


10¢ PER COPY

SATURDAY DEC. 27

BY THE YEAR \$4.00

ALL-STORY WEEKLY



The Gold Girl

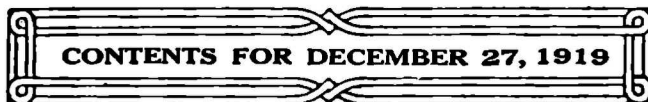
by James B. Hendryx

*Author of "The Texan," "The Promise," etc.
"— and West is West"*

ALL-STORY WEEKLY

VOLUME CV

NUMBER 2



The entire contents of this magazine are protected by copyright, and must not be reprinted without the publishers' permission.

FIVE CONTINUED STORIES

The Gold Girl	James B. Hendryx	161
A Six-Part Story — Part One		
A Goth from Boston	Julian Hawthorne	186
A Two-Part Story — Part Two		
The Red Seal	Natalie Sumner Lincoln	248
A Five-Part Story — Part Three		
No Fear	Captain Dingle	273
A Four-Part Story — Part Four		
A Buccaneer in Spats	Achmed Abdullah	292
A Six-Part Story — Part Five		

ONE NOVELETTE

House of the Dream	Edith Sessions Tupper	218
------------------------------	---------------------------------	-----

FIVE SHORT STORIES

In Quest of Vengeance	Raymond Lester	178
One Combatant	Eugene P. Lyle, Jr.	207
A Mere Matter of Place	Rothvin Wallace	263
The Fire Drill	Harry Hamilton	289
How Portugues Came Home	Walter Noble Burns	307

VERSE

The Difference	Antoinette DeCoursey Patterson	185	I Wonder Why!	Catharine Young Glen	247
A Will	Paul West	217	A Distinction	Carlyle Smith	272

Heart to Heart Talks	The Editor	317
--------------------------------	----------------------	-----

THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY, 280 BROADWAY, NEW YORK, and TEMPLE HOUSE, TEMPLE AVENUE, E. C., LONDON

FRANK A. MUNSEY, President

RICHARD H. TITHERINGTON, Secretary

CHRISTOPHER H. POPE, Treasurer

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

PUBLISHED WEEKLY BY THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY. COPYRIGHT, 1919

Entered as second class matter May 17, 1915, at the Post-Office at New York, under the Act of March 3, 1879

ALL-STORY WEEKLY

VOL. CV

NUMBER 2



SATURDAY, DECEMBER 27, 1919



The Gold Girl

by James B. Hendryx

Author of "The Texan," "The Gun Brand," "The One Big Thing," etc.

CHAPTER I.

A HORSEMAN OF THE HILLS.

PATTY SINCLAIR reined in her horse at the top of a low divide and gazed helplessly around her. The trail that had grown fainter and fainter with its ascent of the creek bed disappeared entirely at the slope of loose rock and bunch grass that slanted steeply to the divide.

In vain she scanned the deeply gored valley that lay before her, and the timbered slopes of the mountains for sign of human habitation. Her horse snipped at the bunch grass. Stiffly the girl dismounted.

She had been in the saddle since early noon with only two short intervals of rest, when she had stopped to drink and to bathe her face in the deliciously cold waters of mountain streams. Now the trail melted into the hills, and the broad shadows of the mountains were lengthening. Every muscle of her body ached at the unaccustomed strain. She envied her horse his enjoyment of the bunch grass which he munched with much tonguing of the bit and impatient shaking of the head. With bridle reins gripped tightly she leaned wearily against the saddle.

"I'm lost," she murmured. "Just plain lost. Surely I must have come fifty miles, and I followed their directions exactly, and now I'm tired, and stiff, and sore, and hungry, and lost."

A grim little smile tightened the corners of her mouth: "But I'm glad I came. If Aunt Rebecca could see me now! Wouldn't she just *gloat*? 'I told you so, my dear, just as I often told your poor father, to have nothing whatever to do with that horrible country of wild Indians, and ferocious beasts, and desperate characters.'"

Hot tears blurred her eyes at the thought of her father. "This is the country he loved, with its mountains and its woods and its deep mysterious valleys — and I want to love it, too. And I *will* love it! I'll find his claim if it takes me all the rest of my life. And I'll show the people back home that he *was* right, that he did know that the gold was here, and that he wasn't just a visionary and a ne'er-do-well!"

A rattle of loose stones set her heart thumping wildly and caused her to peer down the back trail where a horseman was slowly ascending the slope. The man sat loosely in his saddle with the easy grace of the slack rein rider. A roll-brim Stetson

with its crown boxed into a peak was pushed slightly back upon his head, and his legs were encased to the thighs in battered leather chaps whose lacings were studded with silver *conchas* as large as trade dollars. A coiled rope hung from a strap upon the right side of his saddle, while a leather-covered jug was swung upon the opposite side by a thong looped over the horn.

All this the girl took in at a glance as the rangy buckskin picked his way easily up the slope. She noted, also the white butt-plates of the revolver that protruded from its leather holster. Her first impulse was to mount and fly, but the futility of the attempt was apparent. If the man followed she could hardly hope to elude him upon a horse that was far from fresh, and even if she did it would be only to plunge deeper into the hills—become more hopelessly lost. Aunt Rebecca's words "desperate character" seemed suddenly to assume significance.

The man was very close now. She could distinctly hear the breathing of his horse, and the soft rattle of bit-chains.

Despite her defiant declaration that she was glad she had come, she knew that deep down in her heart, she fervidly wished herself elsewhere. "Maybe he's a ranchman," she thought, "but why should any honest man be threading unfrequented hill trails armed with a revolver and a brown leather jug?"

No answer suggested itself, and summoning her haughtiest, coldest look, she met the glance of the man who drew rein beside her. His features were clean-cut, bronzed, and lean—with the sinewy leanness of health. His gray flannel shirt rolled open at the throat, about which was loosely drawn a silk scarf of robin's-egg blue, held in place by the tip of a buffalo horn polished to an onyx luster. The hand holding the bridle reins rested carelessly upon the horn of his saddle. With the other he raised the Stetson from his head.

"Good evenin', miss," he greeted pleasantly. "Lost?"

"No," she lied brazenly, "I came here on purpose—I—I like it here." She felt the lameness of the lie and her cheeks flushed. But the man showed no surprise

at the statement, neither did he smile. Instead, he raised his head and gravely inspected the endless succession of mountains and valleys and timbered ridges.

"It's a right nice place," he agreed. To her surprise the girl could find no hint of sarcasm in the words, nor was there anything to indicate the "desperate character" in the way he leaned forward to stroke his horse's mane, and remove a wisp of hair from beneath the head-stall. It was hard to maintain her air of cold reserve with this soft-voiced, grave-eyed young stranger. She wondered whether a desperate character could love his horse, and felt a wild desire to tell him of her plight. But as her eyes rested upon the brown leather jug she frowned.

The man shifted himself in the saddle. "Well, I must be goin'," he said. "Good evenin'."

Patty bowed ever so slightly, as he replaced the Stetson upon his head and touched his horse lightly with a spur. "Come along, you Buck, you!"

As the horse started down the steep descent on the other side of the divide a feeling of loneliness that was very akin to terror gripped the girl. The sunlight showed only upon the higher levels, and the prospect of spending the night alone in the hills without food or shelter produced a sudden chilling sensation in the pit of her stomach.

"Oh! Please—"

The buckskin turned in his tracks, and once more the man was beside her upon the ridge.

"I *am* lost," she faltered. "Only, I hated to admit it."

"Folks always do. I've be'n lost a hundred times, an' I never *would* admit it."

"I started for the Watts ranch. Do you know where it is?"

"Yes, it's over on Monte's Creek."

Patty smiled: "I could have told *you* that. The trouble is, some one seems to have removed all the signs."

"They ought to put 'em up again," ventured the stranger in the same grave tone with which he had bid her good evening.

"They told me in town that I was to take the left hand trail where it forked at the first creek beyond the cañon."

The man nodded: "Yes, that about fits the case."

"But I did take the trail that turned to the left up the first creek beyond the cañon, and I haven't seen the slightest intimation of a ranch."

"No, you see, this little creek don't count, because most of the time it's dry; an' this ain't a regular trail. It's an' old winter road that was used to haul out cordwood an' timber. Monte's Creek is two miles farther on. It's a heap bigger creek than this, an' the trail's better, too. Watts's is about three mile up from the fork. You can't miss it. It's the only ranch there."

"How far is it back to the trail?" asked the girl wearily.

"About two mile. It's about seven mile to Watts's that way around. There's a short-cut, through the hills, but I couldn't tell you so you'd find it. There's no trail, an' it's up one couléé an' down another till you get there. I'm goin' through that way, if you'd like to come along you're welcome to."

For a moment Patty hesitated but her eyes returned to the jug and she declined, a trifle stiffly: "No, thank you. I—I think I will go around by the trail."

Either the man did not notice the curtness of the reply, or he chose to ignore it, for the next instant, noting the gasp of pain and the sudden tightening of the lips that accompanied her attempt to raise her foot to the stirrup, he swung lightly to the ground, and before she divined what he was about, had lifted her gently into the saddle and pressed the reins into her hand. Without a word he returned to his horse, and with face flushed scarlet, the girl glared at the powerful gray shoulders as he picked up his reins from the ground. The next moment she headed her own horse down the back trail and rode into the deepening shadows. Gaining the main trail she urged her horse into a run.

"He—he's awfully strong," she panted, "and just *horrid*!"

From the top of the divide the man watched until she disappeared, then he stroked softly the velvet nose that nuzzled against his cheek.

"What d'you reckon, Buck? Are they

goin' to start a school for that litter of young Wattses? There ain't another kid within twenty mile—must be." As he swung into the saddle the leather-covered jug bumped lightly against his knee. There was a merry twinkle of laughter in his blue eyes as, with lips solemn as an exhorter's, he addressed the offending object: "You brown rascal, you! If it hadn't be'n for you, me an' Buck might of made a hit with the lady, mightn't we, Buck?" Scratch gravel, now you old reprobate, or we won't get to camp till midnight.

"Anyway, she ain't no kin to Watts's," he added reflectively, "not an' that clean, she ain't."

CHAPTER II.

AT THE WATTS RANCH.

IT was with a decided feeling of depression that Patty Sinclair approached the Watts ranch. Long before she reached the buildings an air of shiftless dilapidation was manifest in the ill-lined barbed-wire fences whose rotting posts sagged drunkenly upon loosely strung wire. A dry, weed-choked irrigation ditch paralleled the trail, its wooden flumes, like the fence posts, rotting where they stood, and its walls all but obliterated by the wash of spring freshets.

The depression increased as she passed close beside the ramshackle log stable, where her horse sank to his ankles in a filthy brown seepage of mud and rotting straw before the door. Two small, carelessly built stacks of weather-stained hay occupied a fenced-off enclosure, beside which, with no attempt to protect them from the weather, stood a dish-wheeled hay rake, and a rusty mowing machine, its cutter-bar buried in weeds.

Passing through a small clump of cottonwoods in which three or four raw-boned horses had taken refuge from the mosquitoes she came suddenly upon the ranch-house, a squat, dirt-roofed cabin of unpeeled logs.

So, *this* was the Watts ranch!

Again and again in the delirium that preceded her father's death, he had muttered

of Monte's Creek and the Watts ranch, until she had come to think of it as a place of cool halls and broad verandas situated at the head of some wide mountain valley in which sleek cattle grazed belly-deep in lush grasses. And it was the Watts ranch that was marked as the point of departure upon the intricate and vaguely sketched map that she had found among her father's effects and which now reposed in an envelop of oiled silk suspended about her neck by a thin gold chain.

A rabble of nondescript curs came snapping and yapping about her horse's legs until dispersed by a harsh command from the dark interior of the cabin.

"Yere, yo' git out o' thet!"

The dogs slunk away and their places were immediately taken by a half-dozen ill-kempt, bedraggled children. A tousled head was thrust from the doorway, and after a moment of inspection a man stepped out upon the hard-trodden earth of the door yard. He was bootless and a great toe protruded from a hole in the point of his sock. He wore a faded hickory shirt, and the knees of his bleached-out overalls were patched with blue gingham.

"Howdy," he greeted, in a not unkindly tone, and paused awkwardly while the protruding toe tried vainly to burrow from sight in the hard earth.

"Is—is this the Watts ranch?" The girl suppressed a wild desire to burst into tears.

"Yes, mom, this is hit—what they is of hit." His fingers picked vaguely at his scraggly beard. An idea seemed suddenly to strike him, and turning, he thrust his head in at the door: "Ma!" he called loudly, and again: "Ma! Ma!"

The opening of a door within was followed by the sound of a harsh voice: "Lawzie me! John Watts, what's aillin' yo' now—got a burr in under yer gallus?" A tall woman with a broad, kindly face pushed past the man, wiping suds upon her apron from a pair of very large and very red hands.

"Sakes alive, if hit hain't a lady! Hain't yo' done tol' her to git off an' come in? Looks like yer manners, what little yo' ever hed of 'em's, fell in the crick an' got drowned. Jest yo' climb right down offen

thet cayuse, deary, an' come on in the house. John, yo' oncinch thet saddle, an' then, Horatius Ezek'l, yo' an' David Golieth, taken the hoss to the barn an' see't he's hayed an' watered 'fore yo' come back.

"Microby Dandeline, yo' git a pot o' tea a bilin' an' fry up a bite o' bacon, an' cut some bread, an' warm up the rest o' thet pone, an' you, Lillian Russell, yo' finish dryin' them dishes an' set 'em back on the table. An' Abraham Lincoln Wirt, you fetch a pail o' water, an' wrinch out the worsh dish, an' set a piece o' soap by, an' a clean towel, an' light up the lamp."

Under Ma Watts's volley of orders, issued without pause for breath, things began to happen with admirable promptitude.

"Land sakes!" cried the woman, as Patty climbed painfully to the ground. "Hain't yo' that sore an' stiff! Yo' must a rode clean from town, an' hit fifty mile, an' yo' not use to ridin' neither, to tell by the whiteness of yer face. I'll help yo' git off them hat an' gloves, an' thar sets the worsh dish on the bench beside the door. Microby Dandeline 'll hev a bite fer ye d'rec'ly an' I'll fix yo' up a shake-down. Horatius Ezek'l, an' David Golieth kin go out an' crawl in the hay an' yo' c'n hev theirn." Words flowed from Ma Watts naturally and continuously, without effort, as water flows from a spring. Patty, who had made several unsuccessful attempts to speak, interrupted abruptly:

"Oh, I couldn't think of depriving the boys of their bed. I—"

"Now, honey, just yo' quit pesterin' 'bout thet. Them young-uns 'druther sleep out'n in, any time. Ef I'd let 'em they'd grow up plumb wild. When yo've got worshed up come on right in the kitchen an set by. Us Wattses is plain folks an' don't pile on no dog. We've et an' got through, but yo' take all the time yo're a mind to, an' me an' Microby Dandeline 'll set by an' yo' c'n tell us who yo' be, ef yo're a mind to, an' ef not hit don't make no difference. We hain't partic'lar out here, nohow — we've hed preachers an' horse-thieves, an' never asked no odds of neither. I says to Watts—"

Again the girl made forcible entry into the conversation: "My name is Sinclair.

Patty Sinclair of Middleton, Connecticut. My father—"

"Land o' love! So yo're Mr. Sinclair's darter! Yo' do favor him a mite about the eyes, come to look; but yer nose is diff'r'nt to hisn, an' so's yer mouth—must a be'n yer ma's was like that. But sometimes they don't favor neither one. Take Microb Dandeline, here, 'tain't no one could say she hain't Watts's, an' Horatius Ezek'l he favors me, but fer's the rest of 'em goes, they mightn't b'long to neither one of us."

Microby Dandeline placed the food upon the table and sank, quiet as a mouse into a chair beneath the glass bracket-lamp with her large, dark eyes fixed upon Patty, who devoured the unappetizing food with an enthusiasm born of real hunger, while the older woman analyzed volubly the characteristics, facial and temperamental, of each and several of the numerous Watts progeny.

Having exhausted the subject of offspring, Ma Watts flashed a direct question: "How's yer pa, an' where's he at?"

"My father died last month," answered the girl without raising her eyes from her plate.

"Fer the land sakes, child, I want to know!"

"Watts! Watts!" The lank form appeared in the doorway. "This here's Mr. Sinclair's darter, an' he's up an' died."

The man's fingers fumbled uncertainly at his beard, as his wife paused for the intelligence to strike home: "Folks does," he opined, judiciously, after a profound interval.

"That's so, when yo' come to think bout hit," admitted Ma Watts. "What did he die of?"

"Cerebro spinal meningitis."

"My goodness sakes! I should think he would! When my pa died—back in Tennessee, hit wus—the doctor 'lowed hit wus the eetch, but sho', he'd had thet fer hit wus goin' on seven year. 'Bout a week 'fore he come to die, he got so's 't he couldn't eat nothin', an' he wus thet het up with the fever he like to burned up, an' his head ached him fit to bust, an' he wus out of hit fer four days, an' I mistrust thet-all mought of hed somethin' to do with his dyin'. The

doctor, he come an' bled him every day, but he died on him, an' then he claimed hit wus the eetch, er mebbe hit wus jest his time hed come, he couldn't tell which.

"I've wondered sence if mebbe we'd got a town doctor he mought of lived. But Dr. Swanky wus a mountain man an' we wus, too, so we taken him. But, he wus more of a hoss doctor, an' seems like, he never did hev no luck, much, with folks."

Her nerves all a jangle from trail-strain and the depressing atmosphere of the Watts ranch, it seemed to Patty she must shriek aloud if the woman persisted in her ceaseless gabble.

"Yer pa wus a nice man, an' well thought of. We-all know'd him well. It wus goin' on three year he prospected round here in the hills, an' many an' many a time he's sot right where yo're settin' now, an' et his meal o' vittles. Some said las' fall 'fore he went back East how he'd made his strike, an' hit wus quartz gold, an' how he'd gone back to git money to work hit. Mr. Bethune thought so, an' Lord Clendenning. They must of be'n thicker'n thieves with yer pa, 'cordin' to their tell." The woman paused and eyed the girl inquisitively: "Did he make his strike, an' why didn't he record hit?"

"I don't know," answered the girl wearily.

"An' don't yo' tell no one ef yo' do know. I b'lieve in folks bein' close-mouthed. Like I'm allus a tellin' Watts. But, yo' must be plumb wore out, what with ridin' all day, an' a tellin' me all about yo'-se'f. I'll slip in an' turn them blankets an' yo' kin jest crawl right into 'em an' sleep till yo' slep' out."

Ma Watts bustled away, and Microby Dandeline began to clear away the dishes.

"Can't I help?" offered Peggy.

The large, wistful eyes regarded her seriously. "No. I like yo'. Yo' hain't to worsh no dishes. Yo're purty. I like Mr. Bethune, an' Lord Clendenning, an' that Vil Holland. I like everybody. Folks is nice, hain't they?"

"Why—yes," agreed Patty, smiling into the big serious eyes. "How old are you?"

"I'm seventeen, goin' on eighteen. Yo' come to live with us-uns?"

"No—that is—I don't know exactly where I am going to live."

"That Vil Holland, he's got a nice camp, an' 'tain't only him there. Why don't yo' live there? I want to live there an' I go to his camp on Gee Dot, but he chases me away, an' sometimes he gits mad."

"What is Gee Dot?" Patty stared in amazement at this girl with the mind of a child.

"Oh, he's my pony. I reckon Mr. Bethune wouldn't git mad, but I don't know where he lives."

"I think you had better stay right here," advised Patty seriously. "This is your home, you know."

"Yes but they hain't much room. Me, an' Lillian Russell, an' David Golieth sleeps on a shake-down, an' they-all shoves an' kicks, an' sometimes when I want to sleep, Chattenoooy Tennessee sets up a squarkin' an' I cain't. Babies is a lot of bother an' they's dishes an' chores an' things. Wisht I hed a dress like yo'n." The girl passed a timid finger over the fabric of Patty's moleskin riding coat. Ma Watts appeared in the doorway connecting the two rooms.

"Well, fer the lands sakes! Listen at that! Microby Dandeline Watts, where's yo' manners?" She turned to Patty. "Don't mind her, she's kind o' simple, an' don't mean no harm. Yo' shake-down's ready fer yo' an' I reckon yo' glad, bein' that wore out. Hit's agin the east wall. Jest go on right in, don't mind Watts. Hit's dark in thar, an' he's rolled in. We hain't only one bed an' me an' Watts an' the baby sleeps in hit, on 'tother side the room. Watts, he aims to put up some bunks when he gits time."

CHAPTER III.

ENTER A MONK AND A LORD.

SICK at heart, and too tired and sore of body to protest against any arrangement that would allow her to sleep, the girl murmured her thanks and crossed to the door of the bedroom.

Not at all sure of her bearings she paused uncertainly in the doorway until a sound of heavy breathing located the slumbering

Watts, and turning toward the opposite side of the room, she proceeded cautiously through the blackness until her feet came in contact with her "shake-down," which consisted of a pair of blankets placed upon a hay tick.

The odor of the blankets was anything but fresh, but she sank to the floor, and with much effort and torturing of strained muscles, succeeded in removing her boots and jacket and throwing herself upon the bed. Almost at the moment her head touched the coarse, unslipped pillow, she fell into a deep sleep, from which hours later she was awakened by an insistent tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap.

"Some one has forgotten to pull up the canoe and the waves are slapping it against the side of the dock," she thought drowsily. "Did I have it last?" She stirred uneasily and the pain of movement caused her to gasp. She opened her eyes, and instead of her great airy chamber in Aunt Rebecca's mansion by the sea, she was greeted by the sight of the hot, stuffy room of the Watts cabin. A rumpled pile of blankets was mounded upon the bed against the opposite wall, and a shake-down similar to her own occupied a space beside the open door through which hot, bright sunlight streamed.

Several hens pecked assiduously at some crumbs, and Patty realized that it was the sound of their bills upon the wooden floor that had awakened her. She succeeded after several painful attempts in pulling on her boots, and as she rose to her feet, Ma Watts thrust her head in at the door.

"Lawzie! Honey, did them hens wake yo' up? Sho', ef I'd a thought o' thet, I'd o' fed 'em outside, an' yo' could of kep' on sleepin'. 'They hain't nothin' like a good long sleep when yo' tired,' Watts says, an' he ort to know. He aims to build a house fer them hens when he gits time. Yo' know where the worsh dish is, jest make yo'se'f to home, dinner 'll be ready d'rec'ly."

The feel of the cold water was grateful as the girl dashed it over her face and hands from the little tin wash-basin on the bench beside the door. Watts sat with his chair resting upon its rear legs and its back against the shady west wall of the cabin.

"Mo'nin'," he greeted. "Hit's right hot, I be'n studyin' 'bout fixin' them thar arri-gation ditches."

Patty smiled brightly: "All they need is cleaning out, isn't it?"

"Yas, mom. Thet, an' riggin' up them flumes. But it's a right smart o' work, an' then the resevoy's busted, too. I be'n aimin' to fix 'em when I git time. They hain't hed no water in 'em fer three year. Yo' see, two year ago hit looked like rain mos' every day. Hit didn't rain none to speak, but hit kep' a body hatin' to start workin' fer fear it would. An' las' year hit never looked like rain none, so hit wasn't no use fixin' 'em. An' this year I don't know jest what to do, hit might, an' then agin hit mightn't. Drat thet sun! Here hit is dinner time. Seems like hit never lets a body set in one place long 'nough to study out *whut* he'd ort to do."

Watts rose slowly to his feet, and picking up his chair, walked deliberately around to the east side of the house, where he planted it with the precision born of long practise in the exact spot that the shadow would be longest at the conclusion of the midday meal.

Patty entered the cabin and a few minutes later the sound of voices reached her ears. Ma Watts hurried to the window.

"Well, if hit hain't Mr. Bethune an' Lord Clendenning! Ef you see one you know the other hain't fer off. Hain't he good lookin' though—Mr. Bethune? Lord hain't so much fer looks, but he's some high-up nobility like over to England where he come from. Over yere they call 'em remittance men, an' they don't do nothin' much but ride around an' drink whisky, an' they git paid fer hit, too. Folks says how Mr. Bethune's gran'ma wus a squaw, but I don't believe 'em. Anyways, I allus liked him. He's got manners, an' hit don't stan' to reason no breed would have manners."

Patty could distinctly see the two riders as they lounged in their saddles. The larger, whose bulging blue eyes and drooping blond mustache gave him a peculiar walrus-like expression, she swept at a glance. The other was talking to Watts and the girl noted the slender figure with its almost

feminine delicacy of mold, and the finely chiseled features dominated by eyes black as jet—eyes that glowed with a velvety softness as he spoke:

"We have been looking over your upper pasture," he said. "A f low named Schmidt over in the Blackfo country will be delivering some horses across the line this summer and he wants to rent some pastures at different points along the trail. How about it?"

Watts rubbed his beard uncertainly. "Them fences hain't hoss-tight. I be'n studyin' 'bout fixin' 'em."

"Why don't you get at it?"

"Well they's the resevoy, an' the ditches—"

"Never mind the ditches. All that fence needs is a few posts and some staples."

"My ax hain't fitten to chop with no mo', an' I druv over the spade an' bruk the handle. I hain't got no luck."

Reaching into his pocket, Bethune withdrew a gold piece which he tossed to Watts. "Maybe this will change your luck," he smiled. "The fact is I want that pasture—or, rather, Schultz does."

"Thought yo' said Schmidt."

"Did I? Those kraut names all sound alike to me. But his name is Schultz. The point is, he'll pay you five dollars a month to hold the pasture, and five dollars for every day or night he uses it. That ten spot pays for the first two months. Better buy a new ax and spade and some staples and get to work. The exercise will do you good, and Schultz may want to use that pasture in a couple of weeks or so."

"Well, I reckon I kin. Hit's powerful hot fer to work much, but that's a sight o' money. As I wus sayin' to Mr. Sinclair's darter—"

"Sinclair's daughter! What do you mean? Is Sinclair back?"

Patty noted the sudden flash of the jet black eyes at the mention of her father's name. It was as though a point of polished steel had split their velvet softness. Yet there was no hostility in the glance: rather, it was a gleam of intense interest. The girl's own interest in the quarter-breed had been casual, at most hardly more than that accorded by a passing glance until she had

chanced to hear him refer to the man in the Blackfoot country in one breath as Schmidt, and in the next as Schultz. She wondered at that and so had remained standing beside Mrs. Watts, screened from the outside by the morning glory vines that serves as a curtain for the window.

The trifling incident of the changed name was forgotten in the speculation as to why her father's return to the hill country should be a matter of evident import to this sagebrush cavalier. So intent had she become that she hardly noticed the cruel bluntness of Watts's reply:

"He's dead."

"Dead!"

"Yas, he died back East an' his darter's come."

"Does she know he made a strike?" Patty noted the look of eagerness that accompanied the words.

"I do'no." Watts wagged his head slowly. "Mebbe so: mebbe not."

"Because, if she doesn't," Bethune hastened to add, "she should be told. Rod Sinclair was one of the best friends I had, and if he has gone I'm right here to see that his daughter gets a square deal. Of course if she has the location, she's all right." Patty wondered whether the man had purposely raised his voice, or was it her own imagination?

Ma Watts had started for the door. "Come on out, honey, an' I'll make yo' acquainted with Mr. Bethune. He was a friend of yo' pa, an' Lord, too." As she followed the woman to the door, the girl was conscious of an indefinable feeling of distrust for the man. Somehow, his words had not rung true.

As the two women stepped from the house the horsemen swung from their saddles and stood with uncovered heads.

"This here's Mr. Sinclair's darter, Mr. Bethune," beamed Ma Watts. "An' I'd take hit proud ef yo'd all stay to dinner."

"Ah, Miss Sinclair, I am most happy to know you. Permit me to present my friend Lord Clendenning."

The Englishman bowed low: "The prefix is merely a euphonism, Miss Sinclair. What you really behold in me is the decayed part of a decaying aristocracy."

Patty laughed. "My goodness, what frankness!"

"Come on, now, an' set by 'fore the vittles gits cold on us. Yere, yo' Horatius Ezek'l an' David Golieth, yo' hay them hosses!"

"No, no! Really, Mrs. Watts, we must not presume on your hospitality. Important business demands our presence elsewhere."

"Lawzie, Mr. Bethune, there yo' go with them big words agin. Which I s'pose yo' mean yo' cain't stay. But they's a plenty, an' yo' welcome." Again Bethune declined and as the woman reentered the house, turned to the girl:

"I only just learned of your father's untimely death. Permit me to express my sincerest sympathy, and to assure you that if I can be of service to you in any way I am yours to command."

"Thank you," answered Patty, flushing slightly under the scrutiny of the black eyes. "I am here to locate my father's claim. I want to do it alone, but if I can't I shall certainly ask help of his friends."

"Exactly. But, my dear Miss Sinclair, let me warn you: There are men in these hills who suspected that your father made a strike, who would stop at nothing to wrest your secret from you."

The girl nodded: "I suppose so. But forewarned is forearmed, isn't it? I thank you."

"Thet Vil Holland wus by yeste'day," said Watts.

Bethune frowned: "What did he want?"

"Didn't want nothin'. Jest come a ridin' by."

"I should think you'd had enough of him after the way he ran your sheep man off."

Watts rubbed his beard: "Well, I do'no. The cattlemen pays me same as that sheepman done. Vil Holland tended to that."

"That isn't the point. What right has Vil Holland and others of his ilk to tell you, or me, or anybody else, whom we shall or shall not rent to? It is the principle of the thing. The running off of those sheep was a lawless act, and the sooner lawlessness, as exemplified by Vil Holland, is stamped out of these hills, the better it

will be for the community. He better not try to bulldoze me." Bethune turned to Patty. "That Vil Holland is the man I had in mind, Miss Sinclair, when I warned you to choose your friends wisely. He would stop at nothing to gain an end, even to posing as a friend of your father. In all probability he will offer to assist you, but if you have any map or description of your father's location do not under any circumstances show it to him."

Patty smiled: "If any such paper exists I shall keep it to myself."

Bethune returned the smile. "Good-by," he said. "I shall look forward to meeting you again. Shall you remain here?"

"I have made no plans," she answered, and as she watched the two riders disappear down the creek trail her lips twisted into a smile. "May pose as a friend of your father—and probably will offer to assist you," she repeated under her breath.

"Well, Mr. Bethune, I thank you again for the warning."

CHAPTER IV.

PATTY GOES TO TOWN.

MA WATTS called loudly from the doorway, and many small Wattses appeared as if by magic from the direction of the creek and the cottonwood thicket. Dinner consisted of flabby salt pork, swimming in its own grease, into which were dipped by means of fingers or forks, huge misshapen slices of sour white bread. There was also an abundance of corn pone, black molasses, and a vile concoction that Ma Watts called coffee. Flies swarmed above the table and settled upon the food, from which they arose in clouds at each repetition of the dipping process.

How she got through the meal, Patty did not know, but to her surprise and disgust, realized that she had actually consumed a considerable portion of the unappetizing mess. Watts arose, stretched prodigiously, and sauntered to his chair which, true to calculation, was already just within the shadow of the east side of the house.

Baby on hip, Ma Watts, assisted by Mi-

croby Dandeline and Lillian Russell, attacked the dishes. All offers of help from Patty were declined.

"Yo' welcome to stay yere jest as long as yo' want to, honey, an' yo' hain't got to work none, neither. They's a old piece o' stack-cover somewheres around, an' them young-uns c'n rig 'em up a tent an' sleep in hit all summer, an' yo' c'n hev their shake-down like yo' done las' night. I s'pose yo're yere about yo' pa's claim?"

"Yes," answered the girl, "and I certainly appreciate your hospitality. I hope I can repay you some day, but I cannot think of settling myself upon you this way. My work will take me out into the hills, and—"

"Jest like yo' pa usta say. He wus that fond o' rale home cookin' thet he'd come 'long every wunst in a month er so an' git him a squir meal, an' then away he'd go out to his camp."

"Where was his camp?" asked the girl eagerly.

"Lawzie, his camp wus a tent, an' he moved hit around so they couldn't no one tell from one day to 'nother where he'd be at. But he never wus no great ways from here, gen'ally within ten mile, one way er 'nother. Hits out yonder in the barn—his tent an' outfit—pick an' pan an' shovel an' dishes, all ready to throw onto his pack-hoss, which hits a mewl an' runnin' in the hills with them horses of oun. If hit wusn't fer the fences they'd be in the pasture. Watts aims to fix 'em when he gits time."

"I don't know much about tents, but I guess I'll have to use it, that is, if there isn't another ranch, or a—a house, or something, where I can rent a room all to myself."

"Great sakes, child! They hain't another ranch within twenty-five mile, an' thet's toward town." As if suddenly smitten with an idea, she paused with her hand full of dishes and called loudly to her spouse:

"Watts! Watts!"

The chair was eased to its four legs, and the lank form appeared in the doorway. "Yeh?"

"How about the sheep camp?"

The man's fingers fumbled at his beard and he appeared plunged into deep thought. "What yo' mean, how 'bout hit?"

"Why not we-all leave Mr. Sinclair's darter live up there?"

Again the thoughtful silence. At length the man spoke: "Why, shore, she kin stay there long as she likes, an' welcome."

"Hits a cabin four mile up the crick," explained Ma Watts, "what we built on our upper desert fer a man thet wanted to run a band o' sheep. He wus rentin' the range offen us till they~druv him off—the cattlemen claimed they wouldn't 'low no sheep in the hill country. They warned him an' pestered him a spell, an' then they jest up an' druvin him off—thet Vil Holland wus into hit, an' some more."

"Who is this Vil Holland you speak of, and why did he want to drive off the sheep?"

"Oh, he's a cow-puncher—they say they hain't a better cow-puncher in Montany, when he'll work. But he won't work only when he takes a notion—'druther hang around the hills an' prospeck. He hain't never made no strike, but he allus aims to, like all the rest. Ef he'd settle down he could draw his forty dollars a month the year 'round, 'stead of which he works on the round-up, an' gits him a stake, an' then quits an' strikes out fer the hills."

"I couldn't think of occupying your cabin without paying for it. How much will you rent it to me for?"

"Tain't wuth nothin' at all," said Watts. "'Tain't doin' no good settin' whur it's at, an' yo' won't hurt hit none a livin' in hit. Jest move in, an' welcome."

"No, indeed! Now, you tell me, is ten dollars a month enough rent?"

"Ten dollars a month!" exclaimed Watts. "Why, we-all only got fifteen fo' a herder an' a dog an' a band o' sheep! No, ef yo' bound to pay, I'll take two dollars a month. We-all might be po', but we hain't no robbers."

"I'll take it," said Patty. "And now I'll have to have a lot of things from town—food and blankets, and furniture, and—"

"Hit's all furnished," broke in Ma Watts. "They's a bunk, an' a table, an' a stove, an' a couple o' wooden chairs."

"Oh, that's fine!" cried the girl, becoming really enthusiastic over the prospect of having a cabin all her very own. "But, about the other things: Mr. Watts, can you haul them from town?"

Watts tugged at his beard and stared out across the hills. "Yes, mom, I reckon I kin. Le's see, the work's a pilin' up on me right smart." He cast his eye skyward where the sun shone hot from the cloudless blue. "Hit mought rain to-morrow, an' hit moughtn't. The front ex on the wagon needs fixin'—le's see, this here's a Wednesday. How'd next Sunday a week do?"

The girl stared at him in dismay. Ten days of Ma Watts's "home cooking" loomed before her.

"Oh, couldn't you *possibly* go before that?" she pleaded.

"Well, there's them fences. I'd orter hev' time to study 'bout how many steeples hit's a goin' to tak' to fix 'em. An' besides, Ferd Rowe 'lowed he wus comin' 'long some day to trade hosses an' I'd hate to miss him."

"Why can't I go to town? I know the way. Will you rent me your horses and wagon? I can drive, and I can bring out your tools and things, too." As she awaited Watts's reply her eyes met the wistful gaze of Microby Dandeline. She turned to Ma Watts. "And maybe you would let Microby Dandeline go with me. It would be loads of fun."

"Lawzie, honey, yo' wouldn't want to be pestered with her."

"Yes, I would, really. Please let her go with me; that is, if Mr. Watts will let me have the team."

"Why, shore, yo' welcome to 'em. They hain't sich a good span o' hosses, but they'll git yo' there, an' back, give 'em time."

"And can we start in the morning?"

"My! Yo' in a sight o' hurry. They's thet front ex—"

"Is it anything very serious? Maybe I could help fix it. Do let me try."

Watts rubbed his beard reflectively. "Well, no, I reckon it's mebbe the wheels needs greasin'. 'Twouldn't take no sight o' time to do, if a body could only git at hit. Reckon I mought grease 'em all round, wunst I git started. The young-uns kin

help, yo' jest stay here with ma. Ef yo' so plumb sot on goin' we'll see't yo' git off."

"I kin go, cain't I, ma?" Microby Dandeline's eyes were big with excitement as she wrung out her dish-towel and hung it to dry in the sun.

"Why, yas, I reckon yo' mought's well—but seem's like yo' allus a wantin' to gad. Yo' be'n to town twicet a'ready."

"Twice!" cried Patty. "In how long?"

"She's goin' on eighteen. Four years, come July, she wus to town. They wus a circust."

"I know Mr. Christie. He lives to town."

"He's the preacher. One time thet Vil Holland an' him come ridin' 'long, an' they stopped in fer dinner, an' thet Vil Holland, he's allus up to some kind o' devilment er 'nother, he says: 'Ma Watts, why don't yo' hev the kids all babitized?'

