"

A long silence followed. Both, with deep memories, were peering at those words, as the light slowly faded in the West over the Palisades. The man was first to speak.

"This secret is ours," said he. "I have another, that even you don't know!"

"You have kept something from—*me?*"

"Only until I have quite dared tell you."

"Dared?"

"It isn't the mere, simple thing itself. It's the symbolism back of it. Maybe even now I'm premature in telling you. But, somehow—"

He hesitated. This man of action, hard, determined, strong, seemed afraid.

"Somehow," he added, "you and I—have come so near to one another—and tonight, here is this room where it all started, we have seemed to understand each other so well, through the revocation of the past, that—yes, I'll show you—"

He thrust a hand into his breast-pocket and brought out a small leather sack. Startled, she peered at it as he drew open the cord. He took from the sack a wondrous thing, luminous with nacreous hues.

"The Great Pearl Star;" she cried.

"Yes, the Great Pearl Star, itself!"

She looked in silence. Then she reached out a hand and touched it, as if unbelieving.

"Why, you never told me!"

"I had a reason."

"And—through all that inferno, when every ounce had to be considered—"

"I was keeping this for—you."

There were tears in her eyes as he laid a hand on her shoulder.

"For you," he repeated. "It was mine, but it is mine no longer. This crown-jewel of Islam is yours, now—if you will have it."

"If I will have it!" she whispered. "There's only one thing in this whole world I more dearly long for!"

"I am offering you that, too," said the man, in a trembling voice. "I knew nothing of it, nothing whatever, until I came to understand what a woman really could be. I fought against it—and lost.

"It came to me not sought after and welcomed, but storming over the ramparts of my soul. Yes, I fought love—and lost."

"I understand that, too," she said.

"I put the Pearl Star in my breast, sacred to you. I said to myself: 'If we ever live through this, and I feel worthy to give this gem to her, I'll ask her to complete it.'"

"To complete it?"

"Yes. You see, one pearl was missing. The most wonderful of all. Now, as I clasp this necklace round your throat, the Pearl Star is completed."

"I—don't understand—"

"Ah, but I do! The missing pearl of great price—you are that pearl. In giving the Pearl Star to you, I make it whole."

"And I give it back to you, completed!"

Her head lay on his heart. His lips were on her hair.

"Completion," he whispered. "Peace, to the troubled heart. Peace, after the night that life has been to me. Peace, till the dawn!"

"'Peace,'" she said, in the line of the ancient Arabic poem. "'Peace, until the coming of the stars.'"

"'Peace,'" he breathed. "'It is peace until the rising of the day!'"

(The end.)

Heart to Heart Talks

By the Editor

ONLY the pessimist hath declared in his heart there is no pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. Optimists, pixies, poets, and promoters know there is more than enough gold in the world to build every man a house of plenty, and it is not all buried at the end of the rainbow. Just as beauty dwells as much in the eye of the beholder as in the object beheld, the quest of gold almost invariably enlarges the heart if it does not always swell the pockets of the prospector.

Sometimes, it does both, and when this happy and unusual consummation comes to pass the adventure somehow takes on the character and charm of a modern holy grail. Whether you accept this preface or not, you will accept our next week's serial—

THE GOLD GIRL

BY JAMES B. HENDRYX

Author of "The Texan," "The Gun Brand," "The One Big Thing," etc.

as a decidedly engaging and worth-while story, because the author has not only been indorsed by ALL-STORY WEEKLY readers as one of our most popular authors, but he has chosen for the subject of this serial the hills and the ranges of northern Montana, patrolled by two high-strung and proudly independent spirits, a girl of the East and a rider of the West, whose emotional reactions seem to preclude the gold and the rainbow. But in this ripping Western tale the author is true to his people and his country. We come to see why hearts are truer, smiles broader, hand-clasps heartier in this glowing land, where the rainbow ever stretches for those who have eyes to behold it. As for the pot of gold—well, Hendryx had best tell you about it, and if you are of the elect, Patty will apportion your share.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON once said that there are some old houses in which something tragic *must* have happened some time in the past; that within their grim walls there must have been some tragedy enacted. An old house of this sort was the inspiration of the exceptionally fine novelette in next week's issue of the ALL-STORY WEEKLY—

HOUSE OF THE DREAM

BY EDITH SESSIONS TUPPER

Author of "Gray House," etc.

We don't know whether or not the original of the old mansion in this story really had attached to it a legend such as the author relates; at any rate, if it hadn't imagination has taken the place of legend so well that the result will please all lovers of the sort of fiction that produces thrills and that peculiar sensation at the roots of your hair. This is the sort of yarn that is best read before a blazing fire on a stormy, windy night, when conditions are best for the full enjoyment of the pleasurable "creeps" that tales of the mysterious and unknown—if well written—always produce. If you start this story, you will read it through. And that's the sort of work that we want to publish and you want to read.