"I hadn't never thought much 'bout hit, but there wus the preacher, an' he seemed to think mighty proud of hit, an' hit didn't cost nothin', so I tol' him to go ahead. He started in on Microby Dandeline—we jest called her Dandeline furst, bein' thet yallar with janders when she wus a baby, but when she got about two year, I wus a readin' a piece in a paper a man left, 'bout these yere little microbes thet gits into everywheres they shouldn't ort to, jest like she done, so I says to Watts how she'd ort to had two names anyways, only I couldn't think of none but common ones when we give her hern. I says, we'll name her Microby Dandeline Watts. Watts, he didn't care one way er t'other."

Ma Watts shifted the baby to the other hip. "Babitizin' is nice, but hit works both ways, too. Take the baby, yere. When we'd got down to the bottom of the batch it come her turn, an', lawzie, I wus that ilustered, comin' so sudden, thet way, I couldn't think of no name fer her 'cept Chattanooga, Tennessee, where I come from near, an' the very nex' day I wus readin' in the almanac an' I found one I liked better. Watts, he hain't no help to a body, he hain't no agguccation to speak of, an' don't never read none, an' would as soon I'd name his children John, like his ma done him.

"As I wus sayin', there hit wus in the almanac, the name 'twould of fitten the baby to a T. Vernal Eskimo, hit said, March 21, 5.26 A.M. The baby was borned March the 21st, 'tween five an' six in the mornin'. Nex' time I wus to town I hunted up Preacher Christie, but he said he couldn't onbabitize her, an' he reckoned Chattanooga Tennessee wus as good as Vernal Eskimo, anyhow, an' we could save Vernal Eskimo fer the next one."

The afternoon was assiduously devoted to overhauling the contents of a huge tin trunk in an effort to find a frock suitable for the momentous occasion of Microby Dandeline's journey. The one that had served for the previous visit, a tight little affair of pink gingham, proved entirely inadequate in its important dimensions, and automatically became the property of the younger and smaller Lillian Russell. Patty's suggestion of a simple white lawn that reposed upon the very bottom of the trunk was overruled in favor of a betucked and beflounced creation of red calico in which Ma Watts had beamed upon the gay panoply of the long-remembered circust. An hour's work with scissors and needle reduced the dress to approximately the required size. When the task was completed, Watts appeared with the information that he reckoned the wagon would run, and that the young-uns were out in the hills hunting the hosses.

CHAPTER V.

AN ENCOUNTER ON THE ROAD.

AT early dawn the following morning Patty was awakened by a timid hand upon her shoulder.

"Hit's daylight, an' pa's hitchin' up the hosses." Arrayed in the red dress, her eyes round with excitement and anticipation, Microby Dandeline was bending over her, whispering excitedly. "An' breakfus's ready, an' me an' ma's got the lunch putten up, an' hit's a pow'ful long ways to town, an' we better git a goin'."

"Stay right clost an' don't go gittin' lost," admonished Ma Watts as she stood in the doorway and surveyed her daughter

with approval born of motherly pride. The pink-gingham sunbonnet that matched the tight little dress had required only a slight "letting out" to make it "do," and taken in conjunction with the flaming red dress, made a study in color that would have delighted the heart of a Gros Ventre squaw. Thick, home-knit stockings, and a pair of stiff cowhide shoes completed the costume, and made her the center of an admiring semicircle of Wattses.

"Yo' shore look right pert an' briggity, darter," admitted Watts. "Don't yo' give the lady no trouble, keep offen the railroad car-tracks, an' don't go talkin' to strangers yo' don't know, an' ef yo' see Preacher Christie, tell him howdy, an' how's he gittin' 'long, an' we're doin' the same, an' stop in nex' time he's out in the hills." He handed Patty the reins. "An' mom, don't fergit them steepels, an' a ax, an' a spade."

"I won't forget," Patty assured him, and as Microby Dandeline was saying good-by to the small brothers and sisters, the man leaned closer. "Ef they's any change left over I wisht yo'd give her about ten cents to spend jest as she pleases."

The girl nodded, and as Microby Dandeline scrambled up over the wheel and settled herself beside her upon the board that served as a seat, she called a cheery good-by and clucked to the horses.

The trail down Monte's Creek was a fearsome road that sidled dangerously along narrow rock ledges, and plunged by steep pitches into the creek bed and out again. Partly by sheer luck, partly by bits of really skilful driving, but mostly because the horses themselves knew every foot of the tortuous trail, the descent of the creek was made without serious mishap. It was with a sigh of relief that Patty turned into the smoother trail that led down through the cañon toward town. In comparison with the bumping and jolting of the springless lumber wagon, she realized that the saddle that had racked and tortured her upon her outward trip had been a thing of ease and comfort. Released from her post at the brake-rope, Microby Dandeline immediately proceeded to remove her shoes and stockings. Patty ventured remonstrance.

"Hit's hot, an' them stockin's scratches. 'Tain't no good to wear 'em in the summer, nohow, 'cept in town, an' I kin put 'em on when we git there. Why does folks wear 'em in town?"

"Why, because it is nicer, and—and people couldn't well go around barefooted."

"I kin. I like to, 'cept fer the prickly-pears. Is they prickly-pears in town?" Without waiting for a reply the girl chattered on, as she placed the offending stockings with'in her shoes and tossed them back upon the hay with which the wagon-box was filled. "I like to ride, don't you? We've got to ride all day, an' then we'll git to town. We goin' to sleep in under the wagon?"

"Certainly not! We will go to the hotel."

"The hotel," breathed the girl rapturously. "An' kin we eat there, too?"

"Yes, we will eat there, too."

"An' kin I go to the store with yo'?"

"Yes."

Patty's answers became shorter as her attention centered upon a horseman who was negotiating the descent of what looked like an impossibly steep ridge.

"That's Buck!" exclaimed Microby Dandeline as she followed the girl's gaze. The rider completed the descent of the ridge with an abrupt slide that obscured him in a cloud of dust from which he emerged to approach the trail at a swinging trot. Long before he was near enough for Patty to distinguish his features she recognized him as her lone horseman of the hills. "If it is his intention to presume upon our chance meeting," she thought, "I'll—" The threat was unexpressed even in thought, but her lips tightened and she flushed hotly as she remembered how he had picked her up as though she had been a child and placed her in the saddle.

"Who did you say he is?" she asked, with a glance at the girl at her side.

"He's Vil Holland, an' his hoss's name is Buck. I like him, only sometimes he chases me home."

"Vil Holland!" she exclaimed aloud, and her lips pressed tighter. So this man was Vil Holland—that Vil Holland, everybody called him. The man who had chased

an inoffensive sheep herder from the range, and whose name stood for lawlessness in the hill country! So Aunt Rebecca's allusion to desperate characters had not been so far-fetched after all. He looked the part. Patty's glance took in the vivid blue scarf with its fastening of polished buffalo horn, the huge revolver that swung in its holster, and the brown-leather jug that dangled from the horn of his saddle.

"Good mornin'!" He drew up beside the trail, and the girl reined in her horses, flushing slightly as she did so—she had meant to drive past without speaking. She acknowledged the greeting with a formal bow. The man ignored the frigidity.

"I see you found Watts's all right."

"Yes, thank you."

"Well, if there ain't Microby Dandeline! An' rigged out for who throwed the chunk! Goin' to town to take in the picture show, an' all the sights, I expect."

"We're goin' to the hotel," explained the girl proudly.

"My, ain't that fine!"

"I got a red dress."

"Why, so you have. Seein' you mentioned it, I can notice a shade of red to it. An' that bonnet just sets it off right. That 'll make folks set up an' take notice, I'll bet."

"I'm a goin' to the store, too."

"What do you think of that!" The man drew a half-dollar from his pocket: "Here, get you some candy, an' take some home to the kids."

Microby reached for the coin, but Patty drew back her arm.

"Don't touch that!" she commanded sharply, then, with a withering look that encompassed both the man and his jug, she started the horses down the trail.

"I could of boughten some candies," complained Microby Dandeline.

"I will buy you all the candy you want, but you must promise me never to take any money from men—and especially from that man."

Microby glanced back wistfully, and as the wagon rumbled on her eyes closed and her head began to nod.

"Why, child, you are sleepy!" exclaimed Patty in surprise.

"Yes, mom. I reckon I laid awake all night a thinkin' about goin' to town."

"If I were you I would lie down on the hay and take a nap."

The girl eyed the hay longingly. "I like to ride," she objected sleepily.

"You will be ridin' just the same."

"Yes, but we might see somethin'. Wunst we-seen a nortymobile without no hosses an' hit squarked louder'n a settin' hen an' went faster'n what a hoss kin run."

"You go to sleep, and if there is anything to see I'll wake you up. If you don't sleep now you'll have to sleep when you get to town, and I'm sure you don't want to do that."

"No, mom. Mebbe ef I hurry up an' sleep fast they won't no nortymobiles come, but if they does, you wake me."

"I will," promised Patty, and thus assured the girl curled up in the hay and in a moment was fast asleep.

Hour after hour as the horses plodded along the interminable trail, Patty Sinclair sat upon the hard wooden seat, while her thoughts ranged from plans for locating her father's lost claim, to the arrangement of her cabin; and from Vil Holland to the welfare of the girl, a pathetic figure as she lay sprawled upon the hay, with her bare legs, and the gray dust settling thickly upon her red dress and vivid pink sunbonnet.

CHAPTER VI.

MONK BETHUNE.

PIPPIN LARUE chanted tipsily as he softly strummed the strings of a muffled banjo. And Raoul Bethune, with the flush of liquor upon his pale cheeks, joined in the laugh that followed, and replenished his glass from the black bottle he had contrived to smuggle from the hospital stores when he had been returned to his room in the dormitory. And "Monk" Bethune he was solemnly rechristened by the half-dozen admiring satellites who had foregathered to celebrate his recovery from an illness.

All this was long ago. Monk Bethune's dormitory life had terminated abruptly—for the good of the school. But the name

had fastened itself upon him after the manner of names that fit. It followed him to far places, and certain red-coated policemen, who knew and respected his father, the Hudson Bay Company's old factor on Lake o' God's Wrath, hated him for what he had become. They knew him for an inveterate gambler who spent money freely and boasted openly of his winnings. He was soft of voice and mild of manner, and aside from his passion for gambling, his conduct so far as was known was irreproachable.

But there were wise and knowing ones among the officers of the law, who deemed it worth their while to make careful and unobtrusive comparison between the man's winnings and his expenditures. These were the men who knew that certain Indians were being systematically supplied with whisky, and that there were horses in Canada whose brands, upon close inspection, showed signs of having been skilfully "doctored," and which bore unmistakable evidence of having come from the ranges to the southward of the international line.

But, try as they might, no slightest circumstance of evidence could they unearth against Bethune, who was wont to disappear from his usual haunts for days and weeks at a time, to reappear smiling and debonair, as unexpectedly as he had gone. Knowing that the men of the Mounted suspected him, he laughed at them openly. Once, upon a street in Regina, Corporal Downey lost his temper.

"You'll make a mistake some time, Monk, and then it will be our turn to laugh."

"O-ho! So until I make a mistake, I am safe, eh? That is good news, Downey: good news. Skill and luck—luck and skill—the tools of the gambler's trade! But, granted that some time I will make a mistake, will lose for the moment my skill, I shall still have my luck—and your mistakes. You are a good boy, Downey, but you'll be a glum one if you wait to laugh at my mistakes. If I were a chicken-thief instead of a gambler, I would fear you greatly."

Downey recounted this gibe in the barracks, and the officers redoubled their vigilance, but the Indians still got their whisky,

and new horses appeared from the southward.

When Monk Bethune refused Ma Watts's invitation to dinner, and rode off down the creek, followed by Lord Clendenning, the refusal did not meet with the Englishman's unqualified approval, a fact that he was not slow in imparting when, a short time later, they made noonday camp at a little spring in the shelter of the hills.

"I say, Monk, what's this bally important business we've got on hand?" he asked, as he adjusted a refractory strap. "Seems to me you threw away an excellent opportunity."

Bethune grinned. "Anything that involves the loss of a square meal is a lost opportunity. You're too beefy, Clen, a couple of weeks on pilot bread and tea always does you good."

"I was thinking more of the lady."

"La, la, the ladies! A gay dog in your day; but you've had your day. Forget 'em, Clen, you're fifty and fat."

"I'm forty-eight, and I weigh only fifteen stone as I stand," corrected the Englishman solemnly. "But layin' your bloody jokes aside, this particular lady ought to be worth our while."

Bethune nodded as he scraped the burning ends of the little sticks closer about the tea-pot. "Yes, decidedly worth while, my dear Clen, and that's where the important business comes in. Those who live by their wits must use their wits or they will cease to live. I live by my wits, and you by your ability to follow my directions. In the present instance, we had no plan. We could only have sat and talked, but talk is dangerous—when you have no plan. Even little mistakes are costly, and big ones are fatal. Let us go over the ground and check off our facts, and then we can lay our plans." As he talked, Bethune ate steadily on.

"In the first place, we know that Rod Sinclair made a strike. And we know that he didn't file any claim. Why? Because he knew that people would guess he had made a strike, and that the minute he placed his location on record, there would be a stampede to stake the adjoining claims—and he was saving those claims for his friends."

"His strike may be only a pocket," ventured Clendenning.

"It is no pocket. Rod Sinclair was a mining man; he knew rock. If he had struck a pocket he would have staked and filed at once—and taken no chances. I tell you he went back East to let his friends in.

The Englishman finished his tea and filled his pipe. "And you think the girl has got the description?"

Bethune shook his head. "No. A map, perhaps, or some photographs. If she had the description she would not have come alone. The friends of her father would have been with her, and they would have filed the minute they hit the country. It's either a map or nothing but his word."

"And in either case we've got a chance."

"Yes," answered Bethune viciously. "And this time we are not going to throw away our chance." He glanced meaningly at the Englishman, who puffed contentedly at his pipe.

"Sinclair was too shrewd to have carried anything of importance, and there would have been blood on our hands. As it is, we sleep good of nights."

Bethune gave a shrug of impatience. "And the gold is still in the hills, and we are no nearer to it than we were last fall."

"Yes, we are nearer. This girl will not be as shrewd as her father was in guarding the secret, if she has it. If she hasn't it our chance is as good as hers."

"And so is Vil Holland's. He believes Sinclair made a strike, and now that Sinclair is out of the way, you may be sure he'll leave no stone unturned to horn in on it. The gold is in these hills, and I'm going to get it. If I can't get it one way, I will get it another." The quarter-breed glanced about him and unconsciously lowered his voice. "However, one could wish the girl had delayed her visit for a couple of weeks. Apperson slipped me the word he could handle about twenty head of horses."

The Englishman's face lighted. "I thought so when you began to dicker with Watts for his pasture. We'll get him his bally horses then. This horse game I like; it's a sportin' game, and so is the whisky runnin'. But I couldn't lay in the hills and shoot a man, cold-blooded."

"And you've never been a success," sneered Bethune. "You never had a dollar, except your remittance, until you threw in with me. And we'd have been rich now if it hadn't been for you. I tell you I know Sinclair carried a map!"

"If he did, we'll get it. And we can sleep good of nights."

"You're a fool, Clen, with you 'sleep good of nights.' I sleep good of nights, and I've—" He halted abruptly, and when he spoke again his words grated harsh: "I tell you this is a fang and claw existence; all life is fang and claw. The strong rip the flesh from the bones of the weak. And the rich rip their wealth from the clutch of a thousand poor. What a man has is his only so long as he can hold it. One man's gain is another man's loss, and that is life. And it makes no difference in the end whether it was got at the point of the pistol in defiance of law, or whether it was got within the law under the guise of business. And I don't need you to preach to me."

The Englishman laughed. "I'm not preaching, Monk. Any one engaged in the business we're in has got no call to preach."

"Heigh-ho! What a good old world you've painted it! I hope you're right, and I'm not as bad as I think I am."

Bethune interrupted, speaking rapidly in the outlining of a plan of procedure, and it was well toward the middle of the afternoon when the two, saddled up and struck off into the hills in the direction of their camp.

CHAPTER VII.

HOLLAND AND THE HOTEL.

TWILIGHT had deepened to dusk as Patty Sinclair pulled her team to a standstill upon the rim of the bench and looked down upon the twinkling lights of the little town that straggled uncertainly along the sandy bank of the shallow river.

"Hain't it grand-lookin'?" breathed Microby Dandeline, who sat decorously booted and stockinged upon the very edge of the board seat. "You wouldn't think they wus so many folks, less'n you seen 'em yerse'f. Wisht I lived to town, an' I wisht they'd be a circust."

Patty guided the horses down the trail that slanted into the valley and crossed the half-mile of "flats," whose wire fences and long, clean-cut irrigation ditches marked the passing of the cattle country. A billion mosquitoes filled the air with an unceasing low-pitched drone, and settled upon the horses in a close-fitting blanket of gray. In vain the girls tried to fight off the stinging pests that attacked their faces and necks in whining clouds. But they fought in vain, and in vain they endeavored to urge the horses to a quickening of their pace, for impervious alike to the sting of the insects and the blows of the whip, the animals plodded along in the unvarying walk they had maintained since morning.

"This yere's the skeeter flats," imparted Microby, between slaps. "They hain't no skeeters in the mountains; mebbe it's too fer, an' mebbe they hain't 'nough folks fer 'em to bite out there, they's only us-uns an' a few more." As the girl talked the horses splashed into the shallow water of the ford, and despite all effort to urge them forward, halted in midstream and sucked greedily of the crystal-clear water.

It seemed an hour before they moved on and essayed a leisurely ascent of the opposite bank. The air became pungent with the smell of smoke. They were in town now, and as the wagon-wheels sank deeply into the soft sand of the principal street, Patty noted that in front of the doors of most of the houses, slow fires were burning—fires that threw off a heavy, stifling smudge of smoke that spread lazily upon the motionless air and hung thick and low to the ground.

"Skeeter smudges," explained Microby, proud of being the purveyor of information. "towns has 'em, an' then the skeeters don't bite. Oh, look at the folks! Let's hurry up! They might be a fight! Las' time they wus a fight an' a breed cut a man pap know'd, an' the man got the breed down an' stomped on his face, an' the marshal come an' sp'ilt hit, an' pap says if he'd of be'n let be, he'd of et the breed up."

"My, what a shame! And now you may never see a man eat a breed, whatever a breed is."

"A breed's half a' Injun." Microby was

standing up on the seat at the imminent risk of her neck, peering over the heads of the crowd that thronged the sidewalk.

"Sit down!" commanded Patty sharply, as she noted the amused glances with which those on the outskirts of the crowd viewed the ridiculous figure in the red dress and the pink sunbonnet. "They are waiting for the movie to open."

"Whut's a movie? Is hit like the circus? Kin I go?" The questions crowded each other, as the girl scrambled to her seat, her eyes were big with excitement.

"Yes, to-morrow."

"Looky, there's Buck!" Patty's eyes followed the pointing finger, and she frowned at sight of the rangy buckskin tied with half a dozen other horses to the hitching-rail before the door of a saloon. It seemed as she glanced along the street that nearly every building in town was a saloon. Half a block farther on she drew in to the sidewalk and stopped before the door of a two-story wooden building that flaunted across its front the words: *Montana Hotel*.

As Patty climbed stiffly to the ground each separate joint and muscle shrieked its aching protest at the fifteen-hour ride in the springless, jolting wagon. Microby placed her foot upon the side-board and jumped, her cowhide boots thudding loudly upon the wooden planking.

"Oughtn't you stay with the horses while I make the arrangements?"

Microby shook her head in vigorous protest. "They-all hain't a goin' nowheres less 'n they has to. An' I want to go 'long."

A thick-set man, collarless and coatless, who tilted back in his chair, with his feet upon the window-ledge, glanced up indifferently as they entered and crossed to the desk, and returned his gaze to the window, beyond which objects showed dimly in the gathering darkness. After a moment of awkward silence Patty addressed him: "Is the proprietor anywhere about?"

"I'm him," grunted the man.

The girl's face flushed angrily. "I want a room, and supper for two."

"Nawthin' doin'. Full up."

"Is there another hotel in this town?" she flashed angrily.

"No."

"Do you mean to say that there is no place where we can get accommodation for the night?"

"That's about the size of it."

"Can't we get anything to eat, either?"

It was with difficulty Patty concealed her rage at the man's insolence. "If you knew how hungry we are—we've been driving since daylight."

"Supper's over a couple hours, an' the help's gone out."

"I'll pay you well if you can on'y manage to get us something, we're starved." The girl's rage increased as she noticed the gleam that lighted the heavy eyes. That evidently was what he had been waiting for.

"Well," he began, but she cut him short:

"And a room, too."

"I'm full up, I told you. The only way might be to pay some one to double up. An' with these here cow-punchers that comes high. I might—" The opening of the screen door drew all eyes toward the man who entered and stood just within the room. As Patty glanced at the soft-brimmed hat, the brilliant scarf, and noticed that the yellow lamp-light glistened upon the tip of polished buffalo-horn and the ivory butt of the revolver, her lips tightened. But the man was not looking at her—seemed hardly aware of her presence.

"Hello, Vil. Somethin' I kin do fer you?"

"Yes," answered the man. He spoke quietly, but there was that in his voice that caused the other to glance at him sharply. "You can stand up."

The man complied without taking his eyes from the cowboy's face.

"I happened to be goin' by an' thought I'd stop an' see if I could take the team over to the livery barn for my—neighbors, yonder. The door bein' open, I couldn't help hearin' what you said." He paused, and the proprietor grinned.

"Business is business, an' a man's into it fer all he kin git."

"I suppose that's so. I suppose it's good business to lie an' cheat women, an'—"

"I hain't lied, an' I hain't cheated no one. An' what business is it of yourn if I did? All my rooms is full up, an' the help's all gone to the pitcher-show."

"An' there's about a dozen or so cowmen stoppin' here to-night—the ones you talked of payin' to double up—an' there ain't one of 'em that wouldn't be glad to double up or go out an' sleep on the street if he couldn't get nowhere else to sleep, if you even whispered that there was a lady needed his room. The boys is right touchy when it comes to bein' lied about."

The proprietor's face became suddenly serious. "Aw, looky here, Vil, I didn't know these parties was friends of yourn. I'll see't they gits 'em a room, an' I expect I kin dig 'em out some cold meat an' trimmin's. I was only kiddin'. Can't you take a joke?"

"Yes, I can take a joke. I'm only kiddin', too—an' so'll the boys be, after I tell 'em—"

"They hain't no use rilin' the boys up. I—"

"An' about that supper," continued the cowboy, ignoring the protest, "I guess that cold meat'll keep over. What these ladies needs is a good hot supper. Plenty of ham and, hot Java, potatoes, an' whatever you got."

"But the help's—"

"Get it yourself, then. It ain't so long since you was runnin' a short-order dump. You ain't forgot how to get up a quick feed, an' to give the devil his due, a pretty good one."

The other started surlily toward the rear. "I'll do it if—"

"You won't do it if nothin'. You'll do it, that's all. An' you'll do it at the regular price, too."

"Say, who's runnin' this here hotel?"

"You're runnin' it, an' I'm tellin' you how," answered the tall hillman.

The man disappeared, muttering incoherently, and Vil Holland turned to the door.

"I want to thank you," ventured Patty. "Evidently your word carries weight."

"It better," replied the cow-puncher dryly. "An' you're welcome. I'll take the team across to the livery barn." He spoke impersonally, with scarcely a glance in her direction, and as the screen door banged behind him the girl flushed, remembering her own rudeness upon the trail.

"Lawless he may be, and he certainly

looks and acts the part," she murmured to herself as the wagon rattled away from the sidewalk, "but his propensity for turning up at the right time and the right place is rapidly becoming a matter of habit." A door beside the desk stood ajar, and above it Patty read the words, "Wash Room." Pushing it open, she glanced into the interior, which was dimly lighted by a murky oil-lamp that occupied a sagging bracket beside a distorted mirror. Two tin wash-basins occupied a sinklike contrivance, above which a single iron faucet protruded from the wall. Beside the faucet was tacked a broad piece of wrapping-paper, upon which were printed in a laborious scrawl the following appeals:

NOTISS

Ples DoNT LEEv THE WaTter RUN ITS hAN Pumpt.

PLes DONT Waist THE ToWL.

Kome AN BREsh AN TOOTH BResh IS INTO THE Rak BESIDS THE MIRRoW. PLEs PUT EM back.

THes IS hoUSE RULEs AN WANts TO be OBayD KINLY. F. RuMMEL, PROP.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK. Don't forget this magazine is issued weekly, and that you will get the continuation of this story without waiting a month.



In Quest of Vengeance

by Raymond Lester

FIND him, Victor. Punish him. Make him pay for the suffering he made me go through. Get—him—"

Martha Tarlac's voice sank to a faltering, breath-starved whisper. Her hold on the tenuous thread of this life was fast slipping, and she had been overprodigal of her waning strength.

Removing the trail-dust from their faces and hands, the girls returned to the office and, after an interminable wait, the proprietor appeared, red faced and surly. "Grub's on, an' yer room'll be ready agin you've et," he growled, and waddled to his place at the window.

A generous supply of ham and eggs, fried potatoes, bread and butter and hot coffee awaited them in the dining-room, and it seemed to Patty that never before had food tasted so good. Twenty minutes later, when they returned to the office the landlord indicated the stairway with a jerk of his thumb. "First door to the right from the top of the stairs; lamp's lit; extry blankets in the closet; breakfast from five 'til half-past seven." The words rattled from his lips in a single breath as he sat staring into the outer darkness.

"If Aunt Rebecca could see me now," smiled Patty to herself, as she led the way up the uncarpeted stairs, with Microby Dandeline's cowhide boots clattering noisily in her wake.

An hour past, the hard-worked, seldom-paid doctor of the neighborhood had gone away with a shake of his head and the certain knowledge that he had ministered to the sinking woman for the last time. Her fluttering, feeble and irregular pulse, the feverishly burning light in her eyes sunken in gray-blue hollows, the pale tint of her

dry lips, were open signs of the chronic malady that only her fiercely indomitable will had enabled her to hold at bay so long.

The feeble flame of life was flickering; but although Martha Tarlac was passing, drawing nearer and nearer to the mystery-girt gateway of the Beyond, hate, unextinguishable, vengeance seeking vendetta was the legacy of her heart. To dust she would return; but the power of her will would reach forth over the future unborn years, and seek after death to bedevil and ruin the man who had wantonly crushed her feelings, and humiliated her spirit with heartless brutality and apelike capriciousness.

"Make him," she hissed through clenched teeth, "make him suffer. I swore that I would repay, that I would exact a drop of blood for every tear he made me shed. Now—"

Martha Tarlac shuddered, her pallid features changed to a grayer hue; but the energy of her devouring obsession concentrated the last of her strength to the fulfillment of her desire.

At the parting of the ways, at the crisis where mundane affairs usually sink to insignificant importance, the prospective wayfarer's thoughts turn to matters spiritual. Thoughts of worldly, unredressed wrongs are wiped out, and unavenged injuries are forgiven.

It was not so with Martha Tarlac. She had lived for revenge, brooded over her peace-corrupting ambition, and she would die bequeathing the burden and settlement of her wrongs to another.

"Victor," she continued, clutching the hand of the young man who sat beside her bed. "The same blood is in our veins. Mine will soon cease to pulse. You are clever, you have years of life before you. In a very little while I shall lay in a prisoning grave. Few will miss or grieve for me. There is one who will sneer in triumph. I swore that I would bring him to his knees, and when he hears that I have gone and can do him no harm, he will laugh at the memory of the poor fool who bragged in vain.

"Will you let death cheat your own sister, or will you take on the search I

must abandon? Must all my sacrifices go for nothing?"

The question came from Martha Tarlac with effort. Her dwindling strength was fast ebbing, yet, although her voice was but a weak whisper and her breathing but a labored struggle, her eyes burned with fierce, compelling intensity.

"I'll do what I can," muttered Victor. "But who is this man? What did he do? Rob you?"

"Yes," said Martha slowly, "he stole from me; but he was guilty of cheating and pillaging from me far more than money. I cannot now tell you, give you all the details. After I have gone, you can read in part what has been my humiliation. In here you will find the story and the proof of the crime that has made my life a long, bitter and futile suspense.

"I hoped for revenge. Now—does my desire outlive me? Will you, before you open this case, swear that you will do all in your power to find and punish to the full the man whose name you will learn when you read what I have written?"

Victor's glance shifted from the dying woman's face to the bulky leather case that she had taken from beneath her pillow. The case was old and fastened with a heavy brass lock. What was the secret locked therein? Was there written there, the tale of some terrible tragedy, or did it only contain the vain imaginings of a half-demented, self-deluded neurasthenic?

These thoughts passed swiftly through Victor Tarlac's mind, and, as he judged from the strangeness of the woman's life, her habits of secretiveness and penury, it was reasonable to suppose the possibility that her mind had failed her, and she had magnified some trivial, long past incident into an irreparable, unforgiveable injury. But the leather case suggested a concrete, definite basis, and gave color to the mystery that Martha hinted at.

Victor looked from the case to the black cord that encircled Martha's neck. He remembered that he had once seen hanging to that familiar cord a small brass key, and had vaguely wondered what it would open. What was so precious to Martha that she would wear it as one carries a locket con-

taining the treasured portrait or memento of some loved friend or relative? The leather case! Even as the answer came to Victor, the woman's fingers fumbled with the cord, and she drew the key from the neck-band of her nightgown.

"You will promise? You will give me your word of honor?" she asked.

"I will do what I can, but you know it costs money to trace a person. I have nothing saved from the allowance you have made me."

"I did not suppose you had," replied Martha dryly. "This is not a moment to waste in reproaching you for your extravagance. Indeed, I have provided for your living for a time in luxury."

"Undo this knot, I cannot raise myself or bear to be lifted. Take the key off the cord and—" A spasmodic jerk of her whole body stopped Martha Tarlac's words. A look of fear came into her eyes. "Quick!" she gasped. "I—I have more of—of great importance to tell you. Break the cord—you—you—are not—"

Even as Victor broke the cord, the woman's head sank back. Her chin pointed upward in an unnatural position. A harsh, rasping rattle of sound came from her strained throat.

By the dramatic staging of destiny, the snapping of the cord symbolized and coincided with the breaking of the frail thread that tethered Martha Tarlac to this life. The dead may not hold speech with the living, and whatever Martha had to say to Victor would remain forever beyond the reach of his definite, assured knowledge. He might conjecture. He might in the future guess at the truth, but he could never be certain that his conclusions tallied with Martha's intended revelation.

The brass key dropped to the floor, and the young man stared uncomprehendingly at the quiet, still form. "She—" he questioned himself hesitatingly. Then as he felt the leaden weight of the hand that lay clenched on the coverlet, and studied the immobility of Martha's features, the staring blankness of her wide-open eyes, full realization of the truth came to him.

"She's gone," he murmured and backed away in momentary awe. The next mo-

ment he stooped for the key and reached for the leather case. One thought, apprehensively disquieting, was now dominant in his mind, and it was far removed from Martha Tarlac's request.

It concerned himself, his future welfare. Had the dead woman's unfinished sentence anything to do with the wealth she had stated would be his? Had she died and left undone some formality? Would some legal quibble arise that would deprive him of his heritage?

Hurriedly inserting the key in the leather case, Victor eagerly sought to satisfy himself that he would be able to claim the money that had excited his awakened cupidity. He imagined from Martha's words that there was some paper, will, or document in the case that would guarantee him.

The case contained several pockets. Two were filled with old letters and a small notebook bearing the word *Diary* on the cover. The time-yellowed pages of the letters were faded and creased. The written lines at the beginning of the diary were rusty with age. The entries toward the end of the book were black, and the date heading the last page showed that the dead woman had written it during the last few days.

Victor observed all this in a quick survey, then, without bothering to read more than a line here and there, he threw aside the diary and the letters, and opened the flap of the third pocket. The edges of a closely packed sheaf of paper caught his eye. His heart leaped and his lips went dry. Prey to a combination of hope and fear, he peered closer.

"Bank-notes!" he whispered in a shaky voice. Fifties—hundreds. Four—five thousand dollars. What's this?"

Under the elastic band binding the wad of bills that Victor held in his hand, was a folded slip of paper. It was addressed: Victor Tarlac, and the message written on the half-sheet of paper caused Victor's lips to curl downward in a sneering smile.

"She had it all pat," he murmured as he read. "Well, we shall see. I've waited a long time for this windfall, too long to play the fool and throw good money away seeking for a man who has probably gone the same route as Martha."

"It is time I enjoyed myself and saw a bit of life. Martha planned well, but it is up to me now to dispose of this money as I wish. There is nothing to stop me."

Thus, before her body was chilled with the touch of death, was Martha Tarlac's trust betrayed. The written word of one whose existence is ended, is respected by all but the depraved and selfish. Her note expressed in plain language her wishes, and allotted the money trusted to the young man for certain, defined purposes. It ran:

There is in this packet, over five thousand dollars. This is the last of the money I saved and set aside to enable me to bring to justice, Frederick Luce. I charge you, Victor, to make every effort in your power to carry out my request. Hunt down Frederick Luce. The evidence of the great wrong he did me is among the letters and records in my diary. I know I have not long to live, and I leave this money to you on condition that you exert yourself to the best of your ability. Expend at least three thousand dollars on the search for Frederick Luce. The rest of the money is my free gift and recompense to you to do with as you please.

With a shrug of his shoulders, Victor thrust the note in his vest-pocket, tumbled the letters and diary into the case and re-locked it.

"So much for that junk," he muttered. "This is a different matter."

His last remark referred to the packet of bank-notes. These he carefully placed in his breast-pocket and buttoned his coat. Then, without a backward glance at the woman who had benefited him and solemnly pledged him to keep faith with her, he left the room.

Briefly acquainting the old housekeeper with the news that Martha Tarlac's expected death was an accomplished fact, he hurried to his rooms. He wanted to go through the contents of the case, to carefully read the letters and the diary.

"Martha was uncommonly artful," he reflected, "and she may have left a trap for me. By some trick she may have tied up that three thousand. I never could understand her, and she's more of a puzzle to me now she's gone, than she was before."

"What a queer woman. Living in that poor quarter, posing as a moneyless spin-

ster, and saving every nickel. Well, she's handed me five thousand good dollars, and that's all I care about, so long as there's no hidden string attached to it. Who is this Frederick Luce, I wonder?"

To this and to many other hitherto unanswerable questions Victor found many speedy solutions; but in no way was his sympathy enlisted on Martha's behalf. No desire stirred in him to fulfil her dying commands. He thought of her only as a half-witted, cranky sister. Useful, inasmuch that she had paid for his upbringing at boarding-school, settled the debts he had incurred before he was expelled from college, and allotted him a small but regular income, while he was supposed to be hunting a job.

Victor had never heard or bothered to inquire about his other relatives. He had no memories of his parents, and he had accepted the gifts and material kindnesses of Martha as a chicken's corn, or a hog's swill. It may have been the great disparity in their ages, it may have been caused by his natural selfishness; but he had shown no gratitude to Martha in the past, and now he felt no compunction or twinge of conscience in calmly ignoring the conditions attached to the money she had left.

Behind his smug sense of satisfaction was an unsatisfied feeling of mistrust. They had never been intimate, and when, on rare occasions, Martha had sent for him, she had always behaved with cold aloofness. Why had she reposed this trust in him? Why had she so carefully kept secret her marriage to this Frederick Luce? There, among the letters, was the wedding-certificate dated twenty-five years back. There, too, were the proofs that Frederick Luce had absconded with more than half of Martha's fortune.

"Even if I could lay my hands on him," thought Victor. "I don't believe that now, after all these years, the law could hold him. Besides, I'm not going to waste three thousand perfectly good dollars on a man-hunt. Not while I have an ounce of common sense. Guess I'll go out, get a good dinner, and go to the club. A turn at the roulette-wheel may make that five thousand into a bit more. There's one thing, I don't

have to pretend any sorrow for Martha's demise."

A tap at his room door, and the delivery of a telegram nipped this delightful program in the bud, and Victor received his first intimation that there were wheels and cogs in the machinery of his existence that he was unaware of. The name concluding the telegram was familiar to Victor.

"Martha's lawyer," he murmured with disquieting foreboding. "*Call at my home at once,*" he read. "What can he want to see me about? I suppose he had been telephoned the news about Martha. Has this telegram anything to do with my money? I have a great mind not to go. Yet—"

Unable to remain in ignorance, and fearful of forcing some untoward move upon the lawyer, Victor hovered indecisively between the alternatives of flight or compliance with the lawyer's summons. He finally decided to see the lawyer, and, if necessary, deny, bluff the matter through.

"If he tries to hold me up, or pries me loose from this five thou," he muttered, patting the oblong packet of bank-notes, "I'll swear she never gave them to me. I'm sure there's something going that I can't fathom, or that lawyer wouldn't send for me at this hour and expect me to go to his private house."

This was the extent of Victor's forecast of the worst that could happen at the coming interview. He was totally unprepared and unready for the astounding statement made him by the lawyer.

Vague, dim suspicion crept into Victor's mind that he was being played with and made use of. Some intelligence; greater, subtler than his own was directing the moves in a series of events that he could not analyze to the point of full understanding.

II.

"MARTHA TARLAC," stated the lawyer, "instructed me, in the event of her sudden death, to hand you this letter. I infer that you are already partly aware of the tragedy that shadowed her youth, and caused her to live the life of a recluse. And"—the lawyer hesitated as if it irked him to speak dis-

paragingly of his late client—"it accounts for her somewhat eccentric habits. Have you seen her lately?"

A slight pause ensued before Victor replied. He was taken by surprise, and was doubtful if it would be wise to tell the truth or a lie. He decided that concealment of his visit to Martha would do more harm than good. No one had seen her give him the case. No one had been witness of his finding of the money; but the housekeeper could give testimony that he had actually been in Martha's room at the moment of her death.

"I left her house shortly after her death, about two hours ago."

"Did you see anything of a leather case?"

A fluttering look of indecision came into Victor's too close-set eyes. The point-blank question disturbed him, and struck directly at his possession of the money that he could feel bulging his coat even as he met the lawyer's glance of inquiry.

Had Martha Tarlac left a will that would rescind her personal gift to him, and force him not only to give up the three thousand dollars, but the whole amount? This was a moment to lie. Victor's voice was steady. He simulated surprise.

"Why, no. I saw nothing of the kind. Did it contain anything of value?"

"That I cannot say for certain; but I believe so. Martha Tarlac gave me particular instructions to deliver the case into your hands should she not be able to do so herself. I thought as she had sent for you, that it was already in your possession. However, this letter may throw some light on the matter."

"Possibly," muttered the young man as he opened the unsealed envelope. It was borne upon him that he had needlessly perverted the truth. He had told a foolish lie and he must stick to it. The few lines contained in the letter plunged him into further self-reproach. That one major lie was already bearing fruit. He was enmeshed in a net of his own weaving.

"*The day you find Frederick Luce, my lawyer will hand over to you the whole of my fortune.*"

When Victor looked up from the perusal

of this new and amazing development, he saw the lawyer was watching him intently.

"You seem surprised," said the latter. "Do you know the man mentioned in Martha Tarlac's letter?"

Victor passed his tongue over his dry lips. "She told me something about him. She—she asked me to find him. Said he had defrauded her, embezzled her money and ran away from her more than twenty years ago. I—I did not pay much attention, for I thought she was suffering from some delusion. Some fancied injury."

"It is a pity that you took that point of view," said the lawyer quietly. "There was much that was peculiar about Martha Tarlac, but she was not one to be self-deceived or"—the lawyer paused—"or to allow any one else to play her false. She learned her lesson twenty years ago when she was a young, inexperienced and trusting girl, and so far as I know, Frederick Luce was the only person who ever got the best of her. Are you aware that she died a very wealthy woman?"

"No. How—what do you mean?" faltered Victor, now thoroughly befogged and aghast at this late revealed view-point of Martha.

"I mean," replied the lawyer, "that, although Martha Tarlac held herself down in strict economy, and apparently lived a retired, inactive existence; she engineered and controlled some of the biggest real estate deals that have been brought off in this city.

"A great deal depends on your finding the man she mentions. I am sure, from what she told me, that the leather case contains much that would help you in your search. I must again make a thorough search among her effects."

"You have already been to her house?"

The lawyer nodded and again referred to the leather case.

"Maybe," suggested Victor with sudden inspiration, "she has hidden it, or perhaps it has been stolen. I will go round again and see if I can find it."

"We will both go," said the lawyer promptly. "It is most essential, especially to you, that it be found."

Victor forced a smile. "If it isn't," he

said tentatively, "I suppose I stand a good chance of losing a fortune?"

"Over a million," replied the lawyer.

"A million!" gasped Victor. "You mean to tell me that Martha was worth that amount of money! It is incredible."

"Nevertheless, it is true. As true as it is a fact that the money is willed to you providing you fulfil certain clearly expressed conditions."

"Meaning, I suppose, that I must start out on a wild-goose chase. Why couldn't she employ a detective? Why all this mystery? Martha gave me to understand that she was a comparatively poor woman. She has played the part of an irresponsible. She—"

"Pardon," interrupted the lawyer. "I do not agree with you. Martha Tarlac had many strange qualities; but she seldom, if ever, did anything without motive. You may find that she has acted with wisdom and far-reaching results."

"Possibly," replied the young man sulkily. "Have you the will here?"

"No, it is at my office."

"Can I see it to-morrow?"

"No. Not until three days are passed."

"More of Martha's oddness of behavior," thought Victor with self-contained, savage resentment. Inwardly he cursed his folly in grasping at a paltry five thousand. It was clear to him that he must find a way of replacing the case in Martha's room. Otherwise, how could he proceed with his search for Frederick Luce? How, without branding himself as a liar, could he show the proofs of Luce's guilt? Again, it was quite possible that Martha had given the lawyer some secret instructions.

"Just as I thought," decided Victor. "There's a string tied to that three thousand that would queer me. I must put that case back and let Mr. Lawyer find it and hand it over to me all over again. That 'll give me a fresh start and clear running for that million."

Mightily pleased with this way out of his dangerous dilemma, he found excuse to return to his rooms and get the case.

"The nights are chilly," he explained to the lawyer. "I'll go and get my overcoat, and meet you at Martha's house. If

you have not already found it, we'll have a good look for that case."

Resolved to replace the money, rejoin the lawyer with all speed and drop the case in some corner of the death-chamber, Victor did not wait to switch on the light in his room. Fumbling in the dark, he opened the drawer where he had placed the case. Certain of the exact spot where he had left it, he knew immediately his seeking fingers did not feel the leather, that the case had been moved.

Filled with bewildered dismay, he sought further; but although he turned out the contents of the drawer, he did not find the case. Shaken, frantic with helpless impotence, he switched on the light.

He saw at once that whoever had taken the case had come solely for that purpose. Other drawers had been opened, his traveling-trunk and a closet had been searched, but there was nothing else missing. The thief had come for, had found and taken—only the case containing Martha's letters and diary.

What did this imply? Somebody with a motive other than direct gain had robbed him. Who and why? It was now impossible for Victor to go back on his tracks, to undo that lie he had told. The money in his pocket, the absence of that case, stood between him and a fortune such as he had never dreamed of possessing.

"If I had only waited," he groaned. "I could easily have told the truth and done everything above-board. Now, I'm cornered. I can't say a word or seek the help of the police or a detective to recover that case. I stand as much chance now of landing that million as I do of ever getting hold of Luce."

"Luce! And what do you know about Luce?"

Victor wheeled on his heel at the sudden challenge of his muttered words. Dumb with surprise he glared at the man who stood in the doorway communicating with his adjoining bedroom.

The stranger met the young man's look with calm effrontery. His watchful gaze did not waver. He, the intruder, seemed more at ease than the rightful tenant of the room.

"What are you doing in here?" demanded Victor.

"I came for this," said the other, drawing the leather case from beneath his coat.

"You came for—for that case?" stammered Victor. "What right have you to it?"

The stranger chuckled softly. "Good joke," he murmured. "Very good indeed. I think I have every claim to this bag of letters. Anyway, I have the right of he who generally takes what he wants. I am Frederick Luce."

This assertion aroused in Victor's mind an uneasy significance. The coincidence, the manner of Luce's appearance at this inopportune moment, gave Victor the sensation of taking an icy-cold plunge following a warm bath.

The shock was mental, but he went hot and cold by turns. The event was too startling, too dramatic to be a coincidence. It savored of being part of some connected plan. Had Martha been cognizant of Frederick Luce's proximity? Immediately on top of this thought, Luce himself provided a contradiction.

"I followed you here from Martha's place," he said. "There's nothing to look scared about. I have been watching the house for weeks, and when you came out with that case, I recognized it, and knew it to be extremely likely that it contained something of far more importance to me than to you."

"It may interest you to know that I have only lately come out of prison. The daily visits of the doctor acquainted me with the news that my wife was seriously ill. Dying, in fact, and very naturally I thought it as well to hang around on the quiet in case she left me a snug little legacy. She was a dutiful, if not very loving, wife."

A murderous, vicious gleam shone in Victor's eyes. Was this eleventh hour arrival, this old man, a bona-fide claimant to the estate? The lawyer had said that Martha's wealth was willed to Victor. Had a criminal, but legal husband, prior title to her money?

Thrusting this question to one side, Victor seized on the main opportunity that was staring him in the face. There, within

reach of his hand, stood the man whom Martha had set a price upon. All that was necessary to do was to capture him. A delightfully simple way out. So thought the young man; but he found that planning and execution, are very different propositions.

There was an air of confidence, a suggestion of sinewy strength about this self-avowed jail-bird that promised difficulties. Yet, it was worth risking a good deal to get a fair bid for that million. Victor edged nearer, and was instantly checked.

"No tricks, my friend," said Luce. "I don't quite get your little game; but to be perfectly candid, I don't care for the look on that foxy face of yours. I was born crooked, you were born sly. Suppose you introduce yourself. How did you wheedle yourself into Martha's confidence?"

"She was my sister."

"Your sister! So Martha had a brother, eh? That's another bit of news to me."

Frederick Luce frowned thoughtfully, and the instant he relaxed his watchful guard, Victor leaped upon him. Greed nerved his strength, and a lucky half-arm swing gave him the mastery of the situation.

Half stunned by the vicious jolt on his chin, the older man staggered and went down under the volley of blows. During the struggle that followed when Victor tried to bind his captive's hands and feet, the front-door bell rang, and a caller was allowed to mount the stairs unannounced. It was the lawyer.

Outside the door of Victor's room, he stood an interested listener. "This," he murmured as he softly opened the door and peeped in, "greatly simplifies matters. I shall be able to close the books of the Martha Luce estate without bothersome de-

lay. She was a wonderful woman. A seeress in her knowledge and foresight."

Then he added aloud as he stepped into the room: "No. Don't trouble to hide that case, Victor. I knew all the time you had it. Martha Luce, née Tarlac, left the full and detailed instructions. She even went so far as to give me, with the exception of this little scene, a word for word prophecy of what has actually taken place.

"It was no accident that she entrusted the case of letters *and* the money to you just previous to her death. She had so planned that your title to her whole estate rested entirely upon your choice between honest and honorable observance of her trust, or betrayal or cheaterly. Your fitness to inherit her money has been tested, and you have failed. You were given every opportunity, every incentive toward being honorable. You chose to be a mean thief.

"That lie you told transfers the whole of her estate to charity. The complete affair was planned. Martha was aware of the exact moment when this man here was released. She also knew that he was lurking in the neighborhood watching her house. Had you proved above temptation, the way would have been made easy for you to bring him to my office.

"He is a blackguard, but there is no legal attachment against him now. Unconsciously he has played his part in bringing out the hereditary taint Martha Luce suspected and feared was born in you."

"Born in me!" exclaimed Victor, and then added defiantly. "What are you talking about? I am a Tarlac."

"Plus your relationship to this man," said the lawyer coldly. "Frederick Luce is your father. The woman you looked upon as your sister was your own mother."

THE DIFFERENCE

BY ANTOINETTE DECOURSEY PATTERSON

ALIKE the victims of a fate unkind,
One cursed his God and then succumbed to wrong;
One turned to heaven his eyes with grief half-blind,
And from his sorrows made a deathless song.

A Goth from Boston

by Julian Hawthorne

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

PRECEDING CHAPTERS BRIEFLY RETOLD

WHEN Martha Klemm, a young Boston maiden of independent mind and means, called at the home of Professor Cabot Selwyn to return some books, she was decidedly impressed with the face and form of the professor's servant, Polly King. A blond Venus of Milo, Martha called her and decided then and there she would be the making of Cabot Selwyn, who was mummifying in his artificial creed of culture. Selwyn was ready to thaw to Martha, but he could not see Polly.

Immediately after class-day, Martha took a train to Chicago on her way to the coast, where she intended to sail for Honolulu. On the train she encountered Polly, who was on her way to Australia to join a rich uncle. Martha persuaded Polly to join forces with her, and together they traveled to San Francisco.

Here in a hotel, they ran on Cabot who, after a second declaration to Martha, revealed he was traveling to Japan. Martha declared she was bound for Mexico.

When Polly picked up an acquaintance with Bob Marlin, mate of the *Aloua*, Captain Gordon was delighted to give passage to the two girls. The only other cabin passenger was a sick gentleman, whom the captain informed them could not leave his room.

Later, Martha was more than amused to discover their fellow traveler was none other than the Cambridge professor.

Everything progressed happily, with no untoward event, until a long period of calm was followed by a terrific hurricane, in which the captain and one of the men were carried overboard, and Marlin took command of the ship. Martha and Cabot went down into the galley to see about feeding the men, and the professor knocked over the drunkenly protesting steward before he secured the keys.

Then, just as they were about to call the men, another cataract poured over the deck, and as Cabot started for the door, he was swept back by an astounding apparition.

CHAPTER VIII.

PITH AND PLUCK.

IT was Polly. But never, I am certain, had the chaste eyes of the Harvard professor beheld her, or any other person of her sex, in such guise. Her marble prototype in the Louvre now resembled her in costume as well as in face and figure. But the contemplative tranquillity of the statue was far enough from the living woman's aspect and bearing.

Sca and hurricane had left little of her attire above the petticoat, which still clung in drenched tatters to her stalwart hips.

The lash and drive of wind and spray had flushed her shoulders and bust, her hair flaunted in wild tangles, her eyes sparkled, she panted—she was magnificent! She brought with her into the little galley the wild breath and tumult of the storm.

Cabot was overborne less by her material impact than by the revelation of untrammelled beauty thus suddenly forced upon his unlicensed senses. But he couldn't get out of her path: she filled space, her blood was up, she heeded not him nor his traditional principles. In the flash of the blue eyes that swept him there was an imperial fierceness.

This story began in the *All-Story Weekly* for December 20.

"What are you doing here? Where's Joe? The boys must have grog!"

Cabot strove to get his wits together.

"We have— Would grog be prudent? Here is stew!"

His former housemaid turned savagely upon him.

"Get back to your berth! We want grog! Where's Joe?"

Laughing in spite of myself, I took the keys from his relaxing hand.

"Polly and I will attend to this," I told him. "Meanwhile, go to my room and bring back the gray knitted jersey hanging on the nail. Polly needs it."

He evidently felt the propriety of my suggestion, and made off with alacrity.

I told the dripping young goddess how Cabot had knocked down the steward, at which she stared, half incredulous.

I took a jug of rum out of the locker. "How much do they get?"

"Marlin and the three deck-hands are all that's left; I guess this will about do them. I was at the wheel with Marlin—Olaf is spelling me while I'm below. She's overheavy; but if we can bend 'a jib on her—"

"Why not jettison the cargo?"

"Right-o! But us short-handed, who's to do it?"

"Mr. Selwyn and I can help."

She looked me over grimly.

"There's pith and pluck in you; but him? No! This is man's work! You bide here and serve the grub. 'Tis lively up yonder; but Bob's a man!"

As she turned to go, in her ruddy splendor, there appeared in the doorway, at the end of Cabot's arm (himself averted), my gray jersey. With a snort like a blooded mare, she snatched it from him and tossed it to me.

"Wear it yourself, miss; I'm easier as I be!" And brushing Cabot aside, she strode forth, the soul of the sea in her.

With death at one's elbow, one gets down to first principles; conventions vanish; there is an apocalyptic freedom. Polly had come into her birthright; but how with Cabot?

He seemed more disturbed by Polly's indifference to wearing apparel than by the

loom of life's farther shore. But at all events, he was true to his Emerson—"Obey at eve the voice obeyed at prime!" I can testify that, in that appalling scene, he did his best, and tried to do better. All that night, and far into the following day, he fought beside me; and even, on the second morning, tailed on to a halyard when the men had contrived to set a handbreadth of the new jib.

At times I saw him staring at Polly in a sort of dumb consternation, in which, however, was mingled, I fancied, a spice of awed admiration. What was this divinity whom he had taken for a housemaid? In truth, she was the central figure of the drama.

Marlin was the navigator, but Polly came near being the commander. All the men paid her homage, and she kept them in heart for the battle. Not seldom, when Marlin had to help elsewhere, she held the wheel alone, with steady eyes watching the vast seas, as they now hurtled high above her head, and now heaved her aloft till she looked like a pedestaled statue, undauntedly jockeying with them as a charioteer with mad horses.

On one of her rare visits to the galley she remarked, apropos of my comments on her skill: "It's a bit in my line, d'ye see, miss; my old dad was a mariner, and taught me the trick of it!" She swallowed down her pannikin of hot coffee, and strode out.

I continued to fulfil the romantic office of cook. I had had visions, in former days, of riding the ocean in storms, but in some rôle more heroic than this of keeping an eye on the saucepan. I got glimpses, now and then, of Marlin standing rocklike up yonder, and I would have been glad to stand beside him, as Polly was, and see the set of his lips and the kindling of courage in his eyes.

He was a noble spectacle—they both were! I would have been glad to receive from him the kind of mute homage that he was paying to Polly. As he stood there, in his apogee, I thought I had never seen another man to compare with him; but his only thought of me was as a provider of hot stew. The galley, in his opinion, was the

proper place for persons like Cabot and me!

At the close of the second day Cabot, carrying a can of coffee to the fore-castle, was swung off his feet by a pitch of the vessel and smashed into the lee scuppers. There he lay, helpless and half drowned. Olaf and a sea-worn old salt from Nantucket, Tom, got hold of him and managed to convey him into the cabin. As I have mentioned, I had taken a course as a hospital nurse, and I examined his injury. A bone in his knee had been broken. At such a time it was a desperate injury for him. I determined to attempt to set the bone, but couldn't do it alone, and sent for Polly. Down she came, streaming with brine, a she-Triton, and grasped the leg and held it steady while I worked at the fracture. Cabot endured the pain stoically, and finally fainted. I was able to effect some improvement in the lesion, and bandaged the knee as securely as possible; but it seemed evident that Cabot must be a cripple for life—which, however, might not be for very long. For Polly informed me, after the operation was over and we had got Cabot into his berth, that the *Aloua* had sprung a leak, and it was hard to see how hands could be spared to man the pumps.

I looked her curiously in the face; there was no blanching or wavering there.

"So this is the end, is it?" I said with a smile.

"Not while we have a boat left," she answered stoutly.

Except Polly, I was probably in better physical condition than any of us, and was too much interested in the progress of our affairs to feel sleepy.

"The pumps must be kept going," I said. "I'm strong, and can help."

"Where's Joe?" she asked.

"He's fat and a coward—afraid even of me!" I said. "Don't count on him."

"He'll do his stint or go overboard!" she returned, frowning. "Then there's Jack, the negro from the Barbadoes—he's not so bad. Old Tom's a good hand, but not so strong as he was twenty years back. I'll keep Olaf to handle the wheel off and on, when I'm busy with something else.

As long as Bob Marlin's alive, we've a chance."

"He won't die as long as he has you to live for," I remarked, with a tightening of the heart. "Good luck to you both!" and I laid a hand on her shoulder. Marlin had induced her to put on one of the captain's old sea-jackets, but the buttons had come off, and one of the sleeves had been torn away: it could hardly be said to cover her.

"Well, him and me suit each other," she said; and stood with a grave, thoughtful look for a moment. "Thank you, miss; there's few like you in the world! I'll speak to Bob about the pumps," she added, and went up to the deck.

The pumps were kept going, more or less efficiently, all that night. The gale abated once or twice and came from another quarter; and during one of these partial lulls Marlin came down and took his place beside me. He hadn't slept or laid down since the storm began, but his endurance seemed superhuman. It was inspiring to work with him, and I forgot my sore hands and aching back.

"It's worth while, however it ends," I said, as we bowed ourselves and lifted again in the long rhythm.

"Right you are, miss!" he responded cheerily. "We'll make it, one way or another, never fear! Unless for Polly and you, though, I'd hardly say that."

Some one on deck struck four bells.

"Wedding-bells, Bob!" I said, smiling, with set teeth.

"God never made another girl like her!" he muttered.

"You're pretty good yourself!"

"'Tis she puts the soul in me!" was his reply.

CHAPTER IX.

WHEN THE ALOUA SANK.

THE third morning found us still afloat, though with a deadened movement, like a heavy animal, wounded and near collapse. The leak gained, in spite of our pumping; and all of us in turns had labored at the clumsy contrivance be-

low there in the wet darkness. The boats, Marlin said, were furnished with plain provisions and water and a few tools. We had been driving in a southerly direction chiefly, and there might be islands not far off; he was ready to order the ship abandoned as soon as the seas had subsided enough to give them any chance of not being swamped.

When I came up from below to have a look at things there was Polly, standing with him at the wheel, her right arm and shoulder bare, gleaming out of the rents in the old pilot-coat, and her long hair flapping out like a yellow oriflamme; she held her head erect, and her face, as she watched the career of the vessel, was unsubdued and masterful. A great heart was in her bosom, rising higher with the peril; the simple housemaid had joined the heroes! She was impossible in society; but was that an arraignment of society or of her?

Cabot, at his entreaty, had been roped fast to the stump of the mizzenmast on deck, partially shielded by the deck-house from the sweep of the waves. As he reclined facing the stern, he had Polly full in view. His eyes, no longer shrinking from that superb revelation, were fixed upon her as I made my way up to him.

He made an apologetic grimace when I made my inquiries.

"It's mortifying playing such a part in our final act; one would like to make a decent exit, you know! I fancy I'm the Jonah; since they can't get at the cargo, they'd better jettison me instead."

I looked down at him, pondering his enigma. For my own part, I had almost lost the sense of my separate individuality. I was a part of the vessel and of the crew; there were we on one side, and the ocean on the other. But Cabot was Cabot.

I asked him whether, if he could go back, he would wish to live his life differently.

"To live it all over again, do you mean? Well, I regret not being as strong as Mr. Marlin. But I don't think one is competent to pass judgment on oneself. And after all, it's not so much the things one does that matters as the way one feels while doing them."

That was true enough. Artificiality is an imitation of reality. But, as regarded Cabot, the reply was inconclusive; it would have been more to the point had he admitted a change in his estimate of Polly. But this was not the time for such inquiries.

About evening the wind fell perceptibly, though the waves still ran high. I was in the galley, making the stew, when Polly, who had been taking another spell at the pumps, came in sweating, for the temperature was now tropical. I made her shed the remains of the pilot-coat, and with a piece of rough canvas I rubbed her down from head to foot as a trainer rubs an athlete. Then I gave her a mouthful of rum.

She stretched out her arms, and said:

"A wink or two of sleep, miss, and I could do it all over again!"

I, too, had loved life; but I had no such appetite for it as that! Possibly, however, Polly would have felt less indomitable had she had no Marlin to bear her company.

"When are we to take to the boats?" I asked.

"The pumps could tell better than me! But you'd as well be making a bundle of your bit—tooth-brush and such."

"Will one boat take all of us?"

"We'll take the two of 'em, miss. My old dad used to say, 'Never put all the eggs in one basket.' We'll have more grub, that way."

"You'll go in Marlin's boat, of course?"

She shook her head, with a grave look.

"Him in one and me in t'other! I'll look after the professor; Marlin 'll take care of you. We'll keep alongside each other, as far as may be."

Courage of action is one thing; courage of self-abnegation another. Her eyes and mine met; I couldn't speak.

Joe staggered in, pasty-faced and tremulous. He flapped his hands and squeaked out:

"We're sinking! For God's sake, gimme a drink!"

Polly snatched up a half-empty bottle and thrust it into his hands with a force that sent him reeling.

"You'll find water enough to go with it outside," she said, with a grin at me over

her shoulder. "I'll be fetching the professor, miss," she added, and went out.

"Man the boats!" called out a great voice above—Marlin's.

There was a new, strange motion in the vessel; she was settling downward.

I had already made fast to my belt a small package containing my letter of credit and a few odds and ends. The deck was nearly awash when I reached it. The men were at work swinging the boats from the davits. I had a glimpse of Polly loosening Cabot from the ropes that secured him to the mast-stump; then she rose, clutching him to her naked bosom, like a baby. There was no moon, and the backs of the huge waves that came brimming up had the grim aspect of conquerors; the *Aloua* had been outfought.

I lost sight of Polly and her burden, and at the same moment felt myself caught up round the body by a strong arm.

"Hold your legs up!" boomed the deep voice in my ear.

I was swung outward over the ship's side, but immediately was aware of the thwarts of the lifeboat under my feet; I dropped downward; a mountain of gray water rushed at me, but the boat danced over it; other figures dropped in around me, and some yanked desperately at the oars to clear the vessel as she sank. Now, in the stern-sheets, I saw Marlin, broad-shouldered and dominant. He was looking back toward the *Aloua* as we drew away from her; she was lost to view ever and anon in the trough of the waves. I couldn't see Polly's boat nor anything except those ominous backs of the waves. After a few minutes there came a sullen, muffled explosion.

"That's her deck busted up!" muttered a man near me—old Tom, the Nantucket whaler. "She done her best—and be damned to her!"

"You bane damned you self!" retorted Olaf from the thwart behind. "She good boat!"

All at once Marlin stood up, the lines in his hands, and looked us up and down.

"How's this?" he roared out. "Olaf, Tom, Jack—Joe, too! All you aboard me, and left that girl to navigate this sea with that cripple?"

"And she kin do it, too, better 'n most of us," growled Tom sulkily.

Marlin scanned the surface in all directions; nothing was visible but the sea. The *Aloua* was gone, and the other boat had disappeared in the darkness. Either it had been swamped or the currents had swept it out of sight.

Marlin's glance now returned to the crew; the kindly blue eyes that had looked so friendly on the San Francisco wharf now had a menace in them that none cared to meet.

"Overboard goes the next cowardly lubber that gives me back-talk!" he said in a slow growl. He waited, towering and stern, for what seemed a long time.

But the men were cowed; understanding, as they did, the special grounds of his wrath, they knew the threat would inevitably be fulfilled.

At length he sat down again. But he fought with the savage in him a while longer before nodding to me.

"Come up here beside me, miss, if you please. Hand the lady along, men!"

I made the dangerous transit; he drew me down beside him and covered me with a tarpaulin. His touch was full of gentleness and deference.

"You and me will keep a lookout for 'em, miss; they won't be far off." Then he spoke to the crew. "We'll cruise in these waters till sunup; the nearest port is a thousand miles. Give way, all!"

At this time it was impossible to see as much as a hundred yards in any direction, and then only when a wave tossed us up on its shoulder. As near as I could judge, Marlin was steering the boat in a wide circle, perhaps a mile in diameter. The men pulled doggedly, but without heart. Joe, in the bow, was presently hit under the chin by the handle of his oar, and knocked senseless in the bottom of the boat.

"Stern—all!" ordered Marlin. Then: "Each man, in his order, come aft and get a nip of grog!"

Grog was thus served out every two hours during the darkness, and at such times a respite from rowing of fifteen or twenty minutes was granted, while Marlin, with his sea-glasses, scanned the gloomy

expanse intently. He and I occasionally exchanged a few words.

"If 'twas robbing you of a chance, miss, to be dodging about here, I'd bid 'em pull for land forthright. But, as I told 'em, the least we'd have to do is a thousand miles, except some atoll or another, and that's as likely here as otherwheres. Our only chance—I tell it to you because I know you've a heart can bear to hear it—is to be picked up by some cruising tramp; I reckon we're out of the line of regulars. And 'twould go against me to leave those two alone!"

"I'm content, Mr. Marlin, I said. "If you left it to me I wouldn't lift a hand to get ashore. Nothing that's to come, for me, could be worse—or better—than what has been. But I'd like to see you happy, and I hope you'll find her; she's worth seeking the seas over for!"

But I was provoked at the sentimental and elegiac tone that had got into my voice, and I added lightly: "On the face of it, though, it looks as if she and Professor Selwyn had eloped!"

Probably he didn't understand the paltry words; certainly he paid no attention to them. There was a simple bigness in him that rejoiced though it humiliated me. His very kindness to me showed that I was nothing to him.

"I'll find her!" he muttered as if speaking to himself. "Soon or late, I'll find her!"

A diffused light had spread over the sea; and now the great rampart of cloud in the east tumbled apart, and in a few moments the rim of the sun, intolerably bright, pushed up above the horizon. The men lifted themselves sluggishly from the bottom of the boat, into which they had slumped down, and stared vaguely about. But suddenly the Nantucket man pointed south.

"Somethin' yonder, cap!"

I had caught sight of the object at the same instant. It resembled enough a boat to stir hope; it hove up and subsided in the swell.

Marlin's face was calm, but I felt his body heave with excitement beside me.

"Ship the jib, there, forward! Olaf, stand by with that boat-hook. Steady!"

Bowing and dancing, the boat pushed forward; but after a minute I said to him:

"No, my friend, it isn't they."

He continued to steer for it, however, and we ran up alongside. It was part of the deck-house of the *Aloua*. Was some one clinging to it? No!

Marlin mechanically fetched the boat up into the wind, and then remained for some time without moving, his arms hanging over his knees, gazing out over the barren ocean. At last I touched his hand with mine, and said, with a smile, "Steady!"

He roused himself and rubbed his forehead brusquely.

"You may lay off a bit, men," he said; and to me: "Steady it is, miss, and thank you!"

CHAPTER X.

MARLIN'S CHOICE.

THE men curled themselves up under the thwarts and went to sleep. The boat rocked lazily on the rollers, which slid under us with glossy backs. The heat began to be intense; we were probably not more than a dozen degrees north of the line. We could see now over an area ten miles in diameter, but nothing was visible upon it. Marlin sat in dogged silence, leaning on his elbow.

"Take a nap yourself!" I said to him. "I'll keep a sharp lookout and wake you if there's any change."

He started and frowned; but after some inward debate he answered:

"Chance I'd be better for it. We know nothing; luck may come to us here as well as any place else. You know how 'tis with me, miss—I care for her, and she for me. Wake me in an hour—it's you and me to the finish. I'll trust you!"

He settled his great frame down, like a boy beside his mother, and by and by I drew his head into my lap and shielded his face from the sun with a corner of my skirt. I was glad he had said that he trusted me.

I had the Pacific all to myself, with my thoughts and with him.

My belief was that Polly and Cabot had been drawn down with the *Aloua* when she

founded. Polly had, in a sense, sacrificed herself for the poor professor, who, except that he was a helpless fellow creature, was no more to her than a bit of driftwood. But, in a still higher sense, she had sacrificed herself for Marlin's sake—to do a deed worthy of him. Could any great lady of patrician lineage have done more?

She was gone; and perhaps she had the best of it. We were left to fight it out, and in these desolate seas torture might await us.

I became conscious that Joe's small, bloodshot eyes were fixed on me. He signed to me for a drink. I beckoned to him to come aft, and gave him a sip of water. His nose was swollen from Cabot's blow and his chin cut by the car-handle. He crept back to his place; the other men lay as if dead, their mouths open.

Did I hope we should find Polly?

More than once have I searched my spirit for an answer to that question. I think I can truly answer that I did hope so. In my long life I have been capable of many things which society, perhaps, would have forgiven more easily than a treachery such as the alternative would have involved. But I am sure that I honestly desired the happiness of both these honest persons—of Bob Marlin and of Polly, too—and I knew that it could be realized by their reunion only. I hoped we should find her, and I hoped that I might be the one to awaken him to the meeting with her, if that were to be.

I kept my promise—I kept a sharp lookout. Constantly I searched the horizon and the great sweep of the circle within it, while he slept with his head in my lap. But, as the sun rose higher and revealed more distinctly every part of that wide space, emptiness was all I saw. At times I seemed to lose consciousness of my body and to be floating hither and thither, an untrammelled spirit, seeking for a sign, and always in vain.

The hour passed, but I would not disturb Marlin's sleep. Once in a while I touched his disordered hair lightly with my fingers, bending over and scrutinizing every feature of his countenance, which was a perfect image of profoundest masculine re-

pose. He would never again use me for his pillow in sleep. But this was my day!

Many hours went by, and the sun was now on the western slope, the ocean calm. The men one after the other awoke. Jack, the negro, started up in bewilderment; Olaf raised himself heavily and scratched his stupid, blond head; old Tom found a bit of plug in his pocket and comforted himself with a chew; I served water and biscuit to all, warning them to be silent. Marlin slept on, and seemed to have pleasant dreams.

Great, splendid Polly! What a life to be extinguished! Or were she and Cabot living still and seeking us, as we them.

A long-drawn, wild yell startled me. Jack had started to his feet and was pointing southward: "Sail-ho!"

Marlin, seamanlike, was awake on the instant, and gave me a glance as he noted the position of the sun. But when his eyes had followed the direction of the negro's arm he sat down silent. This was not the sail he longed for.

It was no sail at all, indeed, but a big freighter, five miles away.

The men were chattering in joyful excitement, getting their kits together and waving signals to the steamer. There was no doubt that she had already descried us; she emitted a short whistle from her steam-pipe and began to turn in our direction. The water was level as a lake.

"Order, there!" Marlin called out. "No need of jumping overboard!" Well, miss," he said, with a glance at me, "you'll be a bit easier now in mind and body."

The state of my emotions, however, more resembled the storm we had survived than the calm that surrounded us. That we should be rescued in this manner had not been among the possibilities that I had anticipated. We might have slowly perished of thirst in the boat; we might have found a desert island and dwelt there, perhaps, for the rest of our lives; we might have encountered Polly and Cabot, and shared with them whatever fate might hold for us. I had thought out all these contingencies and the consequences they might include.

But to be brought suddenly back to the world was another story. What did it

mean for Marlin and me? The search for Polly and Cabot must, of course, be abandoned. Marlin must give her up; but he and I would ~~still~~ be together! I cared nothing for the mode of existence which had been suspended when I embarked on the *Aloua*. I could turn my back upon it forever, with a will, and find an intenser and nobler life by his side. Men are not adamant; time and circumstance may change all else.

While I had a rival I had held off from this man, but no such scruple could restrain me now. I could reveal to him a nature and qualities, I could arouse in him feelings which he had never before imagined or experienced. Our lives could become one, and both of us gain far more than lose by the union.

In the few minutes that passed before the steamer was within hail such thoughts careered through my mind and wrought me to a pitch I had never known till then. He remained somber, with eyes downcast, seeming to meditate deeply. No doubt such a man as he could not but feel a terrible wrench in abandoning a hope even so slender as that of finding the castaways; but I smiled in my heart, believing that he could be comforted.

"From the first there was no chance," I said to him at last. "Now that all's over, I may say so."

"You say so," was his reply, slowly uttered; "but, while I live, I'll seek her."

What did he mean by that?

But there was no time to ask. The black hull was now looming right above us; I heard her bell strike and the engine reversed. Upon her bow, as she drifted along, was the name "*Ambrosia—Liverpool*." Faces crowded to the rail, gazing down at us. On her white bridge stood two officers, the sunlight glinting on their brass buttons. Orders were given; the gangway was lowered. Marlin brought our boat smartly alongside.

Joe made a scramble to get out: big Olaf, with an angry growl, yanked him back. Jack and Tom held the foot of the ladder, while Marlin took me by the arm to lift me up; an officer who had come down the ladder stood to receive me.

"Good-by, miss, and thank you," Marlin said as he let go my hand.

"But—you?" I cried, turning. I think I had a foreboding, then, of what he meant to do, and all within me seemed to turn to ashes. I made a blind effort to throw myself back toward him, but the look in his eyes stopped me, and the officer, thinking I was about to faint, got an arm round me and fairly dragged me up the gangway. I saw the men following me, Marlin standing below, fending off the boat with an oar. Now he stood there alone.

"All aboard, skipper!" shouted down the officer to him.

Marlin did not answer; he planted the blade of the oar against the steamer's side, and, with a powerful shove, floated clear. Then he seated himself on the middle thwart, handled another oar, and began to row away toward the south.

"Hey, there!" shouted the officer. "Has the man gone light-headed? Hey!"

Marlin, paying no attention, kept on rowing.

The officer stared after him, and then looked amazedly in my face. But I was worn out; all the stress and burden of the past days came down on me at once; with an effort I said:

"The girl he cared for— He believes she's afloat somewhere—"

The officer was a rough bulk of a man; but, as he grasped my meaning, a sympathy dawned in him which made his tanned visage quiver. He turned from me to gaze after the receding boat; half lifted an arm and drew his breath to give an order; dropped his arm again, took off his vizored cap, and rubbed his sleeve across his sweating forehead.

"God!" he grunted in his throat. "God!"

He relinquished me to the care of a middle-aged woman who had appeared, and swung himself up to the bridge, where he and the captain conferred together, and the crew crowded to the rail to stare after the lifeboat, which was now fully a mile away, though the click of the oars in the rowlocks, as the rower bent steadily to his work, was still faintly audible in the great surrounding stillness.

From the height of the steamer's deck, in the light of the declining sun, how illimitable and desolate did that expanse appear! And that solitary searcher the center of it!

The conference on the bridge could have but one issue; it was vain to pursue the man and compel him to come aboard. His boat was provisioned; he was free to follow his own inclination. It was conceivable that his quest might be successful; there was nothing to be done.

The bell rang at last; orders were given; the engines started, and the Ambrosia resumed her northward way. But as long as the tiny boat remained in sight I followed it with my eyes and heart.

Afterward I found myself in a berth; a woman sitting under a swinging lamp, sewing; in my ears the rhythm, not of oars, but of the steamer's propeller.

For years afterward, however, in day-dream or night-dream, I saw the vanishing speck on the bosom of the Pacific and heard the thud of oars. Was the man alive? Would he return? From the vastness came no reply.

CHAPTER XI.

THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE.

AFTER three months of refitting and reflection in Honolulu, I went back unobtrusively to my house on Beacon Street, and walked into my study. A book was lying on the table, and I picked it up and opened it; it was a volume of Walt Whitman, and the first line that met my eye was this:

I celebrate myself!

I laid the book down, and have never since opened it. My mood was not in the least degree sympathetic with that of the poet.

Beacon Street looked not familiar, but strange. We pass our lives in regimented houses, but our real dwellings are incredible palaces and dungeons of the spirit, which we never speak to one another about.

I spent a day strolling about Cambridge. What a trivial place! I stood before the gate of Cabot Selwyn's colonial mansion.

The blinds were down; the doors that had been opened to me by the Venus of Milo had a rusty look, as if it hadn't been opened for ages; the elms had shed their leaves and scattered them over the limestone path.

I invited Topham Brent to take afternoon tea with me. To him I told my tale, omitting those parts only which were of interest to myself.

"Poor Selwyn! What a figure for an adventure!" he remarked. "If they come back, that housemaid of his will be Mrs. Selwyn, of course!"

"She cared for Marlin."

"Oh, the roots don't go deep in people of that class!"

"Marlin's going off that way looks as if they might."

"What he did does strike the imagination! Still, emotions may be strong without going deep."

"Well, Polly took care of Cabot, whom she despised, so as to feel worthy of Marlin!"

"Aren't you drawing it rather fine?" he asked, smiling. "She didn't expect the boats would get separated!"

There are times when I hate Topham Brent!

During the three ensuing years I kept a good deal to myself.

A vessel chartered by the government to investigate the bottom of the Pacific was instructed, on the strength of my report, to keep an eye out for Professor Selwyn; but I never heard that they found anything of him, there or elsewhere. Inasmuch as Cabot had resigned his chair at Harvard, the university wasn't officially concerned about him, and I am afraid he was soon forgotten, even as "an intellect."

Of course, three years is a long time.

One Indian summer afternoon I took my parasol and went for a walk in Boston Common.

A baseball match at the western end of the enclosure had left the famous Frog Pond alone with the ducks and the fountain, which was not spouting, but bubbling quietly to itself like an old gossip mumbling of past times. As I sauntered along the neat granite margins, however,

I noticed a woman seated on a bench on the opposite side.

She was busy sewing something, and her strong, upright pose was like that of the female figure in MacMonnies's fountain, which I saw long afterward in the Court of Honor at the Chicago Fair. Her complexion was a deep, gold brown, oddly contrasting with the thick, yellow hair partly visible beneath her brown straw hat. She wore a thin white waist and a plain gingham skirt: a woman of the people, out for a little fresh air.

My knees felt a little shaky, and I sat down on a near-by bench, and continued to observe her. She glanced up occasionally, looking in a westerly direction.

By and by, after one of these looks, she lifted a hand with the sewing in it and waved it, and when I, too, gazed thither I saw a man walking toward her with a brisk, capable step, though he seemed to limp slightly on one leg.

He came up and sat down beside her; she patted him on the knee with a kindly gesture, and they fell into talk. Presently he put a hand in his side pocket and pulled out some crumbs, which the ducks, swimming near, gobbled up. He was clad in a cheap, hand-me-down suit, with a soft felt hat, the brim shading the upper part of his face: a short, brown beard and mustache covered the lower part. He looked like an enterprising artizan.

He was apparently relating some episode to her, and as he talked he would intermittently throw more crumbs to the ducks. One of the ducks, less active than the rest, was not getting his share; the man, noticing this, took a crumb, rolled it up into a pellet between his thumb and forefinger, and projected it at this duck with a peculiar little jerk of the wrist. It fell right in front of the feeble duck, which swallowed it before the others could get up. The man and the woman exchanged a smile: but if the pellet had been a bullet, and had struck me in the breast, it would hardly have impressed me more.

It settled the doubt that had lingered in my mind: I had not been mistaken!

I stood up; but before I could take a step the man, too, rose, having probably fin-

ished his narrative, and with a brief nod to his companion, made off with the same alert gait, and was soon out of sight toward the east. The ducks quacked and dispersed; the woman resumed her sewing. I moved slowly round the pond to join her. It was like going round the world.

When at last I stood beside her, and my shadow fell across her sewing, she raised her head, and our eyes met. I have elsewhere said, I think, that Polly King possessed remarkable poise, both of body and mind; it was statuesque, dealing with large, simple movements, and though admitting, at need, of swiftness, was never hurried or excited. If the Venus of the Louvre could ever move, it would be in Polly's way.

She laid down her sewing, and that well-remembered smile brightened in her face. Then she rose and grasped my hand. In her buoyant, friendly voice she said:

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

The years rolled away, and I dropped on the bench beside her.

There were mutual questions and answers for a while, superficial and perfunctory on my part, to get accustomed to the situation. She and Cabot had arrived in Boston only a week before; they had been picked up from the Pacific atoll on which they had been living these three past years by a haphazard steamer—not the government vessel—and landed at the Isthmus (this was before the building of the Canal), and had made their way to the eastern side and thence taken passage to Boston. They had rented a little flat on the western slope of Beacon Hill: she had written to her uncle in New Zealand, to inquire whether he, if alive, would still be willing to receive them: she had managed to keep, through all vicissitudes, the five hundred pounds he had sent her. They were, both of them, in excellent health and spirits. "Cabot, he was for staying on at the island," she said, laughing. "He didn't want no more civilization, he said. But I told him to come along—I didn't want no more island! 'We'll have to wear clothes, Polly,' he says, 'and act proper.' 'Three years going bare-naked is enough for any decent man and woman,' I comes back at him; so we

climbs aboard the steamer, and here we be!"

"I saw him with you just now," I said. "He looks a different man."

She nodded contentedly. "He's all of that, is Cabot! He's just now been out to Cambridge, to say how-do to the professors. A bunch of old mummies, he calls 'em! The gulls over to our island has more sense, he says, and the ducks here on the pond knows more of what's what! He says he'd never train with that gang again, not if they'd give him the college; and he's right keen to get over to New Zealand, and meet up with my uncle and folks like him. 'Living is better than talking about living, and being dead all the while,' he says. All the same," Polly added, smiling, "there was a spell over on the island when he was all for learning me to be a fine lady, and to call the good Lord the Cosmic Mind, and to make us dresses of leaves, like Adam and Eve in the Bible. Well, I humors him for a while; but at last I tells him, 'There's no pith in it; a clean skin is good enough clothes for me, and a coat of tan fits snug and stays by you!'"

She pulled open the front of her waist and showed me a glimpse of a polished bosom, brown as English autumn. "Clothes irks us a bit yet—him in especial!" she remarked, amusedly.

"And what about the Cosmic Mind?" I asked.

"Living like we did, year in and year out, one gets to know that God's good, and let it go at that," she replied with a serious look. "You see, miss, things happened out there, and we was bound to face 'em and make the best of it. Book learning is all right; but over on the island, what you learns you believes—which is more than what book-learned folks does of their learning, Cabot says; and having tried both sorts, he ought to know. But maybe you'd like to hear the whole yarn, miss?"

"I would, indeed! But first, tell me one thing." My heart stirred a little, and I had to pause to control my voice. "Did you see anything of Bob Marlin?"

Her eyes darkened, and her lips were grave.

"Do you know aught of him, miss?"

"After putting us on board a ship he rowed away alone to seek for you."

She looked at me. "Aye, that would be like Bob Marlin!" After a thoughtful silence she said: "I'll spin you the yarn, and then you'll know as much as I do."

CHAPTER XII.

THE TALE OF TWO.

SHE went succinctly over the first experiences. After three days in the open boat, she had sighted, on the fourth, the soft outline of a palm-tree on the southern horizon. Late that afternoon they came to it, entered the lagoon, and the boat dug her nose into the white sand of the inner cove. She had lifted up the helpless man in her arms and carried him ashore, and their island life began.

"'Twas as easy as a picnic, miss," she observed; "but we was alone, with thousands of miles of water, and more, all round about us!"

There were provisions and a set of tools in the boat, and they found a spring of good water at the head of the beach. There were clams and fish innumerable, coconuts, berries, fruits, and roots, and a climate that made their scanty wardrobe, which speedily became much scantier, very tolerable from the bodily standpoint at least. "And bless your heart!" said Polly, with her frank laugh, "by the time the boat come for us we'd nigh forgotten what clothes was! So far as that goes, if you ask me the difference betwixt cold weather and civilization, I couldn't tell you, and no more could Cabot, I believe.

"First off," she continued, "him and me didn't keep together so much. That leg of his kept him from walking, and I'd tray-pass off by myself. The whole island wa'n't bigger than this Common, but uneven like, and trees growing over it; so it was quite some time before I'd been over it all. There was one high point, and on that I piled up a heap of stones, and chopped down a big bamboo-stalk and stuck it up there, with a bit of the sail from the boat at the top of it for a signal flag: and nights I'd go up there and make a fire, so that if Bob Mar-

lin was to come along that way he'd see it and steer for us. Him, or anybody else," she said, drawing the needle through her hem.

"I got boughs together, too," she went on, "and fixed up a sort of shack for the two of us near where we came ashore—the boughs twisted in and out, like a basket—and I made a partition through the middle of it, so there was one side for me and t'other for him; and two beds of moss and seaweed, one for me and t'other for him. The roof was palms thatched together like they thatch the cottages in England, to keep the rain off; but it didn't rain so much; and but for sleeping, outdoors was better than in.

"His leg healed fast, barring that bit of a limp, but he seemed moping—homesick for Boston, likely; times I see him looking at me hard, but I didn't bother my head about him. I'd chores enough about the place to keep me busy; other whiles I'd be off to my beacon, to look off over the wide waters, and to be thinking of what had been and might be. Him and me, of all two folks alive, to be here, and no way out, for all our lives, maybe—'twas a puzzle I couldn't make out—because, do you see, I couldn't think it just happened that way by accident. Howandever," added Polly, with a shrug of her magnificent shoulder, "there we were!

"But after nigh a year, as I figured it, things came to a show-down.

"I'd gone off to the beacon about sundown to gather sticks for the fire up there. As I comes near I see the heap of stones is pulled to pieces, the flag thrown over, and the ashes of the fire strewn about.

"With only him and me on the island, 'twas no trick to guess who done it!

"And that, thinks I, might be the one day of all the year when Bob was passing by, and, seeing no sign, would come back no more!"

She dropped her sewing in her lap and, stretching out her arms, made a gripping movement with her fingers. The menace of her tone and aspect were deadly as she muttered:

"If I'd had his throat in my hands then!"

After a few moments she passed out of that mood and quietly took up her sewing again.

"I stayed around there till dark. But when I got back to the shack and seen him sitting there, there was black wrath in me.

"'No more of you here!' I says to him, 'Off with you!'

"He'd stood up when he seen me, and faces me straight. Up to that time he'd always been timidlike with me, but now I could see he'd manned himself to meet me—though, for strength of body, well he knew he was no match for me.

"'I done it for the best, Polly,' he answers me back, but his voice shaking a bit. 'Folks can go crazy looking for what will never come!' he says.

"'That's my business,' I tells him. 'But if you don't want to be fed to the sharks, get out! I'll not speak twice!'

"He didn't budge. And we stood that way for a minute in the firelight, watching one the other. There was murder in my heart, but his head was up, and he put his hands behind him; he looked more a man than I'd seen him yet.

"'If you want me fed to the sharks, Polly,' he says, 'I'll do it myself.' His voice had steadied, and it wasn't loud. 'If I didn't love you I'd have done it long since. And I won't live, cast off from you!'

"That took me aback. And what he said he meant—I could feel that.

"'You love me?' I says after a bit. 'This is a new turn!'

"'Not new to me,' he says. 'True, I didn't love you at first—I was going another way entirely. But on the ship you learned me what a woman is, and now if all the women in the world was to choose from, I'd turn to you and ask you to be my wife!'

"'Your wife! Out here on this island!' I says, in a sort of laugh.

"'You don't need me to tell you that if a man and a woman that loved each other kneels down, wherever they be, and asks God's blessing on them, they're married as fast as church and priest could make 'em,' he answers.

"'Happen they might! But I was more like to strangle you than love you!'

" 'I love you, Polly,' he says, 'and when a man loves a woman true, it may come to pass that by and by she may come to love him back. You're to choose; but if you choose against me, don't fear I'll trouble you again. I'm an asker—not a beggar!' he says.

"The way he said that showed me what a gentleman is! My notion of a gentleman had been a rich man that did what he liked; but I knew then there was more to it than that.

" 'Hear you this!' I says to him at last. 'The only man I could ever love is gone, and you and me is here alone, likely to live and die here. I don't value myself overmuch, but there's some things has more value than people. What you've said needs to be thought about a bit; and though you may have thought of it before, I haven't. Leave me alone to-night, and to-morrow I'll tell you what I'll do. More than that I'll not say now.'

" 'I've waited months; I can wait a night,' says he, and turns round, and I loses sight of him in the darkness. And after I'd stood staring into the fire for a spell I goes to my bunk and lays me down, not to sleep, but to think things over."

She paused, and her hands fell in her lap, and her eyes fixed themselves on remoteness, with the look of those used to gaze across boundless seas. Before my own mind formed that picture of the two figures facing each other in the darkness across the fire, in love and in hate; and another, of Polly standing alone in meditation above the embers, statuesque and grave! Oh, for an artist with imagination and skill to depict them!

She came back to her story.

"In the morning, before dawn, my thinking was done, and up I gets, having work to do that must be done before he came. After 'twas finished to my liking I comes out of the shack, and seen him sitting on a rock beside the water, the sky bright behind him with the sun that would soon be up. The water was smooth like this pond, and some gulls was swimming about there in front of him that he tamed and was used to feed, like he was feeding yonder ducks a while ago. But he paid no

heed to them now, but stared off toward the sunrise.

"I'd made no sound; but in a moment he turns him round and sees me standing there. I beckons him, and he comes up to me and stands close. He eyes me keen in the eyes, a stern sort of look, like as I've fancied a soldier that's to be shot minded to show no fear. But there was a bit of a tremor through him, too, maybe because the chill of the night was on him still.

" 'Well, Polly?' he says quiet, and fetching a long breath.

" 'You said you love me,' I says; 'you a gentleman, and me a common woman. Our kinds don't naturally come together. But there's no other woman here for you, good or bad; and to live herē for many and many a year, maybe, seeing you unhappy, that's a fellow creature anyhow, and a man with manhood in him—as I've seen,' I says, 'and me able to make you happy—that don't look right to me, either!'

" 'Me being unhappy is neither here nor there,' he answers. 'If you can't stand being my wife, you've to say so—that's all!'

" 'No, not all!' I tells him. I waited a bit, for I was feeling worked up myself. I was but a girl, after all, and what I had to say didn't come easy.

" 'There's this,' I says at last. 'Woman to you I'll be—bed and board with you, be good and helpful to you, bear children to you—if that's to be; but wife and husband is names you and me will never give each other! What I give you you're free to take; but to be your wife, not knowing whether Bob Marlin is dead or alive—I'd shame to ask God to let me into heaven after it! That mayn't be what educated folks calls moral,' I says, 'but it's Polly King!'

"Well, miss, to say truth, I looked for him to jump at it; but I didn't know him all even then!

"There was sweat running down his forehead now, and dropping on his shoulders, though he'd seemed chilled, like, a minute before, and his eyes bright and big.

" 'Polly,' he says, very soft, 'you and me is naked soul to soul here. What you mean wouldn't be a square deal to you! If ever

we got back to the world, living together yet not married, the world wouldn't treat you like it would me. You'd be the one would suffer; and to see the woman I loved suffer because I loved her—I couldn't stand it: it would hurt me if I lay dead in the grave!

"It was spoke fine and honest; and I was glad of it, and sorry, too, though what I was sorry for would be hard to tell.

"But he'd no more than spoken when up comes the sun over yonder, dazzling bright, right behind him, so as I puts up my hand to fend it off; and with that I sees, in the jaws of the cove, something floating toward us on the tide. 'Twas floating in, same as we'd floated in in our boat, a year before. One look I gives, and down the beach I runs and into the water and starts swimming out to it. The mate to our boat it was, and as I comes close, I sees the name, *Aloua*, written on her bows. I grabs hold on her, and gets my leg over the side, and tumbles in.

"Empty, she was: not even the body of him left! And she was all warped and blistered and leaking through the seams; many a month had she drifted on the seas with never a hand to guide her, but finding her way to me, to tell me he was gone! And there I sat, on the thwart he'd sat on, and the water swashing about half-way up my legs. There was an oar in her, but I laid no hand on it; all the same, on she floated, like she was drawn by something I couldn't see, till at last she pushed her nose into the sand, same as ours did a year before!

"I kept on sitting on the thwart, seeing naught that was really there, but with thoughts that seemed like real to me: it was like Bob was there with me, and him and me talking together. And I asks him: 'What to do with that other man?' and the answer comes: 'He's a good man; do you be good to him, like you told him; and our time will be afterward!'

"I gets out at last, and pulls her up beyond the tide. The other man was keeping back out of my way, and I took it kindly of him, for feeling how 'twas with me. I seen no more of him that day.

"But 'tis no more than truth that I saw

Bob, now and again, as plain as if he was there! Mostly, he seemed rowing out over the bare sea, hunting the girl he cared for, and me striving to make him see and hear, but 'twas not to be. Other times he'd be close beside me, his face grave, but not grieving, as if he was telling me: 'Bear it out, girl—all's well ahead!' Because of me not having slept that night, I was fancying such things. I stayed by the boat, patting it with my hands, and talking to it, and may be kissing it sometimes, like as 'twas a message he'd sent me from overseas.

"But I knew all the while there was a thing to be done, and along toward sundown I rouses me up to do it. There was dry sticks a-plenty on the borders of the forest, and that had been brought up by the sea; and I fetched them by armfuls and piled 'em up round the boat, till she was hid from sight, and I put more inside her; a big heap it made altogether, as tall as me. Then I takes embers from the fire that was always kept in front of the shack; and soon there was a big bonfire blazing up, like us children in England would make 'em when there was some cause of merrymaking: though small merriment it was to me, standing there, watching burn to ashes all that was left me of him that had been so dear to me!

"Before 'twas over, I hears a shout, and soon along comes the other man, as fast as his limp would let him, all wildlike and short of breath, for he'd seen the fire from t'other side the island, and feared I was gone wrong in my head and would be doing myself some mischief. But seeing me safe and sound, he stops where he is, and the next minute, down he goes on his knees, like he was praying!

"I let him pray: in a way of speaking, I'd been praying myself! But by and bye I steps up to him and takes him by the hand. 'Come along with me!' I says to him; and I brings him up to the shack.

"The sun was gone down, and 'twas dark there under the trees, and inside the shack 'twas dark like night. After a bit, though, our eyes getting used to it, the work I'd done at dawn could be seen. The partition betwixt the two parts, his and mine, I'd

pulled down and cast out, and the two beds I'd made into one. I felt his hand grip mine in the dark.

"'I'm not fit for you, Polly!' he says.

"'God, that sent us here, knows what we're fit for!' says I. 'Seems like all ain't the best it could be in this world; but you and me, here, will do the best we can for each other, and the next bridge we'll cross when we comes to it—as my old dad used to say!'

"And that was about all there was to it, miss, as I remember," said Polly, folding up her sewing. "'Tis time I was going home to get my man his dinner."

We both rose, and I walked along beside her.

"From that glimpse I had of him, he looked a happy man," I remarked.

She nodded. "I done what I could, as I promised him; and he made good, beyond all I'd looked for in him. Seems like he'd got a new spirit in him! Them finicking, highfalutin ways and words dropped off him—or 'twas like working himself out of a mess of petticoats and ribbons that ain't proper to a man, and coming out clean and straight and sturdy, with the paint and powder rubbed off, and fit to take his own part, honest and simple! 'My sort of folks acts by rule instead of from the heart,' he'd tell me, 'till at last the heart perishes out of 'em and naught but the rule is left. But you've cured me of that, Polly,' he'd say, 'and now, what there is of me is me myself, and not the lendings of society,' he says. He'd no wish to come back here, as I was telling you, miss; but I'm thinking that was more for my sake than for his, we not being married! But 'tis little enough to me what folks goes about to say,' added Polly, lifting her chin. 'I feel to have done the square thing, and that contents me!'

"Did Cabot find anything to occupy him on the island?" I inquired.

"Indeed, a busier man you never saw!" was her ready answer. "I spoke of the box of tools that was in the boat—good carpenters' tools, they was—and Cabot has 'em out, and sets himself to learn carpentering! You'd never believe the handiness of him, and that quick to learn! When the men come for us in the boat, they was

fair amazed at the fine dock was built out in the cove for a landing; and it was no basket-work shack we had 'em into, but as neat a bit of a cottage as ever was seen, roof and floor, windows and blinds, and chairs and tables like you'd buy 'em in a shop! And over on the high point he'd build a summer-house, pretty as a picture, where we'd sit to see the sun go down; and a path to it cut through the jungle, paved with white pebbles one end to t'other, and with steps made to go up the steep places. A master-carpenter he is this day, and tells me he's landed a job on a new house building over here at Belmont, that 'll keep him all autumn!"

We had come to the exit from the Common at the head of Beacon Street.

"Our flat is over north of here, not so far," said Polly. "Right glad we'd be if you'd come along and have a bit of supper with us!"

"I will come, but not to-day—Polly!" I said, facing her. "Why don't you marry him?"

She looked down thoughtfully, and held back her reply for a little.

"What I told him at first is as true now, or truer," she said at last; "him and me don't belong together. 'Tis like two trees in a forest: they may stand side by side for years, and the boughs touching; but the roots of 'em is always different. And what led him to fancy me was this—that I was, as you might say, wild, and he was tame; and he got tired of tameness, and thinks if him and me is together, he'd get like I be."

"Yes and isn't it so?"

"It might be after a thousand years!" she replied scornfully. "It took that long for my folks to be what they are! Leaving off ribbons and furbelows isn't changing inside: he's a gentleman and I'm a plain woman still! And a gentleman is all right—I'm not saying otherwise; but he's not for the likes of me, nor me for him!"

"But he loves you, Polly!" I explained, a little impatiently.

"Right good friends we be," she returned tranquilly. "More than that I'd not say, either for me or for him. If he's better for me, I'm glad of it; and that I'm no

worse for him, I believe! But to be married would turn friends to foes."

I brought it out at last:

"What if you and Marlin had never met?"

"As well say, if God had never made us!" she answered with a haughty look. "Having made us, He brought us together—and parted us, He knows why! What next, is His business!"

We said good-by, and I walked home slowly. As I came to my door, I saw a tall man talking to the servant. I mounted the steps; he turned, and I recognized Bob Marlin.

CHAPTER XIII.

MARTHA MEETS MARLIN.

I HAD denounced the mask of society hypocrisy to Cabot, in the former times; but I said, "Welcome back!" to this apparition from the dead, and shook hands with him, with a calm as benign as if he had been Topham Brent returning from a trip to New York. But my heart was fluttering like a sentimental girl's.

I didn't dare look at him, though I was aware that the bony contours of his face stood out like the frame of a wrecked ship, that his eyes set deeper and darker beneath his brows, with the look in them of one who has searched vast horizons, and yet that there was a gentleness about him, as having learned from fate endurance, but not rebellion.

I led him in, and up-stairs, took his hat, and made him sit in the big easy-chair by the window, chattering lightly of nothings; and drew up another chair and seated myself opposite him. His brown hair was iron-gray.

A temptation too wicked and strong to be dallied with was tearing at my heart—to tell him, as, an hour earlier I might have done with truth, that nothing had been heard of Polly and that she must be given up as dead. I made haste to burn my ships.

"I just now parted from Polly, you'll be glad to hear," I said; "she and Mr. Selwyn have been back only a week. They—she is the same Polly!"

"Happen they're married?" he said, coming to the point at once.

"No, Mr. Marlin! But they lived together for three years on a little coral island in the Pacific. She was great enough, and compassionate enough to grant him that. But she had promised you, before God, to be your wife; and she wouldn't ask God to witness her marriage covenant with another man. She believed you dead; but she hoped to be with you afterward."

It was all told now: how would he take it?

He had not changed his posture, but his eyes, after a moment, had ceased to hold mine, and were exploring the unseen in a gaze that doubtless had become habitual with him.

"I'd figured it two ways, these past years," he said after a pause: "She'll be dead, I'd thought; or she'll have married. But of this that you tell me, I hadn't chanced to think. 'Tis a strange sail, that must be looked over."

He became silent: it was hard for me. All that I had felt for this man had revived—had perhaps never ceased to be. I had no pride at that moment: I was ready to tell him that he could have a woman to love him if he would. But, except he gave me the cue, I couldn't betray Polly. It was hard!

He began to speak at last, but it was as if he talked to himself.

"After I'd put you aboard the *Ambrosia*, and was cruising about on my search, I'd time to think of the ways of men and women with each other—the rights and wrongs of it; but in the end I got weak, and lost myself; and when I came to, I was in a hospital at Hong-Kong, having been picked up at sea and fetched there. Low with fever I was; but I pulled out of that, and ever since I was sailing the Pacific this way and that, having shipped in one vessel or another, always seeking news of her; till one day I fell in with an old hand from the *Ambrosia*, that told me they'd made port, and that you'd taken passage to Boston. So, thinking you might have news of her, here I be!"

His eyes returned to me; but there was no hope for me in this elemental faith and

simplicity! I had heard Marlin's voice lifted to its compass in the hurricane, and audible through the shriek of it: and now he spoke in tones so low that I bent forward to hear them. Yet the walls of the room seemed to vibrate as he spoke, and space to be lacking to hold the emotion that wrought behind his words. Compared with the storm he was mastering, the hurricane was a petulant breeze!

"Will you see her now?" I asked him. "I have her address."

His powerful hands, resting on the arms of his chair, gripped them fiercely. But his voice, when he spoke, was as low and controlled as before.

"A man mustn't tempt himself—nor the girl he cares for! She thinking I'm dead, has come to be content; but, seeing me, would be troubled what to do. Our troth to each other would pull her one way, and her kind heart to the man she's with, another; and go which way she might, she'd be unhappy. So 'tis for me to cast off moorings and get away."

"I've made it clear—haven't I?—her feeling about you—and him?"

"You have, miss, and I thank you kindly. As for what she did, I hold her to have been right, though, in general, folks give one law to a woman and another to a man. But for all I'm an unlearned man, Miss Klemm, time and cause, as I've said, has been given me to think out things, and that's how it shapes itself to me! I hold her to be a gallant girl, and a good girl; I love her not less, but more, and I've not sought her so long to do her a mischief now! Knocking about so long, I've come to understand a bit of how the Maker deals with us."

He seemed ready to depart.

"Shall I let Polly know you've been here?—that you're alive?"

"No!" he answered at once, firmly.

"No! We'll not meddle with that, if you please!"

"Tell me where I can find you, at least—if anything should happen."

"Mostly I'll be away on the high seas," he said; "however, I'll give you a place where I might be found when in port."

He took a little note-book from his

pocket, wrote something down in it, and tore out the leaf and gave it to me.

"'Tis not likely we'll meet again," he said, "so here's good-by, and I thank you right heartily."

He held my hand a moment in his massive clasp, and then I watched the strong figure tread down the room and pass out through the door.

In one of my old journals of this epoch I found, the other day, that slip of paper on which he had written his address for me, wetting the pencil between his lips. It is the only thing of his that I ever possessed. It is forty years since then. I leaned back in my chair and thought of that parching day in the Pacific, when he had slept, hour after hour, with his head in my lap, and I shielded his face from the sun with the corner of my petticoat. That, too, is a possession! During those hours of peril and exhaustion I was happy.

CHAPTER XIV.

A MASTER CARPENTER.

THAT same Indian summer, Sally Bridge drove me out to the western environs of Boston—which were then less professionally beautiful than now—to see the new country place that her new husband was having made for her.

"There's a South American note—rather *chic*, we think," she told me.

The little house, wide-eaved and verandaed, with pergolas and pagoda's, stood on the slope of a green acclivity, with clumps of shrubbery and groups of trees about it; it was unfinished, the hour was noon, and the workmen were just laying off for their lunch. A man in dirty, white overalls, a cloth cap tilted back on his head, was speaking, in a loud, authoritative voice, to some men at a little distance, whom he was admonishing to finish stacking some boards before stopping work. "You lazy lubbers! I've no use for a man who's always trying to beat the clock! If you can't work for me as you would for yourselves, you can hunt another job!"

"He sounds imperative!" I remarked.

"Oh, that's our foreman; he is rather

brisk, but awfully clever and independent. He's quite educated, too, for a man in his class."

We roamed about the grounds, and finally came to the house itself. It was being roofed with red earthenware tiles, in the Spanish-American fashion. At the eastern end a *porte cochere* was erecting, of somewhat complicated design.

Sally, attempting to explain it, fell into difficulties.

"We'll ask the foreman!" she said at last. "He'll make it plain in a jiffy!"

"What's his name?" I inquired, to disguise a yawn.

"I don't know. I've heard his wife—I suppose she's his wife—who comes out here sometimes, call him 'Cabot.' She seems to understand the business almost as well as he does: a nice looking woman, as big and strong as he is." We turned the corner of the house. "Oh, there he is—eating his lunch, poor man! But I guess he won't mind!"

The foreman was sitting on a carpenter's bench, munching a thick sandwich. He had a short, bristly brown beard, the upper part of his face was deeply tanned, he wore a pair of cowhide brogans, muddy, and splashed with plaster. He gave no need to our approach.

"Oh, Mr. Foreman," said Sally, in her engaging manner, "we don't want to interrupt you, but could you tell us how the *porte cochere* is to go?"

He stuffed the remains of the sandwich into his mouth, and got down from the bench.

"There's nothing special to it," he said, while chewing his mouthful. He fished in the pocket of his overalls and brought out a short clay pipe, blackened by use. He struck a match on his thigh: he drew hard and quick at the stem a few moments, till the smoke appeared, and then for the first time turned his eyes on us: "I'll show you what we're going to do."

It seemed to be a part of the settled order of things that my meetings with him should be dramatically abrupt. I had already identified my former professor of biology; he now recognized me, but made no sign of greeting; his brows drew together in

a frown that suggested annoyance rather than embarrassment.

I hesitated for an instant only. He would not make the first step, but if he were true metal, he wouldn't evade an advance on my part.

"How do you do, Mr. Selwyn!" I said pleasantly. "I'd heard you were working in this neighborhood, but I didn't expect to find you here." He accepted my hand: his own felt rough and hard, like a carpenter's! I continued: "Since we've met, there's some things I'd like to speak with you about. Sally"—I turned to her—"Mr. Selwyn and I are old friends: I won't keep you—I know you have engagements: I'll come back in the trolley. You won't mind?"

Sally knew me well enough not to be surprised at an eccentricity. That I should be hail-fellow-well-met with a workman was only what was to be looked for. She gracefully adjusted herself to the situation, and was presently trundled away in her carriage, waving me an arch *adieu*. Cabot and I returned to the carpenter's bench.

"Well, I congratulate you!" I said. "I preached, but, as you see, when it came to the point, I hadn't your courage! Does anybody but I know about it?"

"It's Polly's doing, of course," he replied, puffing at his pipe. "She raised the dead! You understand, don't you, that it's the past, not this, I'm ashamed of?"

"Doing something, instead of lecturing—yes! You don't act like a neophyte!"

"Lecturing is all right if you've a gift for it; but most talking does more harm than good. You humbug yourself thinking that what's said, or heard, is as good as done. The only safe test of a man is what he can make with his two hands!" He held them out, clinching his fists. "It took me nigh forty years to find out that my best use was fitting boards and beams together! That *porte cochere* your friend talked about is nothing to boast of; but it's worth more than all that ladylike stuff you and the other girls heard from me in the class-room! Neophyte? No! I'm back where I belong, that's all!"

He knocked the ashes from his pipe, and began to hunt for his tobacco.

"No, I've made no public proclamation,"

he said. "Let 'em find out! I went out to Cambridge to settle up my affairs, and had a half-hour with the faculty." He gave a short laugh. "There's a foreign person from Geneva in my old chair—Professor Langsam Zuerick. They all sized me up for daft, of course—lost my wits in the solitude of the island! I'd a mind to tell 'em I'd the best company on God's earth!"

"You're paying me an indirect compliment!" I said, laughing.

He gave me a sharp look from his bright eyes—how different from the polite glances of the urbane professor! "I've often wondered if you knew what you were talking about!"

"Perhaps I was only a mouthpiece, divinely inspired!"

"You had me to rights, anyhow! That woman nursed me back to life like a mother give suck to her child!" His eyes filled with tears. "And all for what?—pure human pity for a helpless good-for-nothing! But she never came down! If you get the point"—up went the hand, and he was rolling his pellet, as at the professorial desk—"through it all, she kept her height and her distance! The Spartan women—that was her style! She gave, but like a goddess! And the best I can say of myself is, I never presumed!"

He was speaking passionately, his tones husky and uneven. He made me feel that he was real, and I the unreality. But never was a stranger thing than this present man standing on and even forgetting the husks of the former one!

A fatal necessity is sometimes laid upon me to say the words or ask the question that one commonly lets slip through his mind unuttered.

"Are you content not to be married to her?"

He frowned, and his lips twitched. He lifted his hand and brought it down on the planks of the bench.

"People have been fooling with that question for thousands of years, and they've answered it wrong! Can a negro be a white man if he wants to?—easier than most people can marry! Miss Smith thinks she married Mr. Jones, but did she? There are white negroes, and there are marriages but

the marriages are fewest! And as for me, I could no more marry Polly King than a mouse's skin can hold a lioness! While I was a fool, I imagined I could; now, I thank my Maker for letting me breathe her air, and eat the crumbs from her table! Content? The time may come when she sees fit to give me the door: I'll be content, though I pray God I may be dead first!"

I had no rejoinder for this outburst. A lover may pardonably overstress the discrepancy between him and his beloved; and his criticism of the futility of marriage in general was keen. How many truly married persons do I know, or you? I could not answer this question offhand.

Cabot, recovering himself, was exploring his pockets. "Whatever became of that infernal tobacco? Must have left it on the roof! Hey, boy! Come here!"

A freckled youngster, all elbows and knees, loped clumsily up; he was the general utility agent about the place.

"My plug is up there behind the chimney, can you get it?"

There was a ladder leaning against the wall, and the messenger loped off to it.

"What shall you do with that lovely Colonial mansion of yours?" I asked, to change the vibrations.

"That museum that I kept my mummy-case in? I sold it!"

"Polly told me you and she might go to New Zealand."

He rubbed his beard thoughtfully: in old times he would have touched his mustache with his finger-tips.

"You're the first person ever talked common sense to me, whether or not you meant it in earnest," he said. "I owe a lot to you—most of all, that you detested me so when I wanted you to marry me! You and Polly are the only ones I can talk straight to. I ought to have stayed on the island; but she wouldn't leave without me. Now I'm here, there's some devil lingering in me that wants to stay—though I myself want to go! It's like a reformed drunkard smelling a gin-shop! Boston! I fight against it day and night! Sometimes I think I'll have to go to the end of Long Wharf and jump off! If she'd only go whether or no, it would be all right—all the devils in hell

couldn't prevail against her! I'd follow, and be safe. If she loved me, instead of pitying me, she'd understand what I need, and go! As it is, she'll humor me, like a spoiled child, and—"

He was interrupted by a yell from on high.

The freckled Ganymede had attained the ridgepole, and, straddling it, had made his way to the chimney and laid hands on the tobacco. Proud of his agility, he had faced about, and lost his balance. Now, grabbing frantically at the treacherous tiles, he was sliding downward toward the fatal brink. Thence to the ground was a drop of full five and twenty feet.

Cabot had already sprung to his feet and was running to the ladder, somewhat hindered by his stiff leg. The ground at the base of the house was cluttered with two or three large beams, lying athwart one another. By the time Cabot reached this obstruction, the boy was dangling over the abyss, kicking out helplessly with his legs and trying to hold on above. He was some distance away from the upper end of the ladder.

Cabot saw that there was but one chance of saving the boy's life, and he did not flinch from taking it. He planted his feet firmly on the beams, just beneath the floundering urchin, and, looking upward, held out his arms. Some of the workmen, hearing my scream, and seeing the imminent catastrophe, came running up, but they were too late.

The boy fell, sprawling. Cabot intercepted him with his own body, but the impact of that falling weight was too great to be withstood by any human strength. He was dashed backward against the beams—crushed on them. He lay senseless; the boy, after a few moments, rolled off him uninjured, gasping for breath.

I have no clear recollection of what followed, till Topham Brent, to whom I must have sent a telegram, arrived, and Cabot was carried to the ambulance which Topham had brought, and the journey to the hospital was begun. Cabot had regained consciousness, but Topham had given him chloroform, and it wasn't until after he had been laid on his bed in the ward, and

his injuries had been examined, that he revived. Death was not far off.

CHAPTER XV.

A MEETING ON DECK.

THE window beside which Cabot's bed stood looked toward the west, so that he could see the sunset: the sunrise he would never see again. He was aware of this, though he had not been informed of it; and in his remoteness—for he seemed to be already far away—he was cheerful, but his brusqueness and bluntness were gone. The refinements and delicacies of his earlier life had returned, though free from the artificiality which had marred them.

"What a simple way out!" he said, meditating aloud.

Polly sat beside him, grave and strong. Topham bent down and whispered in her ear:

"He suffers no pain."

"I'll be that lonesome without him!" she said sadly.

"Why doesn't Bob Marlin come?" Cabot asked later. "That will be a true marriage!" he remarked, looking at me with a smile. "I hoped to witness it."

"Bob's gone a long voyage, boy, dear," said Polly gently. "If all was to do over again, I'd not want it different from what it was!"

His eyes rested upon her face for a while. "The sea flooded into the little bay, and flowed out again, and forgot it; but it was the whole life of the bay," he said; and it was the only poetical sentence that I ever heard from him. Polly, perhaps, took it for the murmur of delirium; she sat holding his hand between hers.

The sea of sunset light presently flooded the room. Cabot's eyelids had closed, but he opened them again, with a dim pleasure, and he may have fancied he was back in the Pacific island. Topham, who was observing him closely, lifted his hand: Polly passed a strong arm under the pillow, and raised him, so that his head rested on her bosom.

"You saved my life!" he said audibly; and I think he died at that moment.

The next day I telegraphed to the address

Marlin had given me, telling him that a letter from me was on the way: there was no answer, and several days passed before I learned that Marlin was away on a voyage. Under the circumstances, I felt justified in letting Polly know what I knew concerning him. She listened quietly, and I could see the narrative sink into her, as it were; but she made no demonstration. As Cabot had intimated, there was something sealike in her nature.

"I've to tell you, miss," she said after a silence, "that I got a letter from my uncle in New Zealand; it came the morning of the day Cabot died. My uncle says he'd be right glad to see me, and he being a bit ailing of late, would I come soon! I'd have said naught of it, if Cabot had lived, unless I'd felt he was willing to go; but, things being as they is, I think I'll be going."

"Not before Marlin gets back from his voyage!" I exclaimed.

She shook her head. "Happen he'd never get back at all; and anyhow, 'tis not for me nor for him to be taking our affairs out of God's hands, that's been caring for us so long! If He means we should meet, He'll know how to manage it. How be, I'll not be starting for a month yet: there's a will Cabot left, that I found in his desk, and he's left me a lot of money he had; and there'll be one thing and another to settle up here. I had in mind to take a steamer from New York, and from London I'd go in a P. and O. ship east: I'd not like to be traveling across the Pacific again, after what's been and gone!"

I felt that it was not for me to oppose her decision: there is mysticism in people of her class. During the ensuing weeks I gave her what help I could in forwarding her plans and winding up her affairs; and I accompanied her to New York to see her off. As on that former train journey, years before, she and I occupied a stateroom to-

gether, and in our talk that night she opened to me some of the deep places of her soul. There is no need, nor justification for disclosing them to others.

Her room had been secured on one of the great liners: Polly was now what might be called a rich woman; but she betrayed small interest in the fact. She was a plain woman, with only simple needs of her own; and if she were destined to live her life alone, money could have little value for her.

It was a sparkling December day when we drove down to the dock, and entered the great barn, alongside of which the steamer lay. I went up the gangway with her, wishing to see the last of her, for it was certain that this would be a final parting. I preceded her up the ascent, and as I stepped out on the deck, I looked in the face of an officer with a gold-braided cap on his head; and, behold, it was Bob Marlin!

I cannot remember that I felt surprised; it seemed as inevitable as life and death. I made a gesture of forewarning; and the same instant Polly, tall and stately, came up and passed into his arms. They held each other but for a moment; the duty of an officer to his ship is paramount. But all the future was joyful in their faces as they moved apart.

In the ensuing spring I had letters from them, dated in New Zealand—from Bob Marlin and Polly, his wife! From time to time, afterward, other letters came. The old uncle died, leaving to them his substance, and they are persons of note and influence in that far-off new world. Polly's eldest son is now nearing his fortieth year, and she and her husband are in the prime of their vigorous old age.

For my part, I possess a good imagination, and when the streams of my own life run dry, I am able to renew them by living in the life of persons I care for.

(The end.)

A Master
Mystery by a
Master Writer

RASPBERRY JAM

BY CAROLYN WELLS

Author of "Faulkner's Folly,"
"The Curved Blades," etc.

Begins in
Next Week's
All-Story

One Combatant by

Eugene P. Lyle Jr.



EX-SERGEANT HENRY DES-CHAMPS JACKSON saw a girl at his desk when he breezed in from war to take his old job back. He did not think more of his old job on that account, nor of himself for having been satisfied with it. He waved an airy hand.

"No! You keep the job, girly, and I'll brace the boss for something around here that you can't do."

She was the only one in the office. The boss's desk was closed, and the bookkeeper would be out in the yard making his daily round as timekeeper. The office was brighter, cleaner, more like a brisk going concern, than Henry remembered it. The old man had not always been so particular to keep out the brick dust and powdered sand.

Outside, the office never had resembled an office, but a gatekeeper's lodge of lathe and stucco within the entrance to a gentleman's park. Only there was no park. When you drove through the gateway from the street, you stopped upon a platform scale beneath a picturesque window of the Elizabethan cottage and some one came to the window—it used to be Henry, but now it would be the girl—and weighed your wagon or motor-truck if you were figuring on taking sand or gravel out with you. Then you drove under an overhead concrete bin with a number, which contained the material you desired, and the same was let down unto you. Going out you were weighed again,

and you signed the ticket, and later your boss paid accordingly.

If æsthetic, you did not linger, as you would not have cared for the yard beyond the cottage. The yard was bounded by a high fence on two of its three sides, and on the third side by a tidewater river whose low bank was buttressed with piles. It was a bleak and raw and busy five acres, sand-strewn and stained with brick dust, where sand and gravel rose in pyramids and brick in rectangular masses. It was a crowded place, which crowded eyes and lungs with wind-blown particles, and ears with endless clatter of a ramshackle sand-screening mill and the thumping and bumping and chain-clanking of a steam shovel on a railroad track.

No, it was no place for the æsthetic. Yet Henry in the office, where oak was polished and walls newly tinted, let his gaze wander from a glass of carnations on the girl's desk and forth through the window upon the grimy prospect.

"Something outdoors," he added, a bit savagely.

The girl considered him with a certain cool sweetness that made him know that he was going to get the worst of this, yet she only told him that she didn't think of anything at the moment that she could not do.

"How about unloading brick? Got young ladies doing that, too?"

Henry was not joking about his desire to handle brick. He had belonged to a com-

batant division, and he could not get over it. He wanted something to do; he did not want to tabulate what others did. Better to take orders than merely transmit them.

He wondered how he could have liked his old job. He had been an indoor man. He had handled papers; he didn't soil his hands, and he could wear clothes to his taste. Things from outside passed over his desk before they went outside again. It had given him a smug, complacent sense of being an executive, but he had been only a cog—a standardized cog at that, easy to replace.

This girl had replaced him, running sweet and cool in her bearings.

He could not fool himself that way any more. He had more man's respect for the little Irishman out there on the steam shovel than for the Mr. H. Deschamps Jackson who had been an indoor man where there was now an indoor girl. Glancing toward the outer desk, he came down to brass tacks—and on them.

"When'll the boss be in?" he asked.

"I am he at present," she informed him.

"What? Well, say, looks like nothing is sacred to pants any more, now don't it?"

"Doesn't it," she said gently.

"I know"—he smiled down upon her with engaging impudence—"but I'm nervous and excited."

He let himself gaze. She made him think of somebody—a queen or a princess. It was her nose. Between the level brows and the satirical little mouth the nose was a long, straight line; not an unduly projecting nose, but a long nose, if you get Henry's meaning.

Suddenly he remembered. In Westminster Abbey or somewhere over there he had seen an old English effigy in stone of a Queen Eleanor or somebody. But anyway, he remembered the nose. He had not thought much of Queen Eleanor's looks at the time; but gazing at the girl helped him to imagine Queen Eleanor—not the effigy—as some queen. Even the nose was all right, here.

It was a queenly line of hauteur, and discretion did not abide in trying to put anything over. A loosened wisp of wavy black hair over the girl's brow would have

softened even stone, making the graven likeness womanly, desirable. The coral pink in these cheeks would have given it warmth; the curve of the lips, spirit; the flash of the black eyes, fire.

"You—the boss?" he echoed feebly.

Her black lashes lifted and took him in. They took in aggressively trim khaki and an aggressively debonair young figure; and though a corner of her mouth twitched as if struggling for composure, sadly, consolingly, she shook her head.

"Quite a shock, isn't it, Soldier Boy?" Subtly she lingered on the endearment in mimicry of an overfond mama or an idolatrous baby-eyed doll, so that Henry writhed all the way down and around his spiral puttees. "The fact is," she continued, "that Mr. Saint-John is up the river. He has an option on a clay bank and is trying it out in a test kiln, so he may not be back for several weeks. But if there is anything I can do—"

"You can start me unloading brick, Queen El. Beg pardon—miss—miss—uh—"

"Saint-John."

Henry's jaw fell slack. "Shucks, I might have guessed! Then you're the kid that was off to school or somewhere?"

She nodded. "Getting beautifully and successfully finished, yes, only the whole thing went flat—perfectly tasteless. Worried the family terribly. Afraid I'd get over-sea doughnut notions—join the Salvation Army or something. But about that time the tenderly nurtured aristocrat of the office—that would be you, wouldn't it?—was needed by his country, and father offered me the job as a sort of counter-irritant; so here I am in brick, sand, and gravel. Now about you, Mr."—she opened an old check-book and read admiringly from a stub—"Mr. H. Deschamps Jackson."

"Say," Henry pleaded miserably, "that's Hank Jackson now."

"I see. Styles do change so, don't they? And you are quite sure your old job would no longer be becoming. Very well. Father has been needing Jim Slocum up there with him. He is yard foreman, you know, and if you would care to try his place—"

"Beautiful!" said Henry, clasping his hands.

"Of course, you could always work down."

"Oh, thank you—thank you, boss!"

Henry's raptures were mostly to fend off the girl's dulcet rapier thrusts. The job had no particular lure for him. But he could not anchor himself to the latest tint in cravats or cut in topcoats or wriggle in dance steps or to any of those old absorbing interests. He was restless, reckless, adrift. His buoyant gaiety was a cloak for the fidgets; his impudence, self-mockery. He wanted a drink, and didn't want a drink. He might have tried one or several for the specious allaying of he knew not what appetite, except that the state had gone dry and the stuff was too much trouble to get. But he had to be doing something—anything—until another war or its equivalent as a sedative turned up.

Again thanking Miss Saint-John, he sauntered out into the yard and met some old acquaintances. These were loading brick from a scow into a building contractor's wagons.

"No—is it?" exclaimed the captain of the scow, a red-faced, lowering blasphemer named Tobe Vogel. "Hey, pike 'im, you-all! It's Deechumps, the office dude!" The man paused, cocking an eye beady with dislike and insult on Henry's trig, soldierly presence. "I want to know, Deechumpsy, did they let you fight in them lovely lace-curtain socks you used to sport?"

"No," said Henry soberly, "I didn't. The colonel was afraid the Germans might object. The Germans were so darn touchy about the rules, we had to be careful."

That had always been the way with Henry. Ridicule had ever failed to tinge his downy cheek. And if Henry of the deeply tanned cheek blushed now for himself in retrospect, he did it entirely under his collar. Vogel frowned. The laugh had not turned right.

"Joke, joke," he scoffed, "that was only my joke, about your fightin'. But we're waitin'. We want to know what our deary did in the war—manicurin' the general's finger-nails or what?"

"I helped," Henry stated simply, "to kick the great and ever-always-undefeated German army the hell out o' there."

Tobe Vogel shook his head. And it is true that he was honestly skeptical. He was honestly puzzled if this thing could be. The office Adonis made over into a fighting man? Yet Tobe had heard that it had been a wonderful war.

"How 'bout a sample?" he inquired, leering with malevolence. "Rough it private, I mean, without the need o' being druv to it by the draft." He folded hairy arms across his chest in a way to bare the corded biceps. "Could you maybe—now, f'r instance?"

They knew then that the office dude had certainly been in the fighting. They knew it from the start he gave at Vogel's offer, from the hunger gleam in his eyes, from the way he wet his lip with his tongue.

"How'll you have it, Tobe?" he asked softly, advancing.

They stared, fascinated. They had never seen a fighter so, taking the chance tenderly, as though it were priceless china. Between Vogel's slitted lids there was sheer incredulity. Like the others, he sensed the electrical in the air, and sensed also that on him would fall the shock and impact. His boastful show of getting set was itself a confession of nervousness. He stamped his feet deep in their tracks, hunched forward his squat torso, and waited, tawny freckled fists slowly opening and closing like the claws of a panther about to spring. Henry seemed a care-free unsuspecting youth walking into a thug's ambush.

But contact was no more than made—Henry stepping clear of a gorilla lunge and putting a rat-tat right and left to Vogel's chin and stomach—when a third man shouldered between them. He was Slocum, the yard foreman, and he wanted them brick unloaded without none of this. His blistering rope-end tongue drove the gang, some grinning, some sullen, back to their work. Vogel stood back.

"All right, you!" Vogel said to Henry. "You with yer smarty stuff, catchin' me off 'n my guard! But it 'll be fur another time, remember that."

Henry, caressing the knuckles of his right, smiled and nodded. "Then it's an appointment."

Slocum blinked at the invader.

"Eh, back, are you?" he sneered. Like the others he could not see a returned soldier, but only H. Deschamps in different clothes. Henry had always affected clothes that were different. "Reckon we *could* have worse luck," Slocum admitted, "but mind, now, pretty boy. You keep to the office, or you're plum' liable to get mussed."

"Now, now," argued Henry. "and when I'd just set my heart on being yard foreman, too!"

They were rapt listeners as he told them the news of the change about to befall them. Slocum professed to see in it a design on Miss Saint-John's part to satisfy everybody by getting Henry murdered, while in Vogel's eyes played a weasel-cunning opportunity.

Something was hatching behind Vogel's scowl, and it made Henry happier. He was going to like this job better than he thought.

He was not so sure, however, after a few days. Slocum had departed up-river, and so had Vogel, with the small fleet of empty scows in tow, and there were no trouble-makers left. Henry had nothing to do with the mill that screened sand from gravel, which was under its own foreman, nor with the little Irishman on the steam shovel, who reported to the mill foreman as to the placing of mixed sand and gravel from barges or lifting it into the mill's hopper.

Henry's duties concerned the yard gang, negroes mostly, who found themselves doing very well without Slocum's abuse yet did not make the error of reckoning the new man as easy or afraid. On the contrary, the crisp, unadorned orders of the ex-sergeant smote their senses with a certain military insistence, smacking of calamity if not militarily executed.

It was difficult to identify the Henry of the yard as the Henry of the office that had been. Simpler was it to accept this man in slouch hat, woolen shirt, corduroys, and hobnail lace boots as another man entirely. Seldom has a past been so adequately lived down.

The reference is to Henry's old past. As to his more recent and combatant past, Henry was having one deuce of a time not to let it break into the present and spread all over the place. Bossing docile ebon-

necks was much too ladylike. Why did they stand it? Seemed like, over in France, the job had been done too well. The world was too all-forsaken safe; it wasn't interesting any more. But at least he could look forward to Tobe Vogel's return.

Then even this ray of cheer went out, for when the laden scows returned, towed by a dingy old gasoline tug, and Henry stood on the pile cap, expectant, they told him that Vogel was not along. Up-river Vogel had acquired corn whisky, perilous bootleg medicine, and had vanished away from there. Henry's eager countenance fell. He felt that he had a grievance against Vogel, and he longed irritably for combat.

But though vaguely meaning to, he did not look elsewhere. There was his boss—not old Saint-John, who was still away, but Miss Saint-John. Yet they did not seem to hit it off at all.

Henry felt that he had stepped in wrong the very first minute, and the burden of his days since was to convince her that he was still the great unsquelched and as fresh as ever, however much she called him Soldier Boy with that lingering sweet mockery in her voice and smile. By way of riposte he yielded to the impulse to call her Queen Eleanor, and did, with cheerful, deliberate challenge, letting no accent betray a queerly disturbing reverence with which he gave her the name of a queen in his thoughts.

For her part, if she so much as noticed that, despite his liting insouciance, he yet would do anything in the world for her with dogged fealty and devotion, she gave no sign in the faintly teasing abstraction with which she contemplated his activities. She may, though the matter is not apparent, have contemplated even, himself.

Even in his honest-to-goodness work clothes a certain jaunty suggestion of dash and style still clung to him, due perhaps to a touch-and-go sprightliness, a seething agility, as if a young colt were trying to take the bit in his teeth. She did tell him, though, that her daddy had got her on long-distance to voice his stupefaction at her judgment in yard foremen.

"But I wonder myself," Henry declared.

"Pshaw," she said, "it would have been

an economic waste—letting so much curdled-up steam escape. Turn you on proper, I said to myself, and here was valuable driving power. So I turned you out into the yard, and in five minutes you were mauling one of my especial pets—that Tobe Vogel does fancy himself such a man-eater, you know. As dad said over the phone, he knew I had a fondness for shaggy brutes but he'd never known me to take up with a sick kitten before. Still, he said, I could always bury it in the sand when the time came." She looked at Henry thoughtfully to note if he did not think well of the idea himself. "Though of course," she added, "it would be a military funeral, Soldier Boy."

"Yes'm, of course," said Henry, and held the harder to his job, whether such were the motive behind her revelations or not.

He did not, however, cherish illusions that he was doing anything that Miss Saint-John could not do. In yard, or mill, or on the greasy old gasoline tugs, she was the supervising boss, doing her round of inspection in dust cap, gauntlets and an overall apron, looking absurdly like a crisply starched young miss just stepped out of cooking school.

For relaxation she delighted to climb into the cab of the steam shovel, which resembled a switchman's shanty set on a bob-tail flatcar, oust the little Irishman from his seat, and scoop tons of golden shifting sand from barge to shore before she tired. Making the monster do its huge tricks of clean precision, controlling such power by grip of slender fingers and calculation of intent eye, had an appeal for the girl; and having that appeal for her, made her appealing to every man-jack on the place.

Henry perhaps would be moodily throwing brickbats, whilst keeping an eye on his gang. He had a mournful fondness for bricks. They were the hard-baked boys, all right. With the snap and form of an egg professor, he bombarded a keg mooring buoy off-shore. Would he ever throw an egg again, scrambling a Dutchman? Alas, poor Yorick, those were the days!

Then the day came when Henry learned that Tobe Vogel had reappeared up-river and had been put on a scow again. That

was satisfactory to Henry, but when the laden scows arrived, Vogel's scow was not among them, nor yet Vogel.

Here was a touch of mystery.

Vogel's scow had certainly started with the others, being the last of four in the long creeping string. The night on the river had been thick and hazy, so that often the tug captain could not see the lights on his second tow back, and when foghorns astern warned him that he had lost a scow, he balked at the hunt in that dark pocket. Vogel would drop his hook and be safe enough until sent for.

"Funny," said Henry, examining the end of the last tow line; "it's all here. No break, or anything."

They scratched heads and rubbed chins. Maybe it had slipped the bitt when there was slack, like when rounding a bend. But lines did not slip bitts, not with old river-men like Vogel. Maybe so, but why should Vogel cast himself adrift on purpose?

"All that Henry could do, was to send the tug back up-river with a fresh crew. They should have the lost scow in by night-fall, and Henry promised himself that then Vogel would explain it all, very satisfactorily.

The work of the yard went on as usual through dust and clatter and the hours that make a day, and the mill whistle blew quitting time and the men quit, and still the tug had not returned with the elusive scow. Reluctantly Henry locked the gates and went home to supper, meaning to go back after supper for what he regarded as a personal appointment with Vogel.

But somebody's queenly nose had presumably scented turbulence in her realm, because, as Henry was bolting a quarter section of pie, the telephone rang, and would Henry call by for her and take her to the office? A statement for her father must be put in the morning's mail, but she could do it quickly from the books if Henry—

"If you're afraid I'll rumple up that pet of yours—that Vogel," Henry began, interrupting; but she protested, "Oh, no—no, really;" and laughed very much amused at Henry's notion of himself as a violent-minded person.

The night was clear, the stars were out, and Henry would not in the least have minded having Queen Eleanor along if, after turning on the lights in the office for her, he could have escaped for a moment. But she went with him, and down at the river they found not only the three scows, which had been unloaded during the day, but the lost scow also, still laden to the gunwale with brick. The tug had brought it in, and left it there, tied up. That was all. There was no Vogel, nobody.

"Now," said Miss Saint-John, "perhaps now you will be satisfied to help me with that statement."

"Even," said Henry, "if we have to invent one."

In the office she called out items and totals, and Henry wrote them down, because there really was a statement that could not possibly have waited another week. And Henry did not mind. She was bossy, critical, exacting, and near. She was herself to the last degree of provocative hauteur. Easily he forgot his earlier disappointment of the evening, and was reminded of it only when they had locked the darkened office behind them and he happened to glance across the yard toward the river.

A full moon was rising, bathing the silent yard and objects so ugly by day in a ghostly effulgence. Above the line of the shore, limned against the sheen of water behind, rose the low, long forms of the brick scows. Something stayed Henry's glance—something queer about them.

"But there are only three!" exclaimed Miss Saint-John.

Of course! That was the queer thing. There had been four, and now there were three. Henry looked at Miss Saint-John, and Miss Saint-John looked at Henry; of the same impulse they went racing across the yard to the river.

"These are the empties," she whispered, panting a little. "It's the loaded one that's gone—Vogel's! But where? Where, do you suppose?"

"Certainly a slippery ship. Sunk, maybe. Let's see." With a pole from the nearest scow Henry walked along the pile cap making soundings. "Only mud," he re-

ported. "And she didn't drift off, either, not with this tide holding her against the bank."

"Henry, somebody stole that scow!"

"Shucks, they could as easy steal a house afire!"

"Then what—"

"Blest if I know. That's the riddle of it."

"Riddle or not," said Miss Saint-John, sounding quaintly like her daddy, grim and quick on the trigger, "I want my bricks back. We'll 'phone for the police."

"And wait half an hour?" Henry demurred. "See here, that scow can't be far. It wasn't towed, or we'd have heard. It was poled, that's what it was, and poling a scow-load o' brick is some kind of slow." He took her hand. "Let's go look. Run—tip toes—not any noise."

The scow could not have been poled across the river, because the channel was too deep, nor down-stream, for there the bank was lined with fenced-in docks and warehouses. Up-stream, then, the pirates must have gone; and up-stream turned Henry and the girl, following the bend of the river between the piling and the railroad track on which the steam shovel operated.

But at the high and tight board fence that bounded the yard down to the water's edge they stopped. From the other side of the fence there came to their ears the creaking of wagon axles and hoarse, muffled objurgations.

These were dark doings, because it was no place at such an hour for honest wagon traffic. There was no road there. There was only an eye-sore desolation of ash heaps and rubbish heaps, where land was still in process of being reclaimed from the tide's backwater. Henry found himself a crack in the fence, and Miss Saint-John the same. But when the girl gave way to a gasp of flaming indignation, Henry drew her away.

"Henry Jackson, they *are* stealing our brick!"

This he could not deny. Lunatics or otherwise, they were certainly stealing Miss Saint-John's brick. The scow was there, staked with poles against the bank just on the other side of the fence, and a two-horse wagon for hauling dirt was being backed down to the scow. Deeper in the shadow

were more wagons, evidently awaiting their turn until their drivers should help load the first wagon. On the scow itself a blurred group of five or six men were intently pulling bricks out of the top layer and stacking them, as it seemed, to pass on into the wagon.

"Now will you 'phone the police?" urged Miss Saint-John.

He gripped her wrist as she turned toward the office. "Think I'd give this to the police?" he protested. "No, sir; I found it, and I've got a right to it. Only let me think a minute, that's all."

She caught something of his mood. After all, they were both young. She began rubbing her cheek with her knuckles, in that unconsciously imitating his own method of chafing stalled wits into a warmth of combustion. But she got a spark before he did. It lifted her in ecstasy to her toes.

"That's Micky," she whispered—"he simply won't draw his fire!"

So much was obvious. The steam shovel was some thirty feet down the track exactly as the little Irishman had left it when the whistle blew, and within the cab a soft pink glow from the fire box had permeated the girl's thought. But she was not blaming Micky—not this night. She ran, jumped into the cab, and scanned the dial of the steam gauge.

"Goody, there's enough!" she cried, turning to Henry behind her. "But throw in a little coal, anyway. . . . Quiet as you can. . . . There!" She reached for the throttle.

"Wait; we want to keep down the racket. Maybe I can push it."

"Yes, yes," and she followed him out of the cab.

They both shoved valiantly, and he tried a crowbar. But the old thing would not budge.

"I bet I kick her off," said Miss Saint-John, hopping back into the cab.

The kick came, very gently, only enough to start the wheels; after which Henry pushed and kept them rolling upon the level rails. At the end of the track close to the high fence Miss Saint-John set the brakes.

"Now, listen," she said to Henry, "I'm going to put the shovel over there among

them—scatter them away from those brick. But you will have to watch from a crack in the fence and call signals—"

"I see—spot for artillery. "Yes'm."

He turned, ran to the shovel where it hung low from the swinging boom, and climbed upon it. From the cab she motioned him down imperiously, but he shook his head.

"Me behind a crack—h'm scarcely! I'm going to ride the shovel. Quick—let's go!"

She hesitated. Then he heard her laughing quietly to herself, and he knew it was all right; they would have a party. Abruptly, as he stood upon the shovel, the slack was jerked out of the big links running through his hands to the boom overhead, and he rose to the clanking of gear and the snort of the engine. The boom swung and the shovel swept over the fence; then stopped in air with a dizzying jolt.

Henry leaned from the chain and looked down. Beneath was the scow. Directly beneath were the men who had been pulling out brick. They peered upward in sudden, dazed commotion, crouching under the huge black shadow hovering over them like a bird of prey. Henry's soul was filled with rapture at the clean calculation of it.

"Down! Down! Let 'er down!" he yelled.

The chain chattered through the blocks and the great condor swooped.

"Stop! Now let 'er bite! Let 'er bite! Let 'er—"

The wide-stretched iron jaws dropped. More slowly the edges met and locked fast. Within were howls and curses and a thumping about, but no yelps of agony, so that ankles and wrists must have been snatched inside in time.

"Hold so!—Oh, bully, beautiful!" yelled Henry.

From his high perch he vaulted down upon the scow. He did not know how many they had bagged, but three men had flung themselves clear and were scrambling to their feet.

These he dealt with, tilting two together and then the third overside into the river. The men on shore, four of them by the wagon, had started to run, but a voice rose among them.

"Oh, hell, it's only one guy! Come get him!"

They hesitated, drew together, and were coming.

"Let 'er up!" Henry signaled. "Hey, that's plenty! Now sweep 'er to the right!"

Inshore swept the shovel, giving its captives a ride, skimming over wagon, horses, and men. The horses reared and bolted. They yanked the empty wagon over ash-heaps sometimes on four wheels but mostly on two, vanishing in the farther shadows.

So that obstacle was removed, and before the men might shake themselves together, Henry was assailing them with brick. The range was close and he had to work fast. Cracking a brick in halves over the gunwale, he threw the halves. Then groping about his feet for another, his hand closed over something that fitted much more snugly.

It was the long neck of a quart bottle. He hurled that, and stooped and found more. There was, in fact a case of bottles. At this spot the top layer of bricks had been taken up to uncover the case. Doubtless the pirates had been in a mood for refreshments and—

But even as Henry was beginning to see a great light, two of the rascals reached the scow. Of the other two, one had been laid flat, and the second was groggily staunching a flow from the mouth, but these two were determined. Henry drove the heel of his boot upon five fingers on the gunwale and his left fist into a desperate face, he half laughing, half singing as he wrought; and this tale would now be all but told except that he was leaped upon from behind.

An arm circled his neck, and the sleeve was dripping wet, from which he knew his assailant to be one of the three men tilted overboard and now back again. Henry still had a bottle in his right hand, and with it he struck backward over his shoulder. Glass crashed, fumes of whisky filled the air, and as the man upon his back slumped inert Henry saw the great light.

No, they were not stealing brick, or at least only incidentally and of necessity to the plot. All but the top layer had probably been stowed in the hold of a schooner up-river, and the schooner would be from

Baltimore, and Vogel had likely found her anchored conveniently near-by when he cut himself adrift during the night.

But any resident of a dry state can go ahead and visualize this as easily as Henry—scores of cases of liquor loaded into the scow from the bootlegging schooner, and over all one innocent layer of brick. The same layer of brick would suffice to cover the cases of liquor after these should be loaded into wagons. At eight or ten dollars a bottle, Henry appreciated that the cargo under his feet was quite some finance.

"Hey, you, I'll help unload. Catch um!" he sang out.

But the teamster-smugglers ashore had caught enough already and were quitting definitely. Henry was making after them in joyous pursuit, hurling bottles, when a cry reached his ears. "Henry—quick!"

Miss Saint-John would not call like that unless she were in trouble. She was alone over there in the yard, in that engine cab. And what of the three men dumped into the river? Two of them were still unaccounted for. If they had made shore around the end of the fence into the yard, their purpose would be to stop the operations of the steam shovel.

For the first time since the affair began, Henry felt anger, and it was anger.

He turned from the fugitives, who were tumbling into their wagons and driving off, and dashed back toward the fence. The steam shovel still dangled over the fence, grotesquely like an old shoe hanging from a fishpole. Henry leaped, caught hold, climbed upon the shovel. Ignoring the perfervid clamor of the captives within, he shinned up the chain and down the steeply slanted boom. Thence he stealthily deposited himself mid a tangle of gear upon the sawed-off flatcar—upon the crowded front porch, as it were, of the shanty-like cab. He heard a man's voice, low, vicious, snarling, inside the cab.

"The sassy moll! Have an accountin', will she, to the last brick? Damn me if there won't be an accountin', all right, for what she's made us lose to-night! Old Saint-John 'll pay, or never see her again. Huh? Risk? Joe, you poor mush, you turn my stumick."

Sassy moll? The fellow meant Miss Saint-John, and she had called but once, Henry remembered. He flattened himself against the wall of the cab beside the window, and, counting on the protection of the deep shadow, got an eye to the window. Inside, by the dull glow from the fire box, he made out dimly the figures of two men—wet, bedraggled, burly specimens. One was holding Miss Saint-John's arms pinioned to her sides—she was already gagged with her handkerchief between her teeth—and the other was wrapping her round and round with a towline from one of the scows. The line was three-inch rope, and there was enough of it, coiled, to fill a washtub.

What made Henry madder, the indignity or the absurdity to which he saw his Queen Eleanor subjected, is not clear, but it is certain that he was mad twice.

"Nough! That'll hold her," said the man of the vicious voice. "Now cut the rope, and we'll tote her down to the skiff."

Skiff, eh? Yes, they must have had a skiff to get to the stolen scow in the first place. They were going to tote her to a skiff, were they? Henry feverishly rasped his knuckles across his cheek. He got nothing. And he had nothing. But he did with—he certainly did wish—for the feel of his old rifle in his hands, with bayonet fixed!

One of the two men stepped from the cab and turned and held out his arms, and the other man handed Miss Saint-John down to him. This was a great deal for Henry to endure, but he dug his nails into his palms and did endure, waiting for the second man to come out.

He poised himself on the balls of his feet, touching the flooring under him with his spread fingers, to leap on the second man. But his fingers touched metal, cold and smooth, and the thing was Micky's crowbar, which Henry had shoved back on the car after using it earlier in the evening. So Henry had something now. He held it as he would his old rifle, with bayonet fixed.

The second man stepped from the cab with the rest of the towline over his arm. Henry let him take six steps, then jumped to the ground and charged. The idea was to knock him down and out by the force of a thrust between the shoulders. But the

man heard and half turned precisely in time to receive the upward jab of the heavy bar under his arm. His breath wheezed from him, and he settled to earth like a collapsing bladder. Henry went on.

There were a dozen paces yet to go to reach the first man, who had let Miss Saint-John slip to the ground. He whipped out a pistol, and snarled at Henry to halt. Henry did not halt. Nor did the man shoot. Shooting would bring more interlopers, and if the man could settle with Henry he might yet get clear with his scow-load of whiskey. At the last moment he reversed the pistol to use it as a club, and with his left hand tried to seize the crowbar. Henry lowered his point, eluded the hand, and drove downward for the man's chest. The man stooped, and the blow grazed his shoulder. Rising, the man dropped his pistol and grasped the bar in both hands.

Henry was instantly aware that he had against him the strength of an ox, and the report of his senses in the matter filled him with a strange content. Against beef and sinew he matched seething agility, and what he knew of the game, and one other thing—the superb consciousness that he was a trained hellion in this sort of business.

They were breast to breast, Henry and the man, both gripping the heavy bar at arm's length over their heads. The man was slowly dragging it down, his great weight and tensed muscles prevailing. At the last, Henry knew, he meant to finish with a sharp, quick descent across Henry's skull.

Straining upward against that remorseless force, Henry saw Miss Saint-John risen on her knees in the sand—swathed as she was in three-inch rope, this had been a feat of itself—and saw her watching, spell-bound. Something about the effigy-like figure, kneeling so, gave him the fantastic whim to call to her.

"Better look sharp, Queen Eleanor," he did call, blithe and incorrigible as a Gascon. "Watch and pray—this is going to be good."

He got no reply from the gagged lady, but his adversary seemed shaken, the wits of him shaken off into vacancy for one brief moment.

"What—Deechumps, is it? Only Deechumps, what's ruined us!"

"Tobe?" Henry welcomed him. "Eh, Tobe, I've been keeping that sample for you, and here's where you get it, you sweet thing!"

But Tobe should have paid no heed to an erstwhile doughboy's larking chatter. It is of record that there may be death in it.

Tobe was searching for rejoinder when, abruptly, the crowbar gave way at one end and leaped upward at the other. Vogel found the hold of one hand broken, and the other instantly afterward as the bar twisted like a tourniquet. He stumbled back, arms wildly waving to save his head. Then neatly, with the dry short stroke of pocketing a cushion ball, Henry bestowed the end of the crowbar upon the pit of Vogel's stomach. The man's fingers crisped in air, and his mouth opened. But there was no breath in the universe, and he went down upon the sand like a collapsing bladder.

Henry dragged him to where the other man lay. Both were stirring, writhing, and flopping, but Henry promised to tap them with Vogel's pistol, so that they became amenable. He arranged them back to back, and with the remainder of the three-inch rope lashed them together round and round, from neck to ankles. Then he stood up, pointed out his elbows, and flapped his arms.

"*La Victoire* — whoop-de-doodle-doo!" he announced.

But a stifled voice seemed to be calling "Henry—Henry."

He ran to her, where she still knelt, helplessly swaying, and drew her to her feet. In the moonlight he could see that her eyes were snapping, yet he rashly undid the handkerchief between her teeth. With her first breath she said:

"I should think, Henry Jackson, you could postpone your crowing long enough to—come to me!"

And she looked so helpless, so furious, so humiliated!

"I think," said Henry, "I'll get a taxi, and take you home that way. Let the neighbors have a look."

"Henry you wouldn't! Quick, do get this awful rope off!"

"I believe I ought to gag you again, too."

"If you dare! Oh, Henry, please—please!"

But Henry had to consider that the strategic situation could never be better. He really owed it to himself to exact terms.

"By the way," he said severely, "do you suppose it will be necessary to your happiness to keep on calling me Soldier Boy?"

She looked at him. Her eyes gradually stopped blazing. They began to give back to the moon the soft light of stars.

"But—oh, my Soldier Boy," she half whispered, "how can I help it? How can I—after tonight?"

"H'm," said Henry. "Well, all right, if you say it like that—if you don't smile when you say it."

"Now won't you untie me?"

"Not yet. There's one other little thing." But his voice took a ridiculous slant upward; it went back on him outrageously. Her eyes widened as she noted this; a mocking, rather tender smile quirked the nearer corner of her mouth. "One little thing. Yes now I remember. Will you—you—be my girl? Yes, that's it. I—"

She drew herself up in queenly disdain, forgetful of her hobbled state, so that she suddenly lost her balance and toppled over backward. Henry caught her. He held her, because she might go over again. Her head lay back on his arm, and the moonlight was upon her upturned face. He bent nearer, still a little nearer. Then he hesitated. But from the look in her eyes he saw that it would be all right, and he did.

"Henry," she said after a moment, "I believe, dear, I could be more—communicative—if my arms were free."

By George, that rope! He had forgotten it; so, for that matter, had she. He began unwrapping her, from the shoulders down. The rope fell, coiling about her ankles like a discarded garment. Flushing at the familiar action, she stepped out of it, smoothed down her skirts, and put one hand in his, in a way that was very satisfying to Henry.

"Now won't you 'phone for the police?" she asked.

"Yes, sure, they can have it now—the

leavings. Let 'em clean up the whole damned mess."

"You—you were put to so much trouble, weren't you, Henry?"

Trouble? He knew that arch, ironical, manner of hers when referring to his civic duties in Brick, Sand, and Gravel, and now she was referring to the evening's tumultuous gymnastics.

"Great Scott," he said, "that was fun!"

"You don't think," she inquired, her tone still faintly teasing, "that you'd like to catch rum smugglers—you could, you

know, by joining the secret police—and have excitement like to-night as a regular thing? Would that appeal to you?"

He pondered because, beneath her mocking insistence, he detected that she was worried and anxiously awaiting his reply. But, looking at her, he could not ponder long. He gazed at her lovingly.

"Oh, Queen Eleanor, I do love you so!" he burst forth. "No, I stick here. And besides, a fellow can't ever tell when there's a dandy scrap waiting just around the corner, if he'll only be patient."



A WILL

BY PAUL WEST

THIS is the WILL and TESTAMENT
OF A. VERAGE MORTAL, dying content:
I leave to the world, which has been most kind,
A number of things that, all combined,
Have a considerable lot of worth,
And were coming to me upon this earth.
I leave the chances I overlooked,
I leave the fish that I never hooked,
I leave the seats that I didn't get
In the trolley-cars which are filled up yet,
I leave the money I didn't make,
It's waiting for some one else to take.
I leave the things that I meant to do,
Which are still to be done, perhaps by you.

I leave my place in the Scheme of Things,
With whatever of joy or wo it brings—
It wasn't so good, nor yet so bad,
It wasn't so joyful, nor so sad—
An average sort of a place, I guess,
With its share of the things that cheer and bless,
Its share of sorrow, no doubt, beside,
Its share of humility and of pride,
I leave it freely, with my example,
A sort of an average, human sample,
For all to follow its better part,
And dodge the bad, with a stout, firm heart!
That's what I leave—it's not a lot,
But whether or no, 'tis all I've got!

House of the Dream

by Edith Sessions Tupper

CHAPTER I.

A DREAM AND A LETTER.

I STARTED up from my sleep, frozen with terror. A creeping sensation was torturing my hair-roots, and a cold, clammy sweat was bathing my face. For an instant or two I could not stir, then gradually—as I realized that it was only a dream—I controlled myself and presently rose from the bed, and, feeling my way across the room, found my match-case on the table, and lighted the gas.

What a blessed relief to see the room flooded with light! The horror gradually subsided, and I was ready to laugh at myself for my paralyzing fear. I wrapped myself in my bath-robe and lit a cigarette. I did not care to return to bed just yet.

I am not a dreamer. I am a strong, healthy man who never had an attack of indigestion. I was absolutely at a loss to explain the fearful nightmare I had endured.

I ran over in my mind the events of the day. Had there been any episode to lodge its impression in a brain cell and produce such a hideous fantasmagoria? Absolutely none. I had been as usual in my office, going over certain legal papers and preparing a brief for a suit at the coming term.

I had had no controversy with any one, nothing had troubled me in the least—save that Lillian's attitude the night before had perplexed me a little. She had appeared distraught and a trifle upset over something. I could not wonder at that. Living with

her aunt, Saphira Hook, was not conducive to placid content, I argued. I knew one month under that old Jezebel's roof would drive me to insanity. Had the old girl been particularly unpleasant? I asked myself.

I was deeply in love with Lillian Boyninge, and wished to marry her at once, but Saphira Hook had interfered.

"Lillian is too young," she croaked when I had asked her for her niece's hand. "She does not know her own mind; she may change it." She leered offensively as she spoke. "You are not the only man on earth, you know." Here she cackled. Her shrill, metallic laughter sounded like the crackling of twigs on a fire. "I insist that she shall wait one year. Meantime you may call on her once a week."

I was forced to accept this armistice. Miss Hook had never liked me, and I feared she might prevent me from seeing Lillian at all, should I refuse the proffered terms. So once a week I paid my visit to my beautiful betrothed.

It was not very satisfactory. Saphira Hook was always in the room adjoining, and, although we spoke in whispers, we both felt that the old harridan heard every word.

I call Saphira Hook a harridan deliberately. There never was such a terrible old woman. Her deep, cavernous eyes glared over a nose like a hawk's beak. Her thin lips were cruel and vindictive, and her smile was a malignant grin. Although in her seventies, she daubed her wrinkled cheeks with

rouge and wore an abominable blond wig which but accentuated the frightfulness of her appearance. She was bent with years, and walked with an ebony stick—looking every inch a witch. On beholding her, one involuntarily looked about for the black cat and the broomstick.

Lillian Boyninge had been educated abroad, and two years before had come to our town to live with the richest old hag in it. I met her at a party, and directly fell desperately in love.

From the first Miss Hook frowned upon me. I was only a beggarly country lawyer to her. She had more ambitious plans for the exquisite girl who had won my heart. But Lillian loved me, and told her aunt squarely that if she could not marry me, Jim Thorndyke, she would marry no one.

"Hoity-toity!" stormed the old woman, getting so purple in the face I thought she would throw a fit. "Is this the way you defy me, miss? I'll cut you off without a dollar."

"I do not care for your miserable money," retorted Lillian, growing very white. "I love Jim, and you shall not separate us."

"You are not of age—you can't marry," clattered the old woman, her jaw wagging and her eyes protruding frightfully.

"I can in a year!" cried Lillian.

Here I interposed. "Miss Hook," I said bluntly, "I know you dislike me, but I am not asking you to marry me."

"No, thank the Lord!" snapped Saphira. "Who are you, anyway? A country pettifogger. Do you think I've spent thousands on Lillian and made her my heiress to have her throw herself away on the first fortune-hunter who comes along?"

But why prolong the description of this outrageous interview? We patched up a truce, and I was permitted to see my darling once a week. Our only consolation was that Saphira could not prevent our making plans for the future.

I had a modest income and an old-fashioned home my parents had left me, and every week I bought some bit of furniture or piece of bric-à-brac which I hoped Lillian would like, and put it in the house to await the advent of the bride. We planned

in whispers our life together. It was a very unsatisfactory courtship, but the best we could do under the adverse circumstances.

The week dragged along, and the evening of my call came at last. It was with a beating heart that I ran up the steps of Saphira Hook's old-time mansion. "Oh," I said to myself as I rang, "if the old girl should have had a stroke-to-day—would I weep?" I decided that I would not.

I was ushered into the drawing-room, where Lillian always was waiting for me. But to-night she was not there. I sat down to await her coming. Glancing through the curtained doorway into the library where Saphira kept guard, I saw her wicked old face distorted with awful, silent laughter. She bent over and rocked herself to and fro with devilish mirth.

I wondered what on earth was the matter with her. Presently rising and leaning on her ebony stick, she hobbled through the doorway and came toward me, still grinning in malevolent glee.

"Good evening, Mr. Lawyer," she mocked. "I am obliged to disappoint you to-night."

Here she again shook with suppressed, diabolic laughter. I had risen as she entered and stood wondering what she was up to. A premonition of trouble suddenly swept over me. "How is that?" I asked as carelessly as I could.

"Lillian has gone away," she drawled, greedily watching me to see the effect her unexpected announcement would make upon me.

"Gone away?" I blankly echoed.

"Yes, yes," she chuckled. "She's gone away."

"Where?"

She shook her head. "I am not on the witness-stand, let me remind you."

"Gone—without letting me know?" I faltered. I was stunned by the news.

"Yes," she mimicked, "gone—without—letting—you know." She positively revelled in my consternation.

I gripped myself. "When will she return?" I asked as calmly as I could.

"I don't know," she gloated. "She has gone on some business *for me* which may take some time. Too bad, isn't it?"

God forgive me, but I could have killed the taunting, grinning old wretch who stood there openly sneering at my despair. I said nothing, however, but blindly made my way to the hall. As I closed the outer door behind me, I heard Saphira Hook still laughing—her triumphant, metallic laugh—and I realized I was up against something appalling.

Where was Lillian? Where had she banished my darling?

More dead than alive, I got to my home. I went in and mechanically lighted the gas. On the floor of the hall lay a letter which my clerk had shoved under the door—his custom when the mail arrived after I had left my office. I picked it up, hoping it might be a note from Lillian. It was a letter in Frank Edwards's handwriting.

CHAPTER II.

A SCRAP OF PAPER.

I WENT on into my little den, and, lighting my study-lamp, sat down to read the letter. It ran:

DEAR JIM:

I have bought a house in the country, near Waretown. I want yours to be the first foot to cross the threshold. When will you come? It's a rambling old rookery on the banks of a small lake, and surrounded by woods—a most restful place. It's every bit of two hundred years old. There's a secret stairway, also sliding panels and ghosts, I'm told. However, the spooks have not troubled me, as I am still sleeping at a little inn about a mile away. There is a lot to be done and I would like your advice and assistance in putting the place in liveable shape.

You leave the train at Waretown and take a ramshackle country stage for five miles. Get off at the cross-roads where the pirates were hanged. The stage driver will know the place. In case I am not in the house look for the key on a little shelf over the right-hand hall window, and wait for me. I go there nearly every day at about four o'clock in the afternoon and potter about, looking over my possession, my home—how strange that sounds to a man who has never had a home. Write me when you will come.

As ever,
FRANK.

I sat dully regarding the letter. What on earth did it all mean? What portent was there in this apparently harmless in-

itation to visit my old friend's home? And as I pondered I became obsessed with the idea that I must accept Frank's invitation. Yes, I should go—and go at once, I decided.

I tried not to think of Lillian. I tried to be sensible and believe what Saphira Hook had told me—that she had sent the girl away on a business trip. Saphira Hook was eccentric to the *n*th degree. She hated me and had contrived the affair to torment me.

I would go and see Frank's home, and have two or three days with my old pal. That would while away the time until Lillian should return.

As I rose to go up to my room, a sudden peal of my bell startled me. I glanced at my watch. "Quarter to ten," I muttered; "rather late for callers." But at once I went to the hall door and opened it. Two men stood there.

"Good evening, Mr. Thorndyke," said one as he stepped in. I recognized him as Terry Dugan, a well-known detective, a likable, bright chap whom I had frequently employed on various cases.

"Why, hello, Terry!" I cried. "How are you?"

"Meet Mr. Tim Bolan, of the Boston police force, Mr. Thorndyke," he said, indicating his companion. "Mr. Bolan is here on business, and we want to consult you. We went to the office, but it was closed, so we took the liberty of coming to the house, as our errand is important."

"Come in, boys," I responded, leading the way to the library.

Bolan—a big, sturdy, red-faced fellow—sat down and plunged into his business.

"I'm tracking a very dangerous criminal," he said. "I have traced him to this town. But I'm just a little too late. He has made a getaway. Dugan and I searched the room where he has been hiding, and we found this." He extended a piece of paper. "Dugan said he knew you, and he thought we should see you, and possibly you could throw some light on the affair."

I took the paper from his big hand and glanced at it. To my utter amazement, I read: "James Thorndyke, Lawyer—Markham Building."

Just underneath was scrawled in fainter characters: "Lillian Boyninge."

I looked at the two detectives in absolute stupefaction. "I assure you, boys," I said, "I haven't the remotest idea what this means."

"No man giving the name of Joseph Foster has called on you at your office?" asked Bolan.

"No."

"About the young lady's name—you know her?"

"Miss Boyninge is my fiancée," I said. "She is the niece of Miss Saphira Hook—you know who she is, Terry."

"Yes," said Dugan, "an almighty rich old maid who lives on Beacon Hill. A queer old party, I'm told."

"Yes," I admitted, "she is very eccentric. But why under heavens the name of her niece, as well as mine, should be in this man's room is beyond me. I give it up."

"Perhaps we had better call on the young lady," said Bolan. "She may be able to throw some light on the subject."

"She is not here," I replied. "She has left town."

What was that quick look that darted between the two men? Was it alarm? Evidently they were greatly startled.

"When will she be back?" asked Dugan.

"I don't know," I replied.

Dugan hesitated a second: "When did she go?" he inquired.

"I don't know," I said.

"By George!" cried Bolan, smiting his knee with his big fist, "this is amazing. You expect to marry the young lady and don't know where she is! Didn't she tell you where she was going?"

His manner of repressed excitement alarmed me. "I didn't know she was going," I admitted.

Bolan leaped to his feet. "Mr. Thorn-dyke," he cried, "tell us everything. Don't keep back a detail. You can help us—yes—and more. You can protect Miss Boyninge."

"Protect her—from what?" I stammered. "What possible connection can there be between this trip of Miss Boyninge and the presence of a crook in this town?"

"This man Foster or Ferris or Farnham—he is known by all these names—is wanted in Boston for the brutal murder of a young girl. I hate to tell you this, but you should know it."

I sat as if turned to stone. Where was Lillian? Where had that wicked old woman sent her? Why was her name in the possession of this criminal? This man wanted for the murder of young girls? A dreadful mist swam before me, there was a roaring in my ears, I slumped in my chair.

I was conscious that Dugan was pouring something down my throat and adjuring me to "buck up." Gradually I pulled myself together and collected my scattered senses. In a few words I told them of my call at Miss Hook's house that evening, of her extraordinary manner and her reticence regarding Lillian. They listened with grave faces, saying little.

"I shall have a report at midnight from one of my men," said Bolan rising. "We found a time-table in Foster's room and I have several men following up clues. We will let you hear from us in the morning, Mr. Thorndyke."

I walked the floor all night, well-nigh bereft of reason. But when dawn came I made an effort to readjust myself. I had scarcely reached my office when Dugan came in, cool and smiling.

"Well, we've got our man," he announced. "We caught him at Newhall," mentioning a neighboring town. "So you don't have to worry about your sweetheart, Mr. Thorndyke. Bolan's gone on to get him."

Inexpressibly relieved, I put my affairs in order and made my arrangements to leave the office for a week. I felt sure that by that time Lillian would be back.

CHAPTER III.

IN THE FENNIMORE HOUSE.

FOLLOWING Frank's directions I left the train at Waretown and found the old country stage in waiting. The driver was the typical, garrulous country Jehu and entertained me with stories of rural life.

"I dunno," he remarked sagely, "what on airth your friend wanted that there old Fennimore place fer. It's a rotten old j'int—jest drappin' to pieces. Clean outen the way—ye'll hev to hoof it quite a piece.

"'Twas a grand place in its day, so I've hearn my grandfather tell. These Fennimores were big people. They come from off somewheres—England, I b'lieve. They built the house and entertained like royalty—had slaves and hosses and goin's on to beat the band.

"But they all come to grief. Fust old man Fennimore died mysteriously—no one ever knowed what killed him. His wife, old Madam Fennimore, had a lock put on his coffin, and she carried the key day and night, they said. Then her son's wife was burned to death—all dressed fer a ball one night and her dress ketched fire. Then old madam she fell in the lake and was drowned.

"The son shet up the house and went to parts unknown. Grandfather did hear he got married agin—but I dunno."

"I was to get off where the pirates were hanged," I interrupted. "How did that come about?"

"Wall, ye see," he drawled, "them pirates was ketched down on the coast 'bout thirty miles from here and lodged in the jail at Waretown and was hung in chains at this here cross-roads we're comin' to. They say they hung here for quite a spell—six months I b'lieve.

"Yonder's the place." He indicated the spot ahead. "Naow if your friend hain't to the house, you come back this way and take fust turn to the left and ye'll come to the inn where he's a-stayin'. Ef I see him I'll tell him you've come and gone over to the house."

I descended from the crazy vehicle and with a sinking heart watched him drive on. If Frank should not be there—but I would not let myself entertain that contingency. So I trudged ahead along the path.

It was a narrow lane, choked with weeds and small trees, muddy in places, in others stony and difficult of travel. "I am a fool!" I thought more than once as I forged through blackberry bushes and thistles toward a piece of frowning woods.

The dense grove of hemlocks and spruces was the one I had seen and through the thick, swaying branches I caught now and then a gleam of water. I was coming to the lake. At last I saw a clearing ahead, and hastened toward it.

At last I came out of the woods and stood looking across the water. There is was, an ancient, battered habitation with sunken steps and decaying columns, with rambling black wings on either side—like a gigantic bat.

Even the descending sun was shining on the windows that gave back the angry, hectic light as if within the ashes of this habitation still smoldered a wicked fire. An ominous emotion seized me as if a dead hand had clutched my throat.

How foolish I had been not to wire Frank I was coming! What if he were not there? But resolutely pulling myself together I went on. I whistled as I went, "to keep up my courage," I reminded myself. Of course Frank was around there somewhere, fussing about, planning changes. I should find him and we would have a good laugh at my expense.

"I will not be cowardly," I kept saying to myself. "Why should this old villain of a house make me nervous and fearful? Beside, I am not obliged to go inside." But I knew that I would enter. What should I see?

I found myself wiping big drops of perspiration from my face with a shaking hand.

"I am an ass!" I ruminated. "I should be ashamed of my childish fear. There is nothing—absolutely nothing in that ramshackle old joint that can possibly harm me."

Now I was before the house. I sent out a cheery whoop: "What ho! Frank! Hello, hello!" Only a mocking echo answered me. Frank was not there.

I circled the house. It was a huge building running back close up to a tangle of shrubs and young trees, briers and berry bushes. A very tangle in fact, continuing on to another gloomy piece of woods. The environment was forbidding and depressing to a degree. "If Frank had scoured New

England he could not have found a more undesirable place," I thought.

Returning to the front of the house I looked over the great columns of the portico, one of which had tumbled down. The hall door of noble proportions and carved panels boasted a fanlight above it and windows at either side. "It must be that the key is on that ledge," I considered. "I will just look and see."

I went up the rotting steps and reaching up to the ledge, found the key. Mechanically I took it down and quite as mechanically inserted it in the keyhole. It creaked, turned, and the door swung slowly open. I peered in.

The hall was quite dark and a musty odor greeted me—that gravelike scent which is always to be encountered in old houses long closed. I caught a glimpse of the huge carved rail of the winding stairway at the farther end.

I was at the foot of the stairs now. Should I go on? I was suddenly seized with the bluest of funks and was tempted to turn and flee. The appalling silence of the gruesome old place fell upon me like a funeral pall. But again that strange uncanny force propelled me on. I slowly mounted the stairs.

At the top of the flight I paused and listened. Not a sound broke the deathlike stillness save the raucous voices of crows calling from the black woods. The upper hall was broad and full of shadowy turns and corners into which I did not care to look.

Doors stood open on either side and through them I caught glimpses of ancient furniture and even of some portraits on the walls. But I had no desire to explore these.

Now I was standing before the closed door of a bed-room in which I had seen the monstrous vision. I laid one hand on the antique knob. Should I turn it? Once again I shuddered and longed to fly, but I could not—I must open that door.

Slowly and with dreadful forebodings, I turned the knob. The door opened.

It was very dark in the room. Only a faint gleam came in through the long-closed shutters. I was conscious of a vast mirror rising from floor to ceiling, of a huge

bed with curtains in a far corner. I saw tall brass candlesticks on a mantel.

A stealthy, horrible odor struck me like a blow in the face—an odor compounded of cloying sweetness and some smell, vile, loathsome, obscene. "God help me!" I gasped, "what is this?"

And then I remembered the prayer my dear girl had taught me. Circling the room I panted out:

"Praise be to God! He is God!

"All are His servants. All stand by His command."

And now a phenomenon occurred. The repugnant odor suddenly drifted through the open door into the upper hall. I instantly followed it, still murmuring my prayer. It fled, like a tangible thing before me, down the corridor and stairway, through the lower hall, out the door, across the portico, the swards toward the lake.

I pursued the flying scent to the very shore. The scarlet sun had dipped below the gloomy woods. The waters of the lake were turning from brown to an inky blackness. There was no breeze.

But as I stood steadfastly regarding the lake, the water heaved and bubbled as if from the plunge of a heavy body and the ripples rose and spread before me until they reached the farther shore!

CHAPTER IV.

FRANK EDWARDS.

I WAS conscious that I was half way through the woods. I had been running in a sort of panic—away from some malign, unknown force. One can combat physical terror, but when it comes to an unseen, satanic influence, the stoutest heart becomes like water.

I confess that I ran headlong from the black ripples of the lake disturbed by something intangible. In fact I sped like a veritable coward. But suddenly I paused. The remembrance came upon me like a shot that I had left the house unlocked—the hall door wide open. I realized I should go back, but I stubbornly refused.

"The door may stay open till judgment day," I decided, "before I'll go into that

devilish building alone." I resolutely went on in the direction of the narrow, bramble-choked lane.

Suddenly I gave a great start. Something crashed through the dense underbrush at my left. The noise augmented my agitation and I plunged rapidly ahead. I had not gone fifteen feet when I heard a second crashing as of some one rushing through the thickets.

"What in thunder—" I began, but stayed not on the order of going. My nerves were now as taut as violin strings. "Is the woods haunted as well as the lake and house?" I thought as I darted along.

I reached the lane in safety, relieved at being out of the dense forest, quite unbearable now in the fast-descending night. I tore along the path, pushing branches and briars cut of my face and crying out anathemas on the sharp stones. I came to a muddy place about four feet wide, which I distinctly remembered clearing at a leap, and paused suddenly in stupefaction. Some one had walked across it. For there were the distinct prints of feet on the moist surface. I bent and looked closer.

"More than one person has crossed this patch of mud since I passed," I thought as I noted the print of a man's foot, very long and slender, followed by a broad impression, with still another, not quite so broad but sturdy. "Three men have walked across this puddle, I thought. This accounts for the crashes I heard in the forest. Tramps, quite probably. And it is equally likely they will camp in that cursed old hag-ridden house. I hope they do and get as scared as I was."

With this spirit of brotherly love in my soul I hurried on until I reached the cross-roads. It occurred to me that in order to find the close of a perfect day I should most likely discover the pirates hanging there in chains. In my fervent fancy I could almost hear the creaking of their fetters. But after one fearsome look overhead I hastened on down a country road, a veritable boulevard, after the thoroughfare I had traveled.

I must have gone a quarter of a mile before I saw the lights of a farmhouse. They looked good to me. I had some thought of

calling and asking if I could get supper. But I concluded that by this time the voluble stage driver would have found Frank and have disclosed my arrival and doubtless he would be looking for me at the inn. So I trudged on, and after an hour's walk saw a tiny old-time inn by the side of the road and to my overwhelming joy, old Frank on the steps looking eagerly in my direction. When he saw me he let out a whoop and came tearing to meet me: "Is it really you, old scout?" he bawled.

"All that's left of me," I panted. "Your rascally old house has about finished me."

"Hear the blasphemer!" he laughed as he wrung my hand. "My wonderful old manor house to be traduced by a Philistine. Why man, it's a glorious old spot. Why didn't you wire? I should have met you at the cross-roads where they hung the pi—"

"For the love of Heaven let me forget pirates and other horrors," I begged. "Get me some place where I can have a good stiff drink and be quick about it. I've suffered enough on your account for a while."

"Why, Jim, what has happened?" he asked with genuine solicitude. "Didn't you have a pleasant walk?"

"Pleasant!" I jeered. "Oh, yes, lovely! Never in my life have I so enjoyed a ramble through the beautiful countryside."

By this time we were in the house and Frank rushed me to our rooms on the second floor. Hastily fetching out a bottle, he poured a glass of whisky and I downed it with gratitude. "What's the matter, Jim?" the dear chap asked with concern.

"Matter?" I replied. "Black horrors! Spooks and smells! Haunted houses, woods and waters! Death and damnation!" Whereupon I burst into yells of ribald laughter.

Frank rose and laid his hand on my forehead. "There, there," he soothed, "try to control yourself. You are wrought up. What is it? Have you had some unpleasant experience?"

"Unpleasant?" I shouted. "Oh, Lord, this is too much! Unpleasant? A plague o' your black house! By the way, I left your hall door open. I forgot to lock it."

"It's no matter," he replied. "But how did it happen?"

"I was running," I gasped amid my shouts of merriment, "and I couldn't stop."

"Running?"

"Yes, I've sprinted from your very doorstep. Frankie, me boy, I've made probably the quickest cross-country run on record. I'm tired, cross, torn by brambles, wet of feet, utterly unnerved and probably will not last through the night. On your head be my death!"

"What in thunder are you driving at?" he demanded.

Then I told him all I have set down here. Amazement and incredulity chased one another across my friend's mobile face. "By George," he exploded, "what a story!"

"Oh, damn you and your stories!" I cried. "That's all you think of. Here I am almost dead from nervous prostration—on the very verge of insanity—and all you can see in it is some blooming material for a yarn."

"Forgive me, old man," Frank murmured apologetically. "I really am awfully sorry and all that—"

"Yes, I observe that you are mourning," I replied somewhat bitterly.

"Oh, come now, Jim, don't get roily!" Frank cried. "I know you've had a bad time of it, and I'm deucedly sorry. But, oh, man—what a yarn! I can't help it."

"Now, you and I will ferret out this mystery. We'll drag the pond, if necessary, to see what evil-smelling monsters are lurking in its depths. As for the house, we'll go and stop there—"

"Not on your life!" I shouted. "I wouldn't live in your cursed old joint for a day."

"Hold on—gently," Frank laughed. "Don't abuse my property. We'll get a body-guard, and go there and picnic for a day or so, and see what happens. It's just possible that some one is playing tricks to make me give up the property."

"Well, but you've bought it," I answered.

"It seems," replied Frank a trifle sheepishly, "that there is some hitch over the title. I haven't been able yet to get it cleared up. I'll tell you how it is—"

"Oh, for Heaven's sake," I cried peevishly, "forget it! I'm in no condition to listen to the story of a title. Let's get something to eat, have a smoke, and go to bed. I'm all in."

Life looked brighter the next morning. A good night's sleep free from bad dreams had made a new man of me. I was ready, after a hearty breakfast, to fight dragons. So when Frank rehearsed his plan for our going over to the old house for two or three days, it did not seem so preposterous as it had the night before.

Frank informed me at breakfast that he had engaged a couple of husky fellows—hangers on at the inn doing odd jobs—to go over to the house with us, one of whom was to cook our meals. "We'll stay a week if necessary, and lay this ghost of a smell by the heels," he gaily cried. "And we'll look the house over room by room, and plan the improvements—and incidentally have the time of our lives."

So quite late that afternoon we went over. The men, Sile Douglass and Bill Hackney, had gone ahead with the provisions. "If you see any ghosts, boys," Frank said as they drove away in their wagon from the inn, "just hold them till we get there."

"Wall, by josh!" bellowed Sile, a broad grin on his freckled face, "I hain't afraid of no dern spook a goin'! 'Tain't likely, though, they'll begin the show so early. But if they do I'm a goin' to give 'em a right good, smart lively time, you kin bet."

It was nearly night when Frank and I walked around the arm of the lake and came up before the steps of the house which in the descending shadows took on a more desolate, ominous appearance than ever. It fairly frowned down upon us.

"It doesn't want us here, old scout," I said to my friend. "It seems to say: 'Go away. Don't come here prying into my mysteries, or it will be the worse for you.'"

"I say, Jim, you've got an imagination, after all," laughed Frank. "I thought that your old musty law books had killed it off long ago. Now, it's possible you imagined the odoriferous beast you chased."

I did not argue the point. I was wondering what adventures lay before us, and mechanically followed my friend as he entered the hall. Sile came forward to take our grips. "Well," cried Frank jovially, "seen anything yet, Sile?"

"Naw," he drawled, "I hain't seen nuthin', but I've heard suthin'."

"Heard? What have you heard?" demanded Frank.

"I was out to the back of the house a spell ago," went on Sile, "and I heard some one a goin' through that there thicket, crashin' along, bustin' twigs in his road. I hollers out: 'Who's there?' but nobody answered. There's somebuddy hangin' round here, Mr. Edwards. I'm dead sure of that."

"Let 'em hang!" retorted Frank. "Let 'em hang like the pirates in their chains—and be damned to 'em. Hurry up, Sile, and give us some supper. Come on upstairs, Jim, and pick out your sleeping room."

CHAPTER V.

A DREAM?

BILL HACKNEY was an old-fashioned country cook, and the supper he contrived that night was something phenomenal. On a crazy old stove he found in a shed adjoining the kitchen, he fried chicken, ham, and potatoes, and made delicious coffee. Frank and I supped royally, and after our meal was finished we went out on a rickety porch at the side of the house to smoke.

There were two old settles facing each other on this porch. Frank took one, and I sprawled on the other. It was a warm summer night, with no breeze stirring. The silence was oppressive. We could occasionally hear Bill and Sile arguing out in the shed as they washed up their supper dishes. Aside from that, not a sound broke the silence of the night.

"What do you fancy Sile heard in the thicket out there?" Somewhat vaguely I indicated the rear of the house.

"Oh, it might have been an animal of some sort," Frank responded indifferently. "Or possibly tramps. Couldn't very well

have been ghosts," he whimsically added. "Ghosts don't make a noise, you know—only a smell."

"I don't like this place," I said suddenly. "It's got on my nerves. It's too quiet. This silence is maddening. Do you actually purpose to live here, Frank?"

"Well," he drawled lazily, "if I can get a clear title to the place I shall stay here summers. It's an ideal spot for my work—'far from the madding crowd,' and all that sort of thing. No neighbors to bother one."

"I shall make a lot of repairs and improvements. I mean to go in for raising roses. I've always wanted a rose garden with a pergola covered with the luscious beauties. I'll have other flowers and a fountain and a sun dial, if only old Saphira Hook gives a clear title."

"Saphira Hook!" I echoed the name in stupefaction.

"Yes, she's a rich old woman in your town. Didn't you ever hear of her?"

I managed by a mighty effort to control my amazement. "Oh, yes," I returned as indifferently as possible. "Is it possible that she owns this property?"

"Yes, and a deuce of a time have I had with her," responded Frank. "I had actually put a big part of the purchase money into the hands of the agent at Waretown, when he got a letter from the old woman telling him to hold up the sale—that she might not be able to conclude the bargain. She had lost certain papers, it seems. She wrote she would send a representative to see me, but so far no one has appeared."

I did not reply, so stunned was I at this unexpected development. All sorts of fancies rioted like mad through my brain. I sat mentally debating the matter, and just then Bill and Sile came round the corner of the wing and stood awkwardly on the steps of the porch. "I was thinkin'," began Sile, "that I'd git up early to-morrer morning and ketch some fish for your breakfast."

"Oh, Lord, no!" I burst forth. "I—I—don't like fish, Sile," I concluded lamely.

"Oh, wall, thet's all right," broke in Bill. "I got bacon and aigs aplenty."

"Bacon and eggs, boys, will be a little

bit of all right." Frank's voice had a tinge of repressed merriment. "Never mind about any fish."

"Wall, I guess we'll hit the hay," said Sile. "I'm gol darned tired. Come on, Bill."

We heard them clattering up a back stairway to their rooms. For a time the rumble of their voices sounded overhead, and later the soft air was rent with terrific sounds which proved amply that the two men were dead to the world.

Frank and I finished our pipes and finally went indoors. We passed through a long dismal passage and reached the dining-room, where a lamp was burning. Our places were laid for breakfast, and the room looked fairly cheerful. "Shall we have a game of cards before we turn in?" asked Frank.

"No," I replied, "I believe not. I'm awfully sleepy."

"So am I. I was hoping you would refuse. All right. You go ahead to the stairs, and I'll put out the light." I obeyed.

I had reached the stairs when he extinguished the lamp. I was plunged into black velvet darkness. Grasping the rail, I went slowly up. I had nearly reached the top of the stairs when something brushed softly by me. There was no sound. Only I knew that some one had passed me.

"Frank!" I shouted. "Strike a light, quick! There's some one here!"

It took Frank about three minutes to find his match-safe and get a light. The match, flaming up, showed only the stairway. There was no one there. "I swear, Frank," I cried, "that some one or something went by me."

"Oh, you've got 'em again," jeered Frank.

I said nothing in reply to Frank's bantering, but told him to go ahead and light the way. He struck match after match until we reached our rooms.

We had selected two adjoining rooms on the side of the house nearest the lake. They were furnished with old-time grandeur—vast four-post bedsteads hung with tattered curtains. Ancient tables and chairs stood about the rooms in stiff, precise array. The

ceilings were lofty, the windows huge. In each room yawned a black fireplace.

They were not especially inviting quarters. A feeling of depression seized me as I noted the gloomy appointments. Why had we come to this sinister old spot? Why had we not stayed at the cheerful little inn? "Frank's love for atmosphere is the limit," I thought as I took off my garments and prepared to sleep in the great catafalque in the far shadowy corner.

There was a door between our rooms which we left open. For a time we called back and forth, until Frank's heavy breathing told me he was asleep.

I lay for a time thinking of the strange coincidence of this house's being a possession of Saphira Hook. I thought of my darling girl. I prayed for her safety. I could see her sweet, wistful face smiling tenderly on me. But between her and me drifted Saphira's wicked old visage—the wagging jaw, the horrid, malevolent grin.

"What a damnable old woman she is!" I thought. "Was there ever another like her?" At last I fell asleep.

I was standing in the outer hall. A pale light shone up from the lower floor. I stood uncertainly—not knowing what to do. Suddenly I heard a voice—a hollow, awful voice. It cried, "Bring me a light!" imperiously, arrogantly.

And I knew that the voice came from the room with the closed door!

I shook as with an ague. I wanted to run from that voice. But I could not move.

Suddenly a light came slowly up the staircase. I saw an elderly colored woman—her head tied up in a bandanna handkerchief, and with brass hoops in her ears, carrying a tall silver candlestick in her hand. She came on up the stairs through the hall, passing close by me.

I thought she would see me standing there in my pajamas. But she appeared not to notice me. She went on down the hall and turned. And then once more I heard that haughty voice.

"Will you ever bring me a light?" it demanded.

Now I knew I must follow the servant

with the light. I stole on tiptoe down the hall and, turning down the passage, saw that the door to the closed room was open. A light streamed out.

I went on and peered into the room. I saw standing before the vast mirror, which reached from ceiling to floor, an exquisite young girl clad in a filmy, fluffy white tarleton frock. It was made with quantities of frills and flounces and adorned with garlands of white roses and green leaves.

She was a vision of beauty, the joyous embodiment of youth, as she regarded herself in the mirror. And now I noted a sweet, heavy, cloying perfume stealing out of the room—I recognized it. It was like attar of rose, I thought.

The girl turned her head slightly as I looked—and I saw the face of Lillian Boyning! I tried to speak—to call—but could utter no sound.

The servant had handed the lighted candle to a woman who stood behind the girl. She held it on high that the girl might see herself the better in the mirror. I looked steadily at this woman.

She was an arrogant, erect figure, dressed in the costume of two centuries ago. I particularly noted the stiff silk brocade of her gown, the deep frills of lace falling back from the white hand upholding the candlestick and glittering with superb rings. Her hair was powdered and drawn up in a tower on her proud head. She impressed me with her queenly air—her dominating presence.

Suddenly she, too, moved a little, and then, to my astonishment, I saw the face of Saphira Hook—younger, with a cold, inflexible beauty, but with the same malign eyes and sinister, wicked smile.

The negro woman who had fetched the candle was arrogantly dismissed by her mistress and stole past me again in the hall. Once more I marveled that she did not see me as I stood there peering in the room. But she glided noiselessly by and vanished in the shadows.

Presently as I looked within the chamber I saw the older woman caress the girl, as if admiring her beauty. She stroked the golden hair and patted her sweet cheek with seeming affection, smiling approvingly.

Suddenly she stooped as if to arrange a flower in the flounce of the girl's frock, and, to my horror, I saw her deliberately set fire to the flimsy material with her lighted candle.

The skirt was ablaze in an instant, the flames darting up around the white arms and neck. With heartrending screams, the girl rushed out of the room and down the hall. The woman ran after her, still holding the lighted candle, whose glimmer showed me clearly the dreadful, triumphant smile on her satanic face. As I turned and followed the two, I caught the same terrible odor I had sensed when I first entered the house—and *I knew it now for the smell of burning human flesh.*

I shouted curses—I plunged after them. They paid no heed. Down the great stairway I hurled myself, following them through the lower hall, out of the door across the grounds toward the lake. The girl was a living torch now. She reached the bank and fell prone, a blackened, inert mass.

The woman was running so fast behind her that she could not check herself. She stumbled over the dead girl, and with one unearthly shriek plunged down into the black waters of the lake.

I heard the ripples of the waves as they spread to the farther shore. Then I knew no more.

CHAPTER VI.

MYSTERIOUS VISITORS.

"JIM, Jim!" I heard Frank's voice coming, as it were, from a long distance. "Wake up, old man, wake up." Then I felt hands shaking me with gentle persistence.

Languidly I opened my eyes and gazed up into my friend's face. He was bending over me, and just back of him stood Sile and Bill with grave, anxious faces. I glanced about me. I was in my own room lying on my bed. The daylight was streaming in at the windows.

"How did I get back here?" I asked. "I was down at the lake—" The horror of it all rushed over me afresh. I rose on one

elbow. "The girl—the girl!" I panted. "Who was burned alive! And that devil of a woman who deliberately set her afire! Did you find them?"

I saw Sile and Bill exchange furtive glances. Frank regarded me strangely.

"Jim," he said gently, "don't talk until Bill has fetched you some coffee. Then you shall tell us all."

Bill presently appeared with deliciously strong coffee, which at once cleared my hazy brain. As I finished the last drop of my second cup I asked:

"How did I get back from the lake, Frank?"

"Jim, old chap, Sile found you this morning at five o'clock, lying on the portico—"

"The portico!" I echoed wonderingly. "But I tell you I was down at the shore of the lake. I ran after them—the girl ablaze—the murderess behind her."

"Yes, yes," he soothed; "that's all right. But we didn't find you there. You were lying on the floor of the portico as if some one had deposited you there carefully. You see, you walked in your sleep, old man. The night was hot, and you doubtless got up and went down to get a breath of fresh air and lay down on the portico. Don't you see?" His tone was one he might have employed to a peevish baby.

"See here, Frank Edwards," I said wrathfully, "I never walked in my sleep in my life—I followed those two down-stairs. I saw the whole affair. I chased them to the lake, I tell you. The girl fell, a mass of flame. The woman stumbled over the body and went headlong into the water."

Again Sile gave Bill that quick, sharp look and nodded his red head assentingly. Then he spoke.

"Mr. Edwards," he drawled, "suppose you let him tell his story right through, without any of us interrupting him."

"All right," agreed Frank, sitting by the bedside. "Fire away, Jim, and get it out of your system."

Thus adjured, I told the three men all I had seen from the moment I had heard the terrible voice call for a light, through the train of ghastly events, until I lost consciousness. Not one of the trio jeered at

my recital, but listened with sober faces. "But I don't know how I got back to the house," I finished. "That I can't understand."

"Mr. Thorndyke," said Sile, as I ended my narrative, "there hain't a mite of doubt in my mind but that you see this. And I believe the Lord in His wisdom has revealed this to you for some good purpose."

"I've heard my grandfather tell of old Madam Fennimore. She was jest as you've described this woman you saw. Her daughter-in-law was burned to death in her ball dress. She did run out of the house and try to git to the lake to quench the flames."

"Old madam ran after her—the story was—to try to help put out the fire. She did stumble over the girl's body and fell in the lake. Mebbe the truth has been shown Mr. Thorndyke in this here vision."

Bill Hackney corroborated Sile's statement. It was a legend that had been handed down for two generations. "I allus heerd tell that old madam didn't like her daughter-in-law; but no one ever dreamed she killed her," he added.

After the men had left us Frank sat in a brown study for a few moments. "I say, Jim," he at last blurted out, "if I were in your place I'd hang out my sign as a clairvoyant and medium. You would make more money at it than at the law. It surely beats anything I ever heard of."

"There is one phase I can't understand," I replied. "That is, who got me back from the lake to the portico? I distinctly remember running to the bank. I saw the dead girl—I saw the woman tumble over her and plunge headlong into the lake—and I heard the splash and ripple of the waves. After that I remember nothing."

"You may have walked back to the house," suggested Frank, "don't you think?"

"It's possible, but not probable," I replied. "The horror I had witnessed overcame me. I recall falling—it seemed a long way. Frank," I added earnestly, "who or what passed us on the stairs last night?"

"God only knows," he said seriously. "Honestly, I am coming to believe the

place is infested by spooks. I'm going right now"—he rose as he spoke—"to that infernal room and look around a bit."

"Wait," I said, getting up from the bed, "I'll go with you."

"Do you feel strong enough?" he anxiously asked.

"Oh, I'm fit as a fiddle now," I replied.

"Come on. I'm curious to see if there are any daylight ghosts."

The door to the hitherto closed room was open!

"Look," I said to my friend; "that door has been shut every time I have been here. Madam Fennimore did not stop to close it behind her last night."

We went boldly in and surveyed the haunted chamber in the dim light. We gradually made out objects here and there—the huge carved bed, with its brocade hangings, the mirror, the footstools and chairs of antique pattern, the mantel on which stood two tall candlesticks. I took one down and examined it.

"Is that the one she carried?" Frank asked in a subdued voice.

"No," I said; "this is brass. The one the old negro servant brought up the stairs was silver. I believe it was one of those in the dining-room."

The room was in perfect order, nothing being out of place. We were about to go, when some instinct directed me to open the tattered silk hangings of the great bed. As I drew them apart I started back in surprise. "By George!" I burst out.

"What is it?" demanded Frank, hurrying to my side.

"Look, Frank!" I cried in great excitement. "Look! Some one has been lying here."

It was manifest enough that the bed had been occupied. The silk coverlet was disarranged and the pillows plainly showed the hollow caused by a head.

"Well, what the devil do you know about that?" Frank demanded, his eyes popping from his head. "Who has been here?"

"The person who passed us on the stairs last night," I answered. "Perhaps he has been here for some time. You see, I left the hall door open when I ran for my life the other day, and I told you of the foot-

prints in the mud in the lane. Some one of those three tramps has been enjoying this room. I wonder if he saw any spirits?"

"I swear this beats the Dutch!" ejaculated Frank. Mechanically he lifted one of the pillows. As he did so I caught sight of something tucked under the other pillow. I quickly turned it over, revealing to our astonished gaze a packet of papers. Frank seized them, and we hastened to the window, for a few rays of light straggled through the closed outer shutters.

"See what these are!" Frank said. He was trembling with excitement as he extended them to me.

"They are documents—of a legal nature, evidently," I replied. "The light is too faint here. Let us take them to my room."

Going back to our rooms, we inspected them. On paper yellow with age and endorsed in old-fashioned script, we caught the names of Cynthia Fennimore and Saphira Hook!

"These are undoubtedly the missing papers," I said, "which will establish a clear title to the property. I wish you joy of your possession, Frank."

"But," he stammered, scarcely able to take in my words, "what—what were they doing here? Who put them under the pillow on that bed?"

"Ah, there you have me," I answered. "They may have been secreted there for years. Who knows? Some one has lain there recently. Do you suppose"—I was suddenly struck with an idea—"that either Sile or Bill, being worn out with his exertions yesterday, could have lain down there for a nap?"

"By George, you've hit it!" Frank exploded. "Of course, I'll call 'em up." He hastened to a rear stairway and shouted to the men: "Come up quick. I want you at once."

They came running, thinking that I might be ill. Briefly Frank stated the situation.

"I hain't be'n in there," said Sile. "I wuz too busy unloadin' the pervisions to be snoopin' around."

"Nor me," joined in Bill. "We wa'n't in this part of the house at all."

Frank raised his eyebrows at me in comic

dismay. The men were perfectly honest in their denials. Any one could see that. "Then," I said, "some one else has been in the house and enjoyed a rest."

"Well," said Sile, a twinkle in his eyes, "that there room hain't the only place he's visited. Is it, Bill?"

"Naw," said Bill disgustedly. "I set away my dish of cold chicken in the kitchen pantry last night, intendin' to serve it for your lunch to-day, and derned if the hull fowl hain't gone and bread and butter and a quart of milk besides—dog-gone it."

Frank and I laughed. "Well, boys," he said, "never mind about the food, there's more to be got. But who in thunder is prowling about here? That's what I want to know."

"I believe," Sile drawled, "that whoever it is, is hidin' over in them woods back of the house. I surmise 'twas him I heard a rippin' through the bushes yisterday. I'm a goin' over there to investigate. And if I git my hands on him I'll bust his spine, so help me Jiminy Christmas! I'll learn him to come snoopin' round any diggin's where I work."

And breathing threatenings and slaughter, Sile returned to the kitchen, followed by Bill. Left alone, Frank and I stared blankly at each other.

"Well, who do you think it was?" we asked each other simultaneously.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SHOT.

NOTHING further occurred to upset the household during the forenoon.

Sile went on a personally conducted tour of investigation through a portion of the woods back of the house, but reported no traces of invaders.

"It's as much as your life is wuth," he stated on returning, "to try to scramble through them derned slashings. Jes' look at my face." His face and hands were terribly torn by the briars. "Them ghosts kin hide there all they goldern please," he announced, "fer all of me—drat 'em!"

Frank was busy all day making plans for his rose gardens. Now that the missing

papers had come to light, he was keen to go ahead and map out improvements.

"I can't see," he said at luncheon, "why Saphira's representative does not show up. Now, it's possible he may be in Ware-town. I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll go down to the crossroads and ride in on the stage. I'll be back late this afternoon. Will you go with me, Jim?"

"No," I replied slowly. "I'm not feeling quite as fit as I might. I believe I'll stay here."

"All right," Frank replied cheerily. "Sile and Bill will be here, so the bugaboos won't get you. I'll fetch back a lot of stuff, and one of the boys had better meet me down at the crossroads."

The old house grew strangely quiet after Frank's departure. I watched him disappear in the woods with a vague sinking of my heart. Almost I wished I had gone with him.

"I'm getting to be a regular baby," I thought disgustedly. "I think I'll cut the whole thing and go back to my office tomorrow. I wonder if Lillian will have returned?"

I fell to musing on my sweet girl and longing to see her. How dear, how dainty, how wonderful she was! How was it possible that she could be related to such an old she-dragon as Saphira Hook? And again the question pounded through my consciousness: "Where is she?"

I grew so nervous and restless I decided to take a walk. I determined to do a little exploring for myself.

Getting a stout stick of Frank's, I set out to explore the woods at the rear of the house. Sile bawled a parting injunction from the shed as I passed.

"Look out for them spooks!" he yelled. "And don't git lost. We're a goin' to have fried pork, cream gravy, and baked pertaters for supper, and Bill's a throwin' out hints now and then of a strawberry shortcake if he kin make this derned old oven draw."

"All right, Sile, I'll be on hand. I sha'n't be gone long," I answered.

Tangles of vines tripped me, and briars whipped my face. Nevertheless, I pushed on until I reached the woods. It was a

forest of pines, and the ground was carpeted with moss and needles. Here and there were ledges of outcropping rocks showing a black surface.

The air was fresh and deliciously scented, and I found my drooping spirits reviving. I strolled on and on, heedless of where I was going until suddenly I stopped. "Here," I reasoned, "I'd better look out, or I shall lose myself."

I stood uncertainly gazing this way and that. "Had I come from that direction?" I asked myself. The trees were all alike, and there was no sign of a path. "Well, I am an ass!" I reflected. "Which way shall I go?"

I shut my eyes, turned round, and struck off haphazard—a trick I had learned as a boy. But as I went on I saw I was not coming any nearer the house. Therefore I reversed my steps.

Suddenly I saw ahead of me a tiny shack, built in roughest possible fashion. It was only a shed with a door and window. But it was something. Possibly there might be some one there. I approached and knocked. There was no response. I gently tried the door. It opened and I looked in.

It was the most primitive dwelling imaginable. There was no furniture save a rickety old table and two or three wooden stools. But on the table lay something that made my eyes nearly pop out of my head. It was a big automatic, and as I bent in astonishment to examine it, I saw through the gloom a pile of chicken bones, some crusts of bread and an empty milk-bottle!

"Aha!" I said, "here is the robbers' cave. This is where Bill's missing food went."

The automatic looked ugly. I decided to leave it alone and get back to the house as quickly as I could. I closed the door carefully behind me and went on. But I had a curious sensation as if some one were watching me from the bushes thereabout. I stared around with an air of indifference which I was far from feeling. In any one of the thickets about me, I reflected, some one might be lurking with the mate to that big automatic. I quickened my step perceptibly.

Presently I heard a halloo in the dis-

tance and ran toward it with an answering whoop. To my great relief I soon saw Sile coming toward me. "Ye wuz gone so long, and I got kinda scairt," he bellowed. "Thot mebbe you'd fainted away or suthin'."

"No, I'm all right," I answered. "Only I got lost and had some little trouble in finding my bearings." I had quickly decided I would say nothing to the men of my discovery until I had talked to Frank.

"Bill's gone down to the cross roads," Sile announced as we walked along, "to wait for the stage."

"So the house is alone?" I asked carelessly.

"Yes," Sile said, "I locked the front door but left the back and side ones unlocked. You see I thought I'd find you sooner and I've put in quite a spell huntin' fer you."

I looked at my watch. To my great amazement I had been in the woods over two hours. "Upon my word!" I ejaculated. "I never dreamed it was so late." As we passed a ledge of rocks I mechanically picked up a specimen of black heavy substance. "I wonder what this is?" I said turning it over in my hand and indifferently dropped it in the pocket of my coat.

We fought our way through the tangle at the rear of the house and finally reached the kitchen door. I passed through the long corridor that led to the dining-room, thence to the hall and went on up to my room.

Going in I threw myself on my bed and wearied from my long tramp fell at once into a heavy sleep.

I was aroused by stealthy footsteps in the upper hall. I paid no heed at first, thinking it was Frank who had returned and who was going softly to his room so as not to disturb me. I was drowsy from my nap and did not wish to move, but lazily called out: "Hello! That you Frank?"

There was no reply. The catlike tread in the hall abruptly ceased. I lay listening for its renewal, but, hearing nothing, I finally got up and opening my door, peered out. There was no one there! I went into Frank's room but there was no sign of his return.

"Now who in the devil was that?" I asked myself. "This old ranch is full of inexplicable noises. I never thought I should come to believe in ghosts but upon my word this is getting to be more than funny."

It was now nearly six o'clock and I suddenly decided I would go below and sit with Sile until Frank should come. "He must be here soon," I thought. "He's late now."

I adjusted myself and hastily descended. The house was infernally quiet—so much so it got on my nerves. I hastened through the rooms to the kitchen and out to the shed where I thought I should find Sile. But to my stupefaction he was not there.

"Could it have been Sile whom I heard up-stairs?" was my first thought; the next, "Why no, he would have answered when I called out." I turned and walked slowly around the side of the building. For some reason I did not relish the idea of going back in the house.

The sun was down behind the woods now and the waters of the lake were growing black and sinister. I repressed a shudder as I glanced at the place where I had seen the fearful tragedy of the night before. Turning I looked back at the uncanny old dwelling, the repository of so many gruesome secrets.

Who was in there—perhaps peering at me now from behind the shuttered windows? It was not a pleasant thought.

I was impatient. Where was Sile? What on earth had taken him away? And why did not Frank and Bill come? I had scarcely formulated these questions in my mind when looking across the lake to my amazement I saw three men emerge from the woods, two of whom were supporting the third who seemed to stagger as he walked.

In an instant I saw that Bill and Sile were holding up Frank between them. I tore forward to meet them. As I approached I saw to my horror that Frank's arm was covered with blood. "What has happened?" I shouted.

"Mr. Edwards has met with an accident," Bill replied. "Leastwise, we hope it was an accident—he's been shot."

"Shot!" I echoed.

"Yes, over in the lane."

"By whom?"

"That we don't know, sir."

I helped them get Frank to the house and up to his room. We cut away his clothing and Sile, with the greatest tenderness and cleverness, washed and bandaged the wounded arm. I poured whisky down Frank's throat and Bill hastened to prepare some food. At last we had the sufferer as comfortable as possible under the conditions.

"And now, Sile, tell me, how did you know what had happened?" I demanded.

"'Twas this way," he said. "I kept a wonderin' why on airth they didn't come. At last I went over to the woods, thinkin' they might need a hand to fetch along suthin'. I hed jes' got a piece along when I heerd a shot. I ran toward the lane. I didn't know what was happenin'."

"When I got to the lane here comes Bill a tearin' along lookin' wildlike. 'Come quick!' he yells, 'Mr. Edwards is hurt.'"

"I come along with him and there he lay in a heap where he'd fallen. We got him up and Bill took one side and I the other and some way we stumbled along. I was mighty glad when I see you a comin'. I was afraid mebbe suthin' hed happened to you too, Mr. Thorndyke."

"I don't like the looks of things here one mite. And I think the sooner we git out of this gol-derned house the better fer all of us."

"I quite agree with you, Sile," I responded thoughtfully.

"This place is cussed—that's what it is --cussed," said Sile energetically. "Mr. Edwards had orter give up a buyin' sech a derned old rascal of a house. No good's goin' to come to him here, you kin bet on that."

"Now, who would shoot Mr. Edwards?" I mused aloud. "Who has a grudge against so lovable a chap?"

"Mebbe that old she-devil Madam Fennimore don't want him here," suggested Sile with a twinkle in his eye.

"Ghosts don't use fire-arms, Sile," I replied. "I wonder now—"

I paused. I had suddenly remembered

the big automatic in the lonely hut in the woods.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE REAL HEIRESS.

NO one slept that night save Frank, who dozed intermittently. Sile, I soon discovered, was a perfect nurse, as tender and faithful as a woman.

"It's only a flesh-wound," he told me, "and if no fever sets in he will be all right in a few days. To-morrow I'll go to Ware-town after a doctor. Jest think of it—here in this Gawd-forsaken spot without even a telefoam—drat it!"

Bill and I sat in my room, reading or playing cards through the night. Sile occasionally came in from Frank's room and looked over our shoulders for a space, but the slightest stir or moan from the patient took him back at once to Frank.

It was well along toward morning—between two and three o'clock perhaps—that Sile appeared in the doorway and beckoned to me mysteriously. Laying down my draw-poker hand, I arose and followed him into Frank's room:

"Is Mr. Edwards worse?" I anxiously asked.

"No, sir," whispered Sile, "he's asleep—in' like a baby. But I want you to go and peek out that further winder. Be careful not to show yourself. Jes' lift a corner of the curtain and look out for a second."

Quite mystified at Sile's mysterious air, I stole to the window he indicated and cautiously drawing the heavy damask drapery aside, peered out. The moon was in its last quarter and nearly down, casting a pale, ghostly light over the tangled thickets surrounding the house. In the near distance gleamed the waters of the lake—ominous, black, menacing.

These were all I saw at first. Then in the dim, eery light I made out the figures of two men under a tree about twenty feet from the house. They easily could have been mistaken for tree trunks, so rigidly they stood. And while I stared in stupefaction at them, I saw another man creeping slowly toward them from the rear of

the house. He was bent so low that he seemed to be crawling on all fours. "What is he up to?" I asked myself as I watched him glide stealthily like a wild thing through the junglelike shrubbery. There was something deucedly uncanny about his cautious, stalking progress.

Did he mean to join the two under the big oak? Or was he spying on them?

About this time I saw still another man who came from the front of the house. He swaggered boldly across the patch of fading moonlight and joined the two who were evidently awaiting him. And something familiar about the man's carriage struck me forcibly.

"Who the devil is that?" I asked myself. "I seem to know that swagger. Where have I seen a man walk like that?"

The three men conversed together a moment, then withdrew slowly into the jungle. I soon lost the outlines of their forms. Now I thought of the fourth man. Where was he? I strained my eyes in the direction in which he had gone, but could see nothing. No tremor of the bushes gave the slightest intimation of his whereabouts.

I stood for at least ten minutes waiting developments. But nothing happened. The three men did not reappear nor did the fourth man show himself again.

"Well, Mr. Thorndyke, what do you make of them two fellers?" asked Sile as I tiptoed back across the room.

"Two men!" I echoed. "Why Sile, there were four." I then told him of the stalking, stealthy figure and of the swash-buckler who had strode so defiantly across the patch of moonlight into the shadows under the tree.

Sile pursed his big mouth: "By the great horn spoon!" he mused. "Four on 'em! Man to man ef it comes to a rough-house—heh? And Mr. Edwards knocked out besides. However, we're in and they're out and, by gum, we'll keep 'em out."

"What in Sam Hill are they up to? Tryin' to scare you away I believe. I can't make nuthin' else of it. Can you?"

"I'm sure, Sile," I returned, "that I'm completely in the dark. The whole affair is absolutely inexplicable. But I'm convinced that the sooner we all get away from

here the better it will be for our healths. We'll get a physician in the morning and if Mr. Edwards can be moved over to the inn, we'll quit for good and all."

"That's very proper, Mr. Thorndyke," replied Sile. "'Tain't no use of stayin' here to be murdered. When I go fer the doctor I'm agoin' to git my shotgun, by heck, and bring it along with me. I swan, I'd like to pepper them misacrents."

We were all relieved when the gray dawn came drifting into the room. At five o'clock Bill and Sile stole down a rear stairway to make coffee. I sat alone by Frank's bedside, watching him as from time to time he tossed uneasily. He appeared feverish.

Presently I heard the faintest of rustles in the outer hall. At first I paid no attention, thinking that Bill was coming with coffee and moving quietly so as not to waken Frank. But the soft swish went past the door and down toward the haunted chamber.

I sprang up, and rushing through my room to the door, opened it and looked out. The hall was still very dark as all the windows were heavily draped, but I saw something shadowy at the far end—something which instantly vanished. I was conscious of a cold, clammy breath of air in the hall.

My hair literally rose on my head and my flesh crept. I felt that a spirit had passed—possibly the shade of the unhappy, young creature I had seen in my fearful dream. I shut my door and went back to my friend's bedside. I shook as with an ague and the moisture stood in big drops on my face.

"What a donkey I am!" I ejaculated. But I could not recover my poise. Again I felt that chilling draft of air and saw the dim shadow as it vanished seemingly into thin air.

I now heard Bill stumping along the hall and was mighty glad to know that he was approaching. He brought in a steaming pot of coffee and poured me a cup. As he fetched it to me he muttered: "Wall, they cleaned us out agin last night. That ham I biled in the evenin's gone."

"Gone?" I blankly repeated.

"Yep—the hull gol-derned ham has

went," he said. "And cans of sardines and cheese—by jinks, wisht I had my gun here. I'd sweep them woods before I eat. But they've left the bacon," he added, "and the aigs—so you won't starve. Guess they ain't got their cookin' stove along with 'em as they only pinch cooked vittles."

As soon as breakfast was served Sile set out for Waretown to fetch a physician. Frank seemed worse, moaning and tossing with the pain of his wounded arm. At last he dozed off into a fitful slumber. I went into my room and sat down by the table.

"Good Lord!" I groaned disgustedly, "if I only had a morning paper! To sit doing nothing—only to make a vain attempt to puzzle out this unpleasant affair. It's enough to drive one nutty." Suddenly I thought of the packet of papers we had discovered in the bed of the haunted chamber. "By George!" I ruminated, "this is the time to go over them carefully."

I arose and going to my grip, opened it and brought out the packet. Then re-seating myself, I examined the papers one by one. There was the original grant to Dame Cynthia Fennimore, for services rendered the crown by her husband, and a copy of that lady's will in which it was shown that the entailed estate was to descend to her son Hugh and his eldest child.

There was a marriage notice clipped from an English newspaper, of the wedding of Lady Alicia Maud Geraldine Hook to Hugh Mortimore Fennimore. The notice stated that the bridegroom, for family reasons, had dropped his name and taken that of Lady Hook, who was his second wife. There also was a passing reference to the tragic death of his first wife and his mother in America.

"So the son went to England after that awful affair and married again," I mused. "H-m—let's see about this," I went on. I found certificates of the birth of two daughters to Hugh and Lady Hook—Salina Lillian and Saphira Maud. Another time-yellowed clipping described the wedding of Lady Salina Lillian Hook to the Honorable Arthur Dallas Bury Boyninge of Bury St. Athel. Next came a certificate of the birth of a daughter—Lillian Maud to the Honorable and Lady Boyninge.

I straightened up and drew a long breath.

"By Jove!" I said, "Saphira Hook is not the owner of this property, but Lillian Boyning is."

I fell into a brown study. This then, was undoubtedly the reason why Saphira Hook had not been able to furnish clear title. The property was entailed, coming down in straight line to my dear girl.

That was self-evident. And doubtless Saphira Hook had kept this fact from Lillian and with the theory that possession is nine points of the law, had simply assumed control of the property. But what puzzled me was why she had been at first perfectly willing to sell to Frank Edwards and then suddenly begun to hem and haw over the proposition?

What had caused her to change her mind? Did she know of the existence of these papers in the old manor house? Had she sent some one to find them? Was one of the men I had seen the night before her representative? If so, which one? The skulking figure? Or the man who swaggered so jauntily across the patch of moonlight?

And why this murderous attack on Frank? To frighten him away, without doubt. "For some reason that old wretch wants him to get out and has timed these things to scare him off. By George, he doesn't go now. I've got the whip hand of Saphira Hook at last, and I'll keep it," I muttered somewhat savagely.

I locked the papers in my bag and placed it under my bed. A thought suddenly struck me. "Perhaps the chap that was searching for these papers got tired and lay down for a snooze right on top of them. Gad! That's a joke!" I chuckled to myself.

I sat by the window smoking furiously, and reflecting deeply, until to my great joy I saw Sile emerge from the woods and with him a man carrying a physician's bag.

CHAPTER IX.

FOOTSTEPS.

DR. BLISS proved himself a skilful surgeon. Within an hour he had dressed the wound, commending Sile for the first aid he had given, had given Frank a heart stimulant and finally an opiate.

The sufferer was resting quietly when the physician at last emerged from the room: "What happened?" he asked tersely.

"Didn't Sile give you the details?" I inquired.

"Yes, but I want to hear your version," he replied. "I am the medical examiner at Waretown and must make my official report."

Whereupon I stated what I knew, also telling him of the lonely shack in the woods and the automatic I had seen there. He listened gravely.

"This place has had a bad reputation for years," he said as I finished my recital. "Many people believe it haunted. It is such an out-of-the-way spot. Almost inaccessible, as you know. I had to leave my car at the cross-roads and hoof it through that choked-up lane.

"It's an ideal place for a crime. But why should this young man have been selected? He is a stranger in these parts—a well-known writer, I understand. Can he have been followed here by persons who had some quarrel with him?"

"I don't believe Dr. Bliss," I replied, "that Frank Edwards ever quarreled with any one in his life. There never was a more sweet-natured, likable chap in the world."

"Strange," mused the physician, pulling thoughtfully at his beard. "He has bought this place, his man was telling me."

"Yes," I said. "He's simply nutty over this abominable old rookery. And I'm not sure, Dr. Bliss, that the very fact of his trying to acquire this property may not be the secret of this attack on him."

"How is that?" quickly interrogated the physician.

I showed him the papers we had found and explained the details of the case. He nodded his head from time to time in affirmation. "I believe you are right," he said finally. "Some one wishes to prevent the deal being consummated. You say you know these parties—this Miss Hook and her niece?"

"Yes," I answered.

"Are they above any suspicion?"

"Lillian—the young lady is," I warmly replied.

The physician smiled. "And what about the old woman?" he prodded. "Could she connive at a crime?"

I hesitated a moment. Saphira Hook's wicked old face suddenly arose before me—her crafty, sly grin, her malign eyes, her hawk nose, her wagging, defiant jaw—all the ugly details of her forbidding countenance. Then I saw the other—the proud, arrogant face of the apparition—the woman who had killed her daughter-in-law.

In her youth Saphira Hook must have closely resembled her grandmother. Might not she have inherited her traits and passions as well? I drew a long breath. "Yes," I said slowly, "I think she might. I dislike saying so, but I do not think she would stop at murder to further her schemes. But what puzzled me is—why was she so willing to sell at first and then so suddenly remember about the title? She must have known she had no title."

"That's a riddle," replied the physician, rising. "But I must be off. Now, Mr. Thorndyke, I sincerely hope that we can move Mr. Edwards to-morrow. It would not be wise to attempt it to-day, as he has a temperature.

"I shall be here to-morrow about this hour and will fetch a stretcher and between us all we can, I believe, get him to my car and to the hospital or wherever he wishes to go. When I get back to Waretown, I'm going to the chief of police, whom I know well and who is a very decent chap. I shall ask him to send out a couple of men to-night to help you out. These thugs who are lurking around here in the woods might try to make trouble to-night and it's just as well to guard against such a contingency."

"That might be a very good plan," I acquiesced, "especially as we have no fire-arms among us. Sile said he was going to get his shotgun, but I did not see him fetching it."

"He wanted to go around by the inn to get it," returned Dr. Bliss, "but I told him we must not take the time. He agreed and said he would walk over and get it. But if I were you, I would not let him go. Better hang on to him until the officers come out. I wish you had a phone," he finished resentfully.

"I wish we had anything," I retorted. "We're cleaned out of everything save bacon, eggs, and whisky."

"Good thing they left you a life preserver," he laughed as he took his leave. Sile, who was waiting below, escorted him to the woods. It was with genuine regret that I saw him disappear. His visit had been an event and had been a communication with the great outside.

I looked forward now to the coming of the officers as an agreeable diversion, as well as a protection. There was no knowing how many crooks might be skulking about and with a wounded man to care for we could not afford to take hazardous risks.

Sile got very uneasy late in the afternoon. "We got to have some grub," he announced. "Mr. Edwards got to be nourished. Hadn't I orter go over to the inn and git some aigs and milk? He must have a milk punch, Mr. Thorndyke.

"And we got to have supper and breakfast anyway here and the derved pantry is about cleaned out. Mebbe too, I could git some jell from Mis' Perkins fer Mr. Edwards. She makes the gol-dernest jell you ever see. I'll git back before dark."

"Well, Sile, do as you like," I said, "but what if you get waylaid and shot?"

"There hain't nobuddy a goin' to waste their powder on me," he retorted. "I hain't bought this here place. I've heerd lots of folks talk about this property over to the inn.

"Lots would have bought it only fur its reputation of bein' hanted because you see it's valuable. But folks don't want nuthin' to do with it even if 'tis valuable."

Something struck me like a blow in the face. "I say, Sile," I said as casually as I could, "why is it valuable? This old tumbledown joint, these berry patches, these jungles of weeds—"

"That's all right," replied Sile. "But look at the timber in them woods. Besides there's ore here, I've heerd tell on."

"Ore?"

"Yep. Some says it's coal and then agin I've heerd it's lead or suthin' like lead—lumbago, I b'lieve. I dunno one thing from t'other, but there was a man over to the

inn one night a spell ago showin' a specimen he's picked up over in them woods where you took a walk. He said if it wa'n't lead he'd eat his head. My land! If that hain't po'try," Sile burst into a guffaw, and repeated:

"If that ain't lead I'll eat my head.

"Jes' think of that now," he added, "me a bustin' into po'try."

I put my hand in my pocket. "Here is that piece of rock I picked up yesterday over in the wood," I said, "don't you remember my showing it to you?"

"Land, yes!" Sile answered. "I didn't think nuthin' of it then, I was so took up with gittin' you home safe. But now I come to look at it, this looks jes' like the piece that feller was talkin' about over to the inn.

"He said he was a goin' to git an option on it if he could. But I never heerd nuthin' more about it. Wall, I'll be off and git back in no time with them aigs and jell—and my shotgun," he added slyly.

I sat for some time after Sile had gone, looking at the piece of rock I had picked up, reflecting deeply. If some one had discovered lead on this property, might it not be possible that the person might have a strong motive for keeping people away from the place?

The theory seemed feasible, I decided. I resolved to take this specimen back with me to the city and get a friend of mine—a mining expert—to pass on it.

"Could Saphira Hook have got an inkling of this?" I asked myself. Was that the reason she had dallied over the deal and over sending a representative to confer with Edwards? It was a riddle each way I turned, but I decided I should solve it in time. "I will get Frank out of here," I said, "and safely into the inn or the hospital—then I'll go home and get busy."

The afternoon wore away. The sun went down behind the black woods and twilight fell. Bill came up to the door to see how matters were progressing.

"Time for Sile to show up," he whispered. "I've got my fire a goin' and as quick as he gits here with them aigs I'll toss up an omelet. I can't see what's a-keepin' on him." There was a note of anx-

iety in his voice which I could not fail to mark.

"Oh, he'll be along presently," I responded as cheerfully as I could.

"I hope so," Bill answered. He went back down the long hall and I distinctly heard him descending a rear stairway.

It was almost dusk now. I was hungry and forlorn. Frank tossed and muttered. The effects of the opiate Dr. Bliss had given were beginning to wear off. "He needs some nourishment," ran through my mind. "Oh, by George! I wish Sile would come."

I went over to the window and peered anxiously toward the woods on the opposite shore of the lake. And to my intense relief I saw him coming, another man with him. Both were loaded down with bundles of every possible size. Tears actually started to my eyes. "Good old Sile," I muttered, "he's coming with provisions and help, Lord bless him!"

As I stood joyfully watching his advent, I was aware that Bill, who also evidently had been on the lookout, was hastening to meet him. He relieved Sile of some of his parcels and the three came on swiftly toward the house.

As I watched the two faithful servitors approach, reinforced by a friend, I suddenly became aware of something else. I distinctly heard, over my head in the attic, the sound of slow, measured footsteps! Some one was in the garret!

I listened breathlessly. Yes, there was no denying the fact. Some one was pacing slowly to and fro with light footfalls. Who was it?

My heart beat rapidly, my breath came in gasps. *What—who—who* was in this terrible old house save ourselves? Who had stolen by me on the stairs that night? Who or what was it I had seen in the dim dawn, flitting down the long corridor only to vanish in thin air?

I resolved to see. With one look at Frank, I went quickly through my room, closed the door behind me and went toward the stairs winding up to the third story. Once I half paused. "Is this wise?" I thought. "Perhaps I should call Sile. But no," I decided, "I will see for myself what mystery this attic holds."

I crept stealthily up the circular stairway to the door on the landing; to my dismay it was locked! For a moment I was tempted to break it in, but my better judgment prevailed. "How do I know but that the whole gang may be in there?" I asked. "The footsteps may have been a bait to lure me. I must do nothing until the officers come, then we will rush the place and see what or who is in hiding there."

With this sensible if not heroic decision, I returned to my room. Presently I heard Sile coming along the upper hall. He came in grinning cheerfully.

"I s'pose you thought suthin' had happened to me," he said. "But I got to thinkin' goin' over what if them officers shouldn't show up to-night. So I went after Jerry Sullivan. He's allus a sweatin' fer a fight and was tickled to death to come over."

"So now we're all right if them detectives fail to connect. I brung my gun too," he added as an afterthought, "and Jerry's got his revolver. So dern 'em, let 'em come on! We'll treat 'em rough," he blustered.

CHAPTER X.

"ASK SAPHIRA HOOK."

WE were all so exhausted from lack of sleep and worry over conditions that none of us was fit to keep awake. Jerry Sullivan came to the rescue: "Yez all shlope," said he, "and I'll kape watch. And bad cess to the crook or the hobgoblin that walks my way!"

I insisted that Sile and Bill go to their beds for a much-needed rest. They objected stoutly at first, but when I promised faithfully to rouse them at the first sign of disturbance they agreed.

I posted Jerry in my room and throwing myself on a couch in Frank's room thought to get a nap before the officers should come from Waretown. But I found to my intense disgust that I could not sleep. I was expecting the arrival of aid and it did not come. What could be the matter? It was not possible, I assured myself over and over, that Dr. Bliss had forgotten his agreement. No, he was too trustworthy a man for that.

There was some hitch, some delay. The men would surely come. But hour after hour went by and still no reinforcements. At last, from sheer exhaustion, I dozed off.

Again I dreamed of the haunted chamber and heard that terrible voice cry: "*Bring me a light!*" Again I saw the haughty, dominating figure and the beautiful, crafty face staring in the mirror at her lovely, helpless victim.

I tried to stir—to cry out for help, but could utter no sound, could not move a finger. Once more I saw that flying form wrapped in flames rush past me like a blazing whirlwind, closely pursued by the demoniac woman. I sensed again that horrible, obscene odor—my dry lips tried to breathe the prayer my dearest girl had taught me—"Praise be to God! He is God!"

Some one was shaking me, rousing me from my nightmare:

"Mr. Thorndyke, sir, wake up," a voice was saying, "quick sir, there's some one outside in the hall." I sprang to my feet. Jerry Sullivan stood by me, his automatic in his hand. "I'm going out," he whispered, "and I'm going to shoot."

"Hold on a moment, Sullivan," I objected. "We must think of Mr. Edwards. If you fire it may give him an awful shock. Tell me first what you have heard."

"Some one came down those stairs from the garret," he muttered, "stepping slow and soft—like a cat. It brushed past the door and went on down beyant." He pointed in the direction of the dread chamber. "I thought if I fired 'twould rouse the boys and fetch 'em here."

"No," I said, "don't do it. I will slip along the hall and reconnoiter. At my first shout you may fire, but for the Lord's sake, don't hit me. Just blaze away at the floor or the roof or any old place and come running, for I may need you."

I took one last, hurried glance at Frank. He appeared to be deeply slumbering and thoroughly under the opiate. "Perhaps he may not hear anything," I said. "I devoutly hope not." Then with a thumping heart I opened my door and stepped out in the hall, Jerry Sullivan standing on the threshold but shutting the door behind him.

At first I could see nothing, the hall being so dark; but as my eyes became accustomed to the blackness I thought I discerned something moving at the far end of the corridor. It quickly vanished, however, and it was suddenly borne in upon my consciousness that it had gone toward the haunted chamber.

Stealthily, step by step, I crept on until I reached the passageway leading to that accursed room, when suddenly I became aware of a pale glimmer of light coming from its open door. At the same instant I saw a bent form scuttle—I can use no other word—across the threshold. I sprang forward and stared in the room. This is what I saw:

A lighted candle was on the mantel. Bending over the curtained bed was a woman's slender form. I could not see her face, as it was hidden by the ragged silk draperies. She was looking in the bed as if searching for something.

Just within the room stood a man crouched like a panther about to spring. The candle's pale light flickering down across his face showed me the countenance of a fiend, eyes like a hungry beast's, thin, cruel lips set in a snarling grin, long, thin, curving fingers extended to clutch the unsuspecting woman. "This is the beast I saw," ran through my consciousness, even as the woman startled, perhaps by some instinct, turned from the bed, showing the lovely, frightened face of Lillian Boyninge!

Before she could scream—before I could move—he was upon her, his vile hands clutching her white throat.

With a shout that reverberated throughout the silent house, I leaped on him, tearing him from my love. At that instant I heard Sullivan's automatic spit and he came plunging down the hall. Answering shouts revealed that Sile and Bill were roused. I paid no heed as the men came tumbling into the room.

I was mauling and pounding the creature I had seized until I threw him on his knees before me. I know I had my hands round his throat and was squeezing the very life out of him—his eyes were protruding, his tongue hanging out, when suddenly a

terrific din arose below. I heard shouts, revolver shots, the crash of splintering wood, a babel of voices, steps running up the stairs and along the halls and then the room was packed with men—men holding automatics, clamoring, pushing, jostling, swearing.

"Mr. Thorndyke," some one yelled, "where are you? Are you safe?"

I paid no heed but went on with the grim business I had in hand, that of strangling the purple-faced wretch before me. But presently two stalwart fellows loosened my grip from the throat of the monster and held me forcibly. "Leave him to the law," some one was saying, "don't stain your hands."

I looked wildly into the face of the chap who was speaking to me. I instantly thought of the man I had seen in the moonlight. It was Terry Dugan, the detective.

"It's all right now," he said reassuringly patting my shoulder. "It's been a game of cross-purposes, but the tangle is straightened out at last."

I stared stupidly at a big, husky fellow who was shackling the creature I had nearly killed. To my amazement I recognized Tim Bolan, the detective from Boston. Next, as my dazed gaze wandered around I saw my darling lying back in an armchair and Sile giving her a glass of water to drink.

"Lillian, Lillian," I cried. I rushed to her and lifted her in my arms. "Oh, my dearest, are you hurt? Speak to me!"

She raised her sweet face, deathly pale from terror. "No, Jim," she murmured, "only frightened."

We stood clinging to each other, absolutely oblivious of every one in the room. Bolan now approached us. "Miss Boyninge," he said respectfully, "this man attacked you, didn't he?"

"Damn it!" jeered the creature, "what's the use of asking her? You've got me. Yes, I did attack her. I intended to kill her. I had done for Thorndyke—"

"Oh, you had?" mocked Bolan, shaking his big, hairy fist under the wretch's nose. "You boob! This here is Mr. Thorndyke and he pretty nearly finished you. You may thank your lucky stars we got here just as we did."

"That—that Thorndyke?" he asked.

"Yes, this is James Thorndyke."

"Then who in blazes did I shoot?" he sullenly demanded.

"You shot Mr. Frank Edwards, Mr. Thorndyke's friend and the present owner of this property. You big stiff are always making some fool blunder," sneered Bolan. "You think you are darned smart, but sooner or later you slip up as you have this time."

"Why did he wish to kill us, Bolan?" I asked in amazement.

"It's a long story, Mr. Thorndyke. But you remember that he had your names on a slip of paper in his rooms," replied the detective.

"Oh—why—what—is this the man?" I stammered. "I thought you caught him, Bolan."

"No, we merely gave out that we had," Bolan responded, "in order to throw this fellow off his guard. We trailed him here and have been watching the house ever since you came. We're lived in the shack over in the woods yonder and we've helped ourselves to your grub nights. We couldn't starve, you know," he laughed.

"I took some of the food too," broke in the prisoner. "I was living in the cellar."

"Oh, shut up!" growled Bolan. "Speak when you're spoken to. These two men," he indicated them, "are the officers sent out from Waretown by its chief of police. They lost their way and couldn't find the place. After wandering all over the country, they finally got a farmer to show them the path."

"They had just come and we were wondering who on earth they were when your man here fired his revolver. These chaps broke in the front door and Dugan, Briggs, and I burst in the side door, at the same moment. These fellows got crazy and shot at us. We shouted to them that we were detectives after a fugitive and that cooled 'em off a bit. Now we must get this crook over to Waretown as soon as possible. Come," to the prisoner, "get a move on now."

"Wait one moment, please," Lillian's sweet voice interrupted. She looked steadily at the vile wretch who could not meet her gaze but stood with hanging head. "Why did you wish to kill me?" she asked him.

He shambled toward the door; turning he gave her one enigmatic look from his evil eyes. "Ask your aunt—Saphira Hook," he muttered suddenly. "She knows."

CHAPTER XI.

LILLIAN'S STORY.

BOLAN paused in the outer hall to speak alone with me. "We'll lodge our man at headquarters in Waretown tonight," he said. "I want you and Miss Boyninge to get back to town as soon as possible to enter a complaint. But mind, Mr. Thorndyke, don't let the young lady go into her aunt's house. There's more to this than you dream of."

As he spoke Sile joined us, greatly excited. "Say, Mr. Thorndyke," he cried, "I had orter tell you and this officer that this here feller he's got is the same one who was showin' of that specimen over to the inn one night 'bout two weeks ago—you know I was tellin' you yisterday about him. 'This ore is lead or I'll eat my head,' he said. More po'try."

"What's that?" demanded Bolan sharply. Sile explained. It was curious to watch the detective's face while Sile told his story and note the grim satisfaction gradually settling on it. "That establishes the link," he said tensely.

"The link? Between whom?" I asked.

"Between that old hag, Saphira Hook, and the prisoner," he replied. "But I can't stop now to tell you the story. You and the young lady hurry home to-morrow and be on hand when I confront the old woman with our man. Good night."

He ran down the stairs and joined the others waiting below.

"Will you be needing us now, sir?" asked one of the officers from Waretown. "Sorry we were so late, but we simply could not find the lane the doctor told us to take until we roused out the farmer down the road."

"It's all right, boys," I answered. "It seems we were amply guarded, although we didn't know it. I believe those detectives were thugs hired by some one to frighten us

away. I saw them lurking in the brush last night, and their movements were suspicious. I saw Dugan in the moonlight; he seemed familiar, but I couldn't place him.

"Then I saw a fourth man skulking about who, of course, was the prisoner. I thought they were of one gang and got all balled up, but everything's all right now."

"We're very glad. Good night, sir," and the two followed Bolan and the others.

I returned to Lillian, who had now recovered herself to a great extent. Bill was fluttering around her like a distracted old hen mothering a stray chicken, and Jerry Sullivan stood grimly on guard at the door of the dread chamber.

"Lillian, come, dear," I said. "You must not remain in this room. We will all go to my room and Bill shall hearten us with coffee and some food, and then you shall tell us how you came here."

"I was looking for the papers," she said directly.

"The papers?" I asked. "What papers?"

"The ones Aunt Saphira sent me after. I found them in that old chest." She pointed to a brass nail-studded coffer on a table. "I took them out. I was so tired from my long walk and the bed looked so comfortable that I laid down to rest me, putting the packet of papers under the pillows.

"I slept and slept. I could not wake up. I would rouse a little only to fall into deeper sleep. I must have been thoroughly done up. But suddenly I heard men's voices below.

"I was awake in an instant, but horribly frightened. I could scarcely realize where I was, and without thinking of the papers I ran out of the room and up the stairway into the attic, locking the door behind me. I've been there ever since."

"Without food?" I ejaculated. "Oh, my poor child—"

"No," she dimpled and blushed. "I've stolen down at night and helped myself to chicken, ham, bread and milk. I've tried twice to find the papers—went at five o'clock this morning, but they were not there. I thought I must have put them back in the chest, but I've looked through it carefully and could not find them.

"To-night I thought that possibly I had thrust them under the mattress, and so I went down to hunt once more. I was just giving it up when I heard heavy breathing near me. I started, turned, and saw that awful man. Before I could scream his hands were on my throat. Then, I saw you—"

She stopped suddenly, and, burying her face in her hands, burst into dry, hysterical sobs.

"I have the papers, Lillian," I said. I gently led her out of the room. Bill ran down to make coffee, and Sile and Jerry Sullivan accompanied us to my room. As soon as Lillian was calmed, I bethought me of Frank. Hurrying to his bed I found him slumbering peacefully. He had slept through the entire upheaval.

After Bill had brought coffee and a luncheon, and we had all recovered from the shocks of the night, I asked Lillian to tell us more in detail of her adventures. "Begin at the very beginning," I urged.

"The start was that last evening you called on me," she said. "It was just before you came that night that my aunt called me to her room.

"'Lillian,' she said abruptly, 'I'm going to send you out of town for a few days on important business which I cannot entrust to any one else. Now understand—you are not to mention this to Mr. Thorndyke. You know I don't like him, and I don't care to have him know anything of my affairs. Promise me you will say nothing.' Accustomed as I am to obeying my aunt, I said I would not speak of my proposed trip to you."

"Was that what made you so troubled and absent-minded that evening?" I inquired.

"Yes," Lillian answered. "I felt as if I must say something to you, but I was bound by my promise. I had, moreover, a foreboding—a presentiment or something—I cannot describe it, but it seemed as if a shadow had suddenly fallen across my life. I tried to banish it, but it kept returning.

"It was three or four days after that my aunt directed me to come to Waretown, go to a hotel and await further instructions from her. All this puzzled and worried me.

Why did she not tell me more? I questioned. Why this mystery? Again I was tempted to go to your office and ask your advice, but my pledge kept me from following my inclinations.

"I came to Waretown and stopped at the Everett House and awaited instructions. At last I got this letter." She drew an envelope from her pocket and opening it took out a letter which read as follows:

DEAR LILLIAN:

You are to go on the main road about three miles east of Waretown until you come to the cross-roads where they hanged pirates in the good old days. Any farmer will tell you where that is. Arriving there, you will find on the left of the highway a narrow lane which leads into a piece of woods. Go on through the woods and you will come to a small lake. On the opposite shore of this lake you will see a rambling old dwelling—the old Fennimore manor-house, granted to my grandmother Cynthia Fennimore, with the adjoining lands, for service her husband rendered to the crown.

It's in a ruinous condition but that's neither here nor there. You can easily gain access to it, as the doors are crazy and the locks old. Go upstairs and down the upper hall until you come to a passage running to a room on the right. In that room is a small chest which contains a packet of papers—merely valuable to me because I have lost copies of them. On no account are you to read or to show the papers to anyone. Fetch them to me.

Drop me a note and tell me if you receive this letter and also what day you will go to Fennimore Hall. You need not be afraid to go for the place is so out of the way that one scarcely can find it. Attend dutifully to this and I will amply reward you.

Your aunt,
SAPHIRA HOOK.

"I read this letter with mingled emotions—wonder that she did not give me instructions before I left Waretown—a terror of this lonely, unfrequented place, and yet withal a spirit of adventure. I was about to write my aunt and tell her the day and hour of my setting out when the strangest thing happened. Something—or some one—whispered to me not to do so. I could not understand the instinct, or whatever it was, but I listened to it.

"I took the long, lonely tramp and, reaching the house, found to my astonishment that the front door was ajar, the key in the lock. I went in and up the stairs,

starting every time a board creaked. I found the papers without any difficulty, just where my aunt had said. Then I was so weary I lay down for my nap. The rest you know."

I rose and going over to my bed reached underneath it and drew out my grip. Opening it I took out the papers and handed them to her. "There are the papers," I said, "which prove beyond a doubt that you, not Saphira Hook, own this property, which I believe from what I have learned is a rather valuable possession."

The color came and went in my dear girl's face as she looked over the papers. "I fear," she said with her pretty, puzzled air, "that I do not understand the legal terms of this will."

"By that testament of Cynthia Fennimore, the estate is entailed and comes straight down to you," I replied. "Saphira Hook simply seized it and held it from you."

"Is that what that terrible man meant to-night when he told me to ask my aunt why he wished to kill me?" she questioned.

"Surely. She wanted you put out of the way so she could have the property. As you are not married and have no children it would revert to the next of kin—which is herself. Don't you see?"

"Is it possible," asked Lillian, turning pale, "that my aunt sent me here to be murdered?"

"Not only possible, but probable," I replied. "It was well you listened to your instinct, my dear girl, and did not write her the exact time of your coming. Tell me, was it you who passed me on the stairs the first night we came?"

"No," she replied.

"Ah, then, it was this creature, Foster," I said. "I wonder where he had been?"

"Perhaps he had been up in that chamber exploring," returned Lillian, "or he may have been trying to locate me."

"Undoubtedly," I said. "Well, thank God, he did not find you. We have both been mercifully protected. Now it only remains for Bolan to clear up the connection between Foster and your aunt.

"You are not to go back to Miss Hook's house. It would not be safe for you. And

now you must sleep, and my faithful friends and I will watch over you."

I made her lie down on the lounge and soon her quiet, regular breathing told us she had fallen into a sound, refreshing sleep. And Sile, Bill, Jerry Sullivan and I formed her bodyguard till morning.

CHAPTER XII.

LIFE FROM DEATH.

DR. BLISS came in the early forenoon with a stretcher, and after Frank's wound had been dressed we placed him in it, and our party set out for the inn, where the invalid had elected to go. It was arranged that Sile should remain with Frank and take care of him until he had fully recovered.

After we had seen Frank safely to the inn, Dr. Bliss drove my dear girl and myself to Waretown, which we soon left for our home town. Bolan had gone ahead on an earlier train. Dugan, however, was waiting for us at the station.

"We got our man in jail," he cheerfully stated. "And we want you and Miss Boyninge to come at once and enter a complaint. Then we will all go up to Miss Hook's house and have it out with her."

This program was carried out. But it was not until nightfall that we got finished with the preliminaries. So, after briefly dining at a restaurant, we entered a taxi and followed Bolan, Dugan and the prisoner to Saphira Hook's handsome residence on the hill.

I rang the bell and the butler who opened the door gave a start of delight when he saw Lillian: "Welcome home, Miss Boyninge," he said. "The house has been very lonely."

"Thank you, Hammond," Lillian replied kindly. "Where is my aunt?"

"Miss Hook is in the library, but—but why—" he faltered as he saw the low-browed, evil-faced prisoner handcuffed to Dugan.

"It's all right, Hammond," I interposed. "This fellow has been arrested for a terrible crime, and it's necessary that Miss Hook should identify him. We will go right into the library."

"Hadn't I better prepare Miss Hook?" Hammond gasped fearfully. It was evident that the butler had received a terrific shock.

"No, Hammond," Lillian said with quiet authority, "you need not say anything to my aunt." She led the way to the library, and we all followed.

Saphira Hook sat in a great armchair, looking more like one of the witches in "Macbeth" than ever. She wore some sort of a lurid red satin negligee, which made her a fright with her rouged cheeks and cavernous eyes. As we came into the room she turned white under her paint. Panting out "Lillian!" she fell back in her great chair, a picture of dismay.

"Yes, Aunt Saphira, I am back at last," Lillian said icily. "I have had a hard trip."

"What—what is he doing here?" cried Saphira, indicating me with her ebony cane, which rattled in her trembling hands. She had not yet caught sight of Bolan and Dugan, who, with their prisoner, stood just outside the library door.

"I am here, Miss Hook," I said with all the arrogance I could summon, "to look after the interests of my client and fiancée, Lillian Boyninge."

"Oh, you are?" she sneered, her ugly face growing livid with fury. "Well, Mr. James Thorndyke, I am not disposed to receive you. Get out of my house or it will be the worse for you—you—you upstart." She was literally choking with rage now, and a slight foam gathered on her lips.

"Aunt Saphira," said Lillian, "be quiet—"

"What!" she shrieked, "do I hear aright? Be quiet? To me? How dare you order me to be quiet?"

"I dare," returned Lillian very composedly. "I know all about you now and do not fear you. You have cheated me a long time—"

"Cheated?" the old harridan screamed, shaking her stick at Lillian. "I'll teach you, you little huzzy—"

"That's enough," I interposed. "Miss Boyninge need waste no words on you. Come in, Bolan."

And Bolan entered—big, husky, red-faced, dominating, he seemed to fill the whole room. He came and stood directly

before Saphira Hook, gazing at her with his inflexible jaw squared and his cold gray eyes scanning her with a compelling scrutiny.

"Who—who are you?" Saphira gasped, still purple with rage, but somewhat disconcerted at sight of this powerful figure before her.

"I'm Detective Bolan, of Boston," he replied bluntly. "And I'm here to arrest you," he bluffed.

"Arrest?" She mumbled the words after him.

"Yes, for conspiring against the life of your niece," he said. "You planned her murder and that of Mr. Thorndyke. You wanted your niece out of the way so you could possess without question her estate of Fennimore Manor. Mr. Thorndyke you wanted killed because you hated him, and because if he were done for there would be no one to make trouble over Miss Thorndyke's death."

"Lies—lies!" she cried wildly. "Hammond," she called in her cracked falsetto, "put this man out of the house. I won't be browbeaten by a miserable detective. It's a plot—a plot," she screamed.

"A plot—yes," warned Bolan, "but not of my making. Dugan," he bawled ferociously, "come in."

And Dugan came in, with Foster manacled to his wrist.

I think Saphira Hook knew it was all up with her as soon as she saw the prisoner. She went ashen and huddled in a heap in her chair. Her glassy eyes stared in space, her bearded jaw quivered, her breath came in short gasps.

"Foster," said Bolan, "is this the woman who bargained with you to kill Miss Boyninge and Mrs. Thorndyke?"

"That's the woman," said Foster sulkily.

Saphira Hook stared at him with the sightless eyes of the dead. She made a vain effort to speak, but could utter no sound. Bolan went on in cold, remorseless fashion. "Miss Boyninge, my men, who trailed Foster to this town, reported that he came to see your aunt late at night. The paper we found in his room, with your name and Mr. Thorndyke's, convinced us that some diabolical plot was being hatched.

"You went away from town suddenly, and no one, not even the man to whom you were engaged, knew where you had gone. But by judicious inquiry we learned of the deserted old house near Waretown. I sent a man post-haste to Waretown, and he found that you were registered at the Everett House. Meantime we gave out that we had arrested Foster elsewhere. In reality we felt sure he would turn up at Waretown, and our theory was justified.

"You, Miss Boyninge, did not dream that when you entered the old Fennimore Manor House, you were watched by three pairs of eyes from the thickets about. We saw the arrival of Mr. Edwards and Mr. Thorndyke with their servants, and felt they would give you ample protection. We found Mr. Thorndyke unconscious on the lake-bank and carried him to the porch, where his man found him.

"We were positive that Foster was somewhere in the house. We were intending to rush it that night or the next, but the shooting of Mr. Edwards upset all our plans. We realized that in some fashion Foster had eluded us and got over in the woods, to lie in wait for the man he believed to be Mr. Thorndyke. That night, we believe Foster did not stay in the house—"

"No," I interrupted. "I saw him skulking about from the window of Mr. Edwards's room. But I thought you were all of one crew."

"Exactly," returned the detective. "He got back in the cellar, he has told us, before daybreak. All this time he had not succeeded in locating Miss Boyninge. He knew from this woman here that the young lady had been sent there for him to remove. But he could not find her.

"He prowled around that night, looking in various up-stairs rooms for his victim. At last, to his satisfaction, he saw her come along the hall with a candle in her hand and followed her to the room, where he made his attack, which providentially was foiled by Mr. Thorndyke.

"It's been a game of hide-and-seek for the last few days, but it's ended. Foster goes to Boston with me to-night, but before leaving he wanted to pay a parting visit to his patron," the big detective openly

sneered. "Now, Foster," he turned with a truculent air to the prisoner, "you know it's all up with you. You might as well come across with all you know. It will make it easier for you in the long run.

"I want you to repeat before Miss Boyninge and Mr. Thorndyke what you were persuaded"—he hesitated significantly over the word—"to tell Dugan and me this afternoon."

"She's to blame," snarled the prisoner. "Of course I did for those other two girls. One of them yelled so when I was going through the house I had to choke her. The other—well, no matter—I had a grudge against her," he scowled blackly. "But I had said I would never again kill a woman.

"I tramped across country to Waretown, and on the way I struck that old house. I hid in the woods for days. It was while I was in the woods that I discovered the vein of plumbago. I knew a bit about minerals and was pretty sure it was lead.

"I hung around till I was starved out—I had managed to steal some food from that farmhouse down the road, enough to barely keep me alive. At last I got desperate and left the woods. I walked quite a ways and came to the inn. I had a little money—damn little—but I was determined to have one good night's sleep. So I stayed there, and I was fool enough to show that piece of ore that evening in the barroom.

"I heard 'em talk that night about the old house and estate and learned that it belonged to a Miss Hook in this town. So I came here and got me a room. I decided to try to bluff the old woman into believing that I was a man of means and a promoter. So I cleaned myself up as well as I could and came here to see her.

"I showed her the specimen and told her I'd like to get an option on the property, and I thought I could uncover a rich vein of ore. I figure this way: It was a mighty lonely, unfrequented place, and I could hide there in that house for a long time, and no dick could find me. Meantime I could dig around in the woods and perhaps could unearth enough for my needs. Then I would go to some city and sell out my option.

"She," nodding toward the terrible figure in the chair, scarce breathing now, "drove

a hard bargain. She asked me all kinds of questions—where I came from, who I was, and all that sort of thing. At last she came straight to the point. 'You're no promoter,' she snaps out, 'you're a crook. You can't fool me.'

"She knocked me all of a heap, she looked so awful when she said that 'I want a job done,' says she, 'and done thoroughly. If you will do it I'll give you one-half of all the ore you can find on that place, and no questions asked. I might even do more. Money's no object in the deal,' says she.

"What do you want done?" says I.

"She leans close to me and fairly hisses the word 'Murder.' I jumps, I was so nervous the way she glares at me. She don't look human, I can tell you. 'I've quit that,' I says. 'Aha!' she croaks, 'you have done it then. I thought so.'

"'Now, listen, my man,' she says, 'there are some very bad people who are making me a lot of trouble. I want them out of my way. Give me your word that you will kill them, and I'll give you ten thousand dollars besides a half-interest in all the ore you can find on that place.'

"Ten thousand dollars sounds pretty good to a fellow that hasn't got a cent. 'All right,' says I, 'who are these people?' 'There's my niece, Lillian Boyninge,' says she, 'a wayward, headstrong girl who is driving me crazy by her actions; and a lawyer named Thorndyke, a scoundrel who is backing the girl up in her disobedience.'

"I wrote down the two names on a piece of paper and slipped it in my pocket. I agreed to undertake the job. 'You come back then day after to-morrow,' says she, 'and I'll give you your instructions.' She handed me a yellow-back, 'on account,' she said.

"I hadn't seen so much money for months. I went back to my room, and I remember getting gloriously drunk. I must have taken the piece of paper out of my pocket and laid it on the mantel or table.

"I went back at the time she set, and she told me what I was to do and where to go. She had sent her niece to that house to hunt up some papers, and I was to follow her there, kill the girl and fetch the papers back to her. Then I was to do up Thorndyke.

"She gave me plenty of money, and I went back to the inn, where I heard about Mr. Edwards and his friend, Mr. Thorndyke, going over to stay a few days in the old house. I went over and hid in the cellar. I found an old box-couch in there and slept all right, and nights I used to steal up and get food.

"I went all over the house, but I couldn't find the girl. Then I hid in the woods, as I had seen the gentleman go to Waretown, and waited for his return.

"From the description this woman had given me, I thought Mr. Edwards was Mr. Thorndyke. I shot the wrong man. I finally saw Miss Boyninge and followed her and got my hands on her throat. But to tell the truth," he finished, "I'm glad Thorndyke got there in time."

A hoarse, stertorous rattle broke in on his confession. We looked at the huddled heap in the chair. We saw that Saphira Hook had received her death-warrant. She was breathing heavily, her jaw had dropped and the gray shadow of death was on her hideous face. She died within the hour.

Two years later my wife and I sat in a beautiful rose-garden, in which grew and rambed every variety of the exquisite blossoms. The old tumbledown mansion had been transformed into a charming house, gay with awnings and banks of flowers on its balcony ledges. Even the black waters of the sinister lake had been drained away, and in their place was a sunken garden of Japanese design, filled with iris of every conceivable hue. Here birds sported and butterflies fluttered all the day.

A wild driveway circled this garden and entering the woods ran into the lane which

had been cleared of all the briars, weeds and stones. The approach to Frank Edwards's summer home, "Heavenly Rest," was picturesque in every detail.

As we sat in a delightful pergola overhung with roses, breathing in their delicious perfume and listening to the plash of a fountain where once had been a tangle of brambles, Frank sauntered round the corner of the great portico, now happily restored to its early grandeur. He was immaculately clad in white flannel, and his lean, brown hands were filled with geranium plants, vivid with scarlet and pink coloring. Sile was close on his heels with hoe and spade. Together, with the profoundest interest, they worked on a bed by the side-docr.

"How happy Frank is here!" I exclaimed involuntarily. "And he has literally made this desert bloom like the rose."

"Yes," said my dear girl, glancing about the wonderful garden, "out of death came life; out of the shadows, sunshine. And how good Frank is to Sile and Bill. He has made the lives of those two old wayfarers like a pleasant dream. It's all as it should be—the fulfilment of the divine plan—the purpose of God."

We were silent a moment, then Frank's voice rang out cheerily: "Come on, folks," he called, "supper's ready—chicken and hot waffles. Don't waste time."

We rose to obey the welcome summons. The sun was setting behind the dark woods. The iris flamed in a mass of color from the sunken garden. Everything was serene and uplifting. Lillian turned to me, her lovely face aglow with joy:

"*Praise be to God!*" she murmured. "*He is God! All are His servants, and all stand by His command.*"

(The end.)

I WONDER WHY!

BY CATHARINE YOUNG GLEN

A WREATH of yellowed orange flowers.

A wedding wreath!

I wonder why I take it out, and lay

Its drooping leaves against my hair to-day,

Now I am gray?

A gown of lace and lavender,

A wedding gown!

I wonder why I lift it, just to hold

My faded cheek against its faded fold,

Now I am old?

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."

The colonel took Mrs. Brewster and Barbara out to a supper-dance. As the girl stood alone on the curb, waiting for their car, a note signed by Philip Rochester was put into her hands, telling her that the coroner would call an inquest.

Helen went to see Kent, but the lawyer felt he could not tell her that Jimmie, in his opinion, had committed suicide to avoid exposure as a thief and a forger. At the girl's request he placed in Rochester's compartment of their safe a white envelope, with a red seal. Then the colonel, with Clymer, called, and the former gave Kent just two days and a half to clear the dead man.

At the inquest Kent was horrified to discover that the twins had swapped identities, and testified accordingly. Hence, Helen testified the handkerchief, marked with the letter B, was not her property.

The sensation of the inquest was sprung by Ferguson, who testified the handkerchief found by him near Turnbull's body was saturated with amyl nitrite, and a chemist declared that more than one capsule had been used to leave behind the particles that still adhered to the linen. But Dr. Stone thought the dead man may have used the same handkerchief on several occasions.

Dr. Mayo testified that the autopsy showed the presence of aconitin in the stomach of the deceased, a poison generally fatal in its results.

CHAPTER X.

AT THE CLUB DE VINGT.

THE large building of the popular Club de Vingt, or as one Washingtonian put it, the "Club de Vin," which had sprung into existence in the National Capital during the war, was ablaze with light.

Benjamin Clymer, sitting at a small table in one corner of the dining-room, wished most heartily that it had been less crowded. Many dinner parties were being given that night, and it was only by dint of perseverance and a Treasury note that he had finally induced the head waiter to put in an extra table for him and his guest, Harry Kent.

Kent had been very late and, to add to

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

his shortcomings, had been silent, not to say morose, during dinner, and Clymer heaved a sigh of relief when the table was cleared and coffee and cigars placed before them.

Kent roused himself from his abstraction. "We can't talk here," he said, looking at the gay diners who surrounded them. "And I have several important matters to discuss with you, Mr. Clymer."

His remark was overheard by their waiter, and he stopped pouring out Kent's coffee.

"There is a small smoking room to the right of the dining-room," he suggested. "I passed there but a moment ago, and it was not occupied. If you desire, sir, I will serve coffee there."

"An excellent idea," Clymer rose quickly, and he and Kent followed the waiter to the enclosed porch which had been converted into an attractive lounging room for the club members. It was much cooler than the overheated dining-room, and Kent was grateful for the subdued light given out by the shaded lamps with which it was furnished. There was silence while the waiter with deft fingers arranged the coffee and cigars on a wicker table; then receiving Clymer's generous tip with a word of thanks, the man departed.

Kent wheeled his chair around so as to face his companion and still have a side view of the dining-room, where tables were being rapidly removed for the dances which followed dinners on Thursday nights. Clymer selected a cigar with care and, leaning back in his chair until the wicker creaked under his weight, he waited patiently for Kent to speak. It was fully five minutes before Kent addressed him.

"So James Turnbull was poisoned after all," he commented. "A week ago I would have sworn that Jimmie hadn't an enemy in the world."

"Ah, but he had; and a very bitter, vindictive enemy, if the evidence given at the coroner's inquest this afternoon is to be believed," replied Clymer seriously. "The case is remarkably puzzling."

"It is." Kent bit savagely at his cigar as a slight vent to his feelings. "Killed by a dose of aconitine, administered by a per-

son or persons unknown," was the jury's verdict, and a nice tangle they have left me to ferret out."

"You?"

"Yes. I'm going to solve this mystery if it is a possible thing," Kent's tone was grim. "And Colonel McIntyre only gave me until Saturday night to work in."

Clymer eyed him in surprise. "McIntyre desires to secure his lost securities; judging from his comments after the inquest, he is not particularly interested in who killed Turnbull."

"But I am," exclaimed Kent. "The more I think of it, the more convinced I am that the forged letter with the subsequent disappearance of McIntyre's securities has some connection with Jimmie's untimely death, be it murder or suicide."

"Suicide?" Clymer's raised eyebrows indicated his surprise.

"Yes," shortly. "Aconitine would have killed just as surely if swallowed with suicidal intent as if administered with murderous intent."

A pause followed which neither man seemed anxious to break, then Kent turned to the banker, and the latter noticed the haggard lines in his face.

"Listen to me, Mr. Clymer," he began. "My instinct tells me that Jimmie Turnbull never forged that letter or stole McIntyre's securities, but I admit that everything points to his guilt, even his death."

"How so?"

"Because the theft of the securities supplies a motive for his suicide—fear of exposure and imprisonment," argued Kent. "But there is no motive, so far as I can see, for Jimmie's murder. Men don't kill each other without a motive."

"There is homicidal mania," suggested Clymer.

"But not in this case," retorted Kent. "We are sane men, and it is up to us to find out if Jimmie died by his own hand or was killed by some unknown enemy."

"Rest easy, Mr. Kent," said a voice from the doorway and Kent, who had turned his back in that direction the better to talk to Clymer, whirled around and found Detective Ferguson regarding him just inside the threshold. "Mr. Turnbull's en-

emy is not unknown and will soon be under arrest."

"Who is he?" demanded Clymer and Kent simultaneously.

"Philip Rochester."

Clymer was the first to recover from his astonishment. "Oh, get out!" he exclaimed incredulously. "Why, Rochester was Turnbull's most intimate friend."

"Until they fell in love with the same girl," answered Ferguson succinctly, taking possession of the only other chair the porch boasted. "One quarrel led to another and then Rochester did for him. Oh, it dovetails nicely; motive, jealous anger; opportunity, recognition in court of Turnbull disguised as a burglar, at the same time Rochester learns that Turnbull has been caught after midnight in the house of his sweetheart—"

"Damn you!" Kent sprang for the detective's throat. "Cut out your abominable insinuations. Miss McIntyre shall not be insulted."

"I'm not insulting her," gasped Ferguson, half strangled. "Let go, Mr. Kent. I'm only telling you what that half-crazy partner of yours, Rochester, was probably thinking in the Police Court. Let go."

Clymer aided the detective in freeing himself. "Sit down, Kent," he said sternly. "Ferguson meant no offense. Go ahead, man, and tell us the rest of your theories."

It was some minutes, however, before the detective had collected sufficient breath to answer intelligently.

"I size it up this way," he began with a resentful glance at Kent, who had dropped back in his chair again. "Rochester knew his friend had heart disease and that his sudden death would be attributed to it—so he took a sporting chance and administered a fatal dose of aconitine."

"How was it done?" asked Clymer.

"Just slipped the poison into the glass of water he handed to Turnbull in the court room," explained Ferguson, and glanced in triumph at Kent. "Neat, wasn't it?"

Kent regarded the detective, his mind in a whirl. His theory was certainly plausible, but—

"Have you other evidence to prove your theory?" he asked.

"Yes." Ferguson checked off his points on his fingers. "Remember, how insistent Mr. Rochester was that Turnbull had died from *angina pectoris*?"

"I do," acknowledged Clymer, deeply interested. "Continue, Ferguson."

The detective needed no second bidding.

"Another point," he began. "There never would have been a post-mortem examination if Miss Helen McIntyre hadn't asked for it. She knew of the ill-feeling between the men and suspected foul play on Rochester's part."

"Wait," commanded Kent. "Has Miss McIntyre substantiated that statement?"

"Not yet," admitted Ferguson. "I stopped at her house, but the butler said the young ladies had retired and could not see anyone." Kent, who had stopped there on the way to keep his dinner engagement with Clymer, had been met with the same statement, to his bitter disappointment. He most earnestly desired to see the twins and to see them together, to make one more effort to induce them to confide in him; for that they had some secret trouble he was convinced; he longed to be of aid, but his hands were tied through lack of information.

"Don't imply motives to Miss McIntyre's act until you have verified them, Ferguson," he cautioned. "Go on with your theories."

"One moment," Clymer broke into the conversation. "Did Rochester tell you, Ferguson, that he had recognized Turnbull in his burglar disguise?"

"No, sir; I never had an opportunity to ask him, for he disappeared Tuesday night and has not been seen or heard of since," Ferguson rejoined.

"Hold on," Kent checked him with an impatient gesture. "I had a telegram from Rochester this morning, stating he was in Cleveland."

"I didn't forget about the telegram," retorted Ferguson. "It was to consult you about that, that I hunted you up to-night. That telegram was bogus."

"What?" Kent half rose from his chair.

"Yes. After the inquest I called Cleveland on the long distance, talked with the City Club officials and with Police Head-

quarters; all declared that Rochester was not there, and no trace could be found of his having ever arrived there."

Clymer laid down his half-smoked cigar and stared at the detective.

"You think then that Rochester has bolted?" he asked.

"It looks that way," insisted Ferguson. "How about it, Mr. Kent?"

Kent did not reply immediately. Every fact that Ferguson had brought out fitted the situation, and Rochester's disappearance added color to the detective's charges. Why was he hiding unless from guilty motives, and where had he gone? Kent shook a bewildered head.

"It is plausible," he conceded, "But, after all, only circumstantial evidence."

"Well, circumstantial evidence is good enough for me to work on," retorted Ferguson. "On discovering that the telegram from Cleveland was a hoax, I concluded Ferguson might be lurking around Washington, and so sent a description of him to the different precincts and secured a search warrant."

"You did?"

"Yes. Armed with it I visited Mr. Rochester's apartment, but couldn't find a clue to his present whereabouts," admitted Ferguson. "So then I went to your office, Mr. Kent, and ransacked the firm's safe."

"Confound you!" Kent leaned forward in his wrath and shook his fist at the detective. "What right had you to do such a thing?"

"The search warrant covered it," explained Ferguson. "I could look through your safe, Mr. Kent, because Rochester was your senior partner and you shared the office together; I was within the law."

"Perhaps you were," Kent controlled his anger with an effort. "But I had told you I did not know Rochester's whereabouts before I showed you the Cleveland telegram, which you claim is bogus."

"It's bogus, all right," insisted the detective. "I thought it just possible I might find some paper which would give me a clue to Rochester's hiding place, so I went through the safe."

"How did you get it open?" asked Kent.

"I found it open."

Kent leaped to his feet. "You—found—it open!" he stammered. "Why, man, I locked that safe securely just before I left the office at six o'clock."

"Sure?"

"Absolutely certain."

"Were you alone?"

"Yes, all alone. Sylvester left at five o'clock."

"Who knew the combination of the safe?"

"Only Rochester and I."

It was Ferguson's turn to spring up. "By—" he exclaimed. "I thought the electric bulbs in the office felt warm, as if they had recently been burning—Rochester must have been there just before me."

"It would seem that Rochester is still in the city," remarked Clymer. "Do you know, Kent, whether he had his office keys with him?"

"I presume so." Kent slipped his hand inside his pocket and took out a bunch of keys. "He left these duplicates in his desk at the office."

"Sure they are duplicates?" questioned Ferguson, and Kent flushed.

"I know they are," he retorted. "Rochester had them made over a year ago as a matter of convenience, for he was always forgetting his keys, and kept these at our office."

"He's a queer cuss," was the detective's only comment as Clymer broke into the conversation.

"Did you find any address or paper in the safe which might prove a clue, Ferguson?" he inquired.

"Nothing, not even a scrap of paper," and the detective's tone was glum.

"Did the safe look as if its contents had been tumbled about?" asked Kent.

"No, everything seemed in order," Ferguson thrust his hand inside his coat pocket. "There was one envelope in the right-hand compartment which puzzled me—"

"Hold on—was that compartment also unlocked?" asked Kent.

"It was," not giving Kent time to speak again Ferguson continued his remarks. "As this was unaddressed I brought it to you, Mr. Kent, to ask you if it was your personal property." He drew out the white

envelope which Helen McIntyre had brought Kent that morning and turned it over so that both men could see the large red seal bearing the letter "B".

"It is my property," asserted Kent instantly.

"Would you mind opening it?" asked Ferguson.

"I would, most certainly; it relates to my personal affairs."

Ferguson looked a trifle nonplused. "Would you mind telling me its contents, Mr. Kent?" he asked persuasively.

Kent regarded the detective squarely. He could not betray Helen, the envelope might contain harmless nonsense, but she had placed it in his safe-keeping—no, confound it, she had left it in the safe for Rochester—and Rochester was apparently a fugitive from justice, circumstantial evidence pointed to his having poisoned Helen's lover, Jimmie—

"If you must know, Ferguson," Kent spoke with deliberation. "They are old love letters of mine."

Clymer glanced down at the envelope which the detective still held, the red seal making a distinct blotch of color on the white, glazed surface.

"Ah, Kent," he said in amusement. "So rumor is right in predicting your engagement to Barbara McIntyre. Good luck to you!"

Through the open doorway to the dining-room where the dancing had ceased for the moment, came a soft laugh and Mrs. Brewster looked in at them. McIntyre, standing like her shadow, gazed in curiosity over her shoulder at the three men.

"How jolly to find you," cooed Mrs. Brewster. "And what a charming retreat! It's much too nice to be occupied by mere men, exclusively." She inclined her head in a little gracious bow to Ferguson and stepped inside.

"Have my chair," suggested Clymer hospitably as the pretty widow raised her lorgnette and scanned the Oriental hangings and lamps, and lastly, the white envelope which lay on the table, red seal uppermost, where Ferguson had placed it on her entrance.

"Are your daughters here, Colonel Mc-

Intyre?" asked Kent as he took a step toward the table.

McIntyre's answer was drowned in an outburst of cheering in the dining-room and the rush of many feet. On common impulse Kent and the others turned toward the doorway and looked inside the dining-room. Two officers of the French High Commission were being held on the shoulders of comrades and were delivering, as best they could amidst cheers and applause, their farewell to hospitable Washington.

As his companions brushed by him to join the gay throng in the center of the room, Kent turned back to pick up the envelope he had left lying on the table. It was gone.

In feverish haste Kent looked under the table, under the chairs, the lounge and its cushions, behind the draperies, and even under the rugs which covered the floor of the porch, and then rose and stared into the dining-room. Which one of his companions had taken the envelope?

Outside the porch the beautiful trumpet vine, its sturdy trunk and thick branches reaching almost to the roof of the club building, rustled as in a high wind, and the branches swayed this way and that as a figure climbed swiftly down from the porch until, reaching the fence separating the club property from its neighbor's, the man swung