A GRIM story of a betrayed trust and a just punishment is that told in Raymond Lester's "IN QUEST OF VENGEANCE," in next week's issue. In these few words we have told you all that we dare tell you about this story—we can't risk spoiling your pleasure in reading it. And of course you *will* read it—a Raymond Lester story is a treat that ALL-STORY WEEKLY readers never pass up.

THE war turned more than one supposedly tame cat into a first rate fighting man. "ONE COMBATANT" by Eugene P. Lyle, Jr., poses the

case of a kid-gloved desk man who returned to find a girl in his place and a yard of jeering men who refused to accept him as foreman. Even the girl was inclined to accept the decision of the yard and decided a desk was his proper *métier*. How the men changed their minds and the girl revoked her estimate is dramatically brought out in a story which will please all classes of readers by its strong humanity and its insistent appeal. Look for the Lyle tale in next week's magazine.

A RICH man, a college-professor who values money at its real worth, a pretty girl, a catboat, a Florida key—and a storm. These are the ingredients that Rothvin Wallace uses in the making of one of the most interesting and entertaining yarns that it has been our good fortune to read in many moons. Mr. Wallace—as our readers well know—is an expert in the writing of worth-while stories, and has outdone himself in "A MERE MATTER OF PLACE," which you will find in next week's ALL-STORY WEEKLY. Look for it—behind a corking good yarn you will find an idea that's well worth remembering in times such as these.

LIKES THE "SEMI-DUAL" STORIES

TO THE EDITOR:

May I add my mite of appreciation to your Heart to Heart Talks? I just couldn't keep quiet any longer. In my estimation your magazine has them all beat. My favorites among your writers are Max Brand, J. U. Giesy, and J. B. Smith, Isabel Ostrander, Randall Parrish, and, oh, many others too numerous to mention.

I have just finished "The Ivory Pipe," and must say it's simply grand, like all your other "Semi-Dual" stories. Please get after Max Brand and make him bring us a sequel to "The Untamed." We don't want to see poor *Kate* die a broken-hearted old maid, which I'm sure she will do if *Dan* doesn't return. "Comrades of Peril" is sure a dandy, and I am anxiously waiting for the end, and know *Tom Shelby* will come out all right. I would like some more "Night Wind" serials. I never read a more interesting story than "The Lady of the Night Wind."

I'm not a regular subscriber, but get the ALL-STORY WEEKLY just the same. I can't see how any one can kick against your splendid magazine. Of course there are some stories I like better than others, but they are all good. I even read E. K. Means's negro stories, and think they are blue chasers. I think we ought to have a sequel to "Bachelor Dinners," and I would love to see *Janet* and *John* married and happy, and think it would serve *Dick Halloran* just right.

As this is my first attempt to write you, I guess I had better skiddo, as the W. B. will get this, and I hope to see it in the Heart to Heart pages real soon. Here's wishing the ALL-STORY WEEKLY and its staff a long and prosperous life. I am ever an ALL-STORY WEEKLY reader.

Thorndale, Texas. MRS. F. F. WISIAN.

WHO PUT THE A IN A. MERRITT?

TO THE EDITOR:

I note by the book announcement of "The Moon Pool" that Mr. Merritt's first name is Abe which I construe to be a contraction of Abraham. Is he a Hebrew? JEANNETTE O'LEARY.

New York, New York.

NOTE: No, much as Mr. Merritt may regret it, he is not a Hebrew. He tells us that his family were once upon a time French Huguenots who fled to Wales during the religious persecutions of that faith. Early in the seventeenth century they made their way to America. Mr. Merritt is a grand-nephew of the late General Wesley Merritt. His branch of the family had a habit of going to the Bible whenever little newcomers arrived. Over his defenseless and innocent infant body they argued, Mr. Merritt informs us, whether he should be named Job, Hezekiah, Joshua, or Abraham. The Abes had it.

LITTLE HEART-BEATS

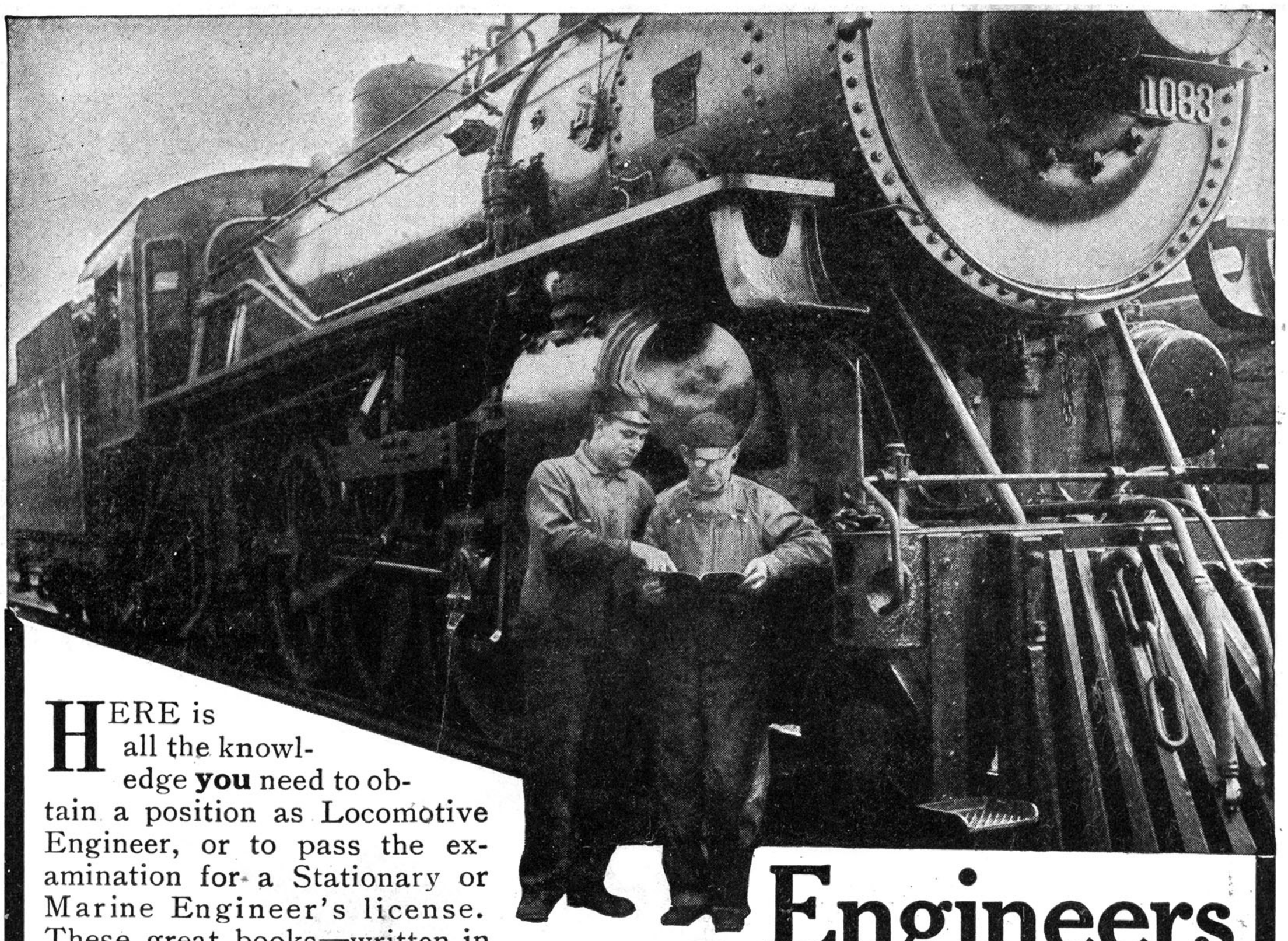
Could you please tell me if the four issues of "The Mucker" are still in print. And also the five issues of "The Return of the Mucker." If they are, please publish in ALL-STORY WEEKLY, the dates and price of the nine issues, because I would like to get them if I could. EDWARD COLEMAN.

Minneapolis, Minnesota.

NOTE: "The Mucker," by Edgar Rice Burroughs, was published in the *All-Story Cavalier*, October 24 to November 14, 1914. "The Return of the Mucker," in the ALL-STORY WEEKLY, June 17 to July 15, 1916. With the exception of the November 14, 1914, issue, which is out of print, we can supply the numbers mentioned for twenty cents each. If Mr. Coleman so desires, and will send us his full address, we will publish a request for the missing number in our next Readers' Exchange Column.

I have been reading the ALL-STORY WEEKLY for about a year. I have read about all the other magazines, and have dropped them all for the ALL-STORY WEEKLY. Having read Delvin Hallock's estimate of some of the stories, I will give my estimate of a few: "The Owl Taxi," 90; "The Clean-Up," 95; "Four Quarts of Rubies," 94; "The Conquest of the Moon Pool," 35; "Pug-Ly-Gug-Lo," 10; "The Girl in the Golden Atom," 97; "The Grouch," 75; "Misery Mansions," 15; "The Unsuspecting Suspects," 70; "The Yellow Lord," 0; "Into the Infinite," 80; "From Now On," 90; "The Consolation Prize," 20; "The Mind Machine," 50; "The Trump Card," 50; "The Lord of Death," 90; "With a Crew of Skeletons," 0; "Tool o' the Trolley" series, 100. We all want a sequel to "The Girl in the Golden Atom." Will close, wishing a long life to the ALL-STORY WEEKLY. B. ED. BRAND.

Norwood, New York.



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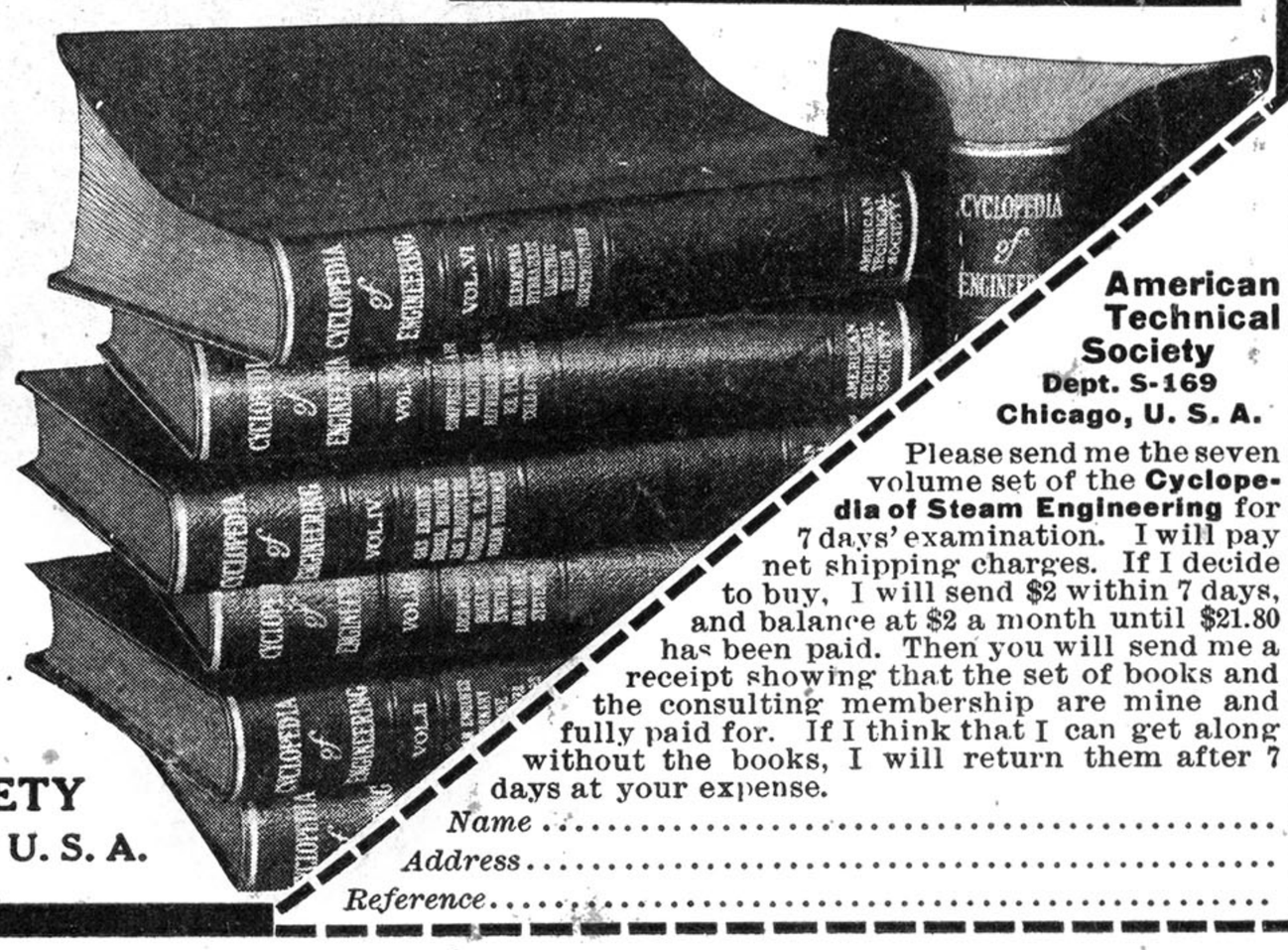

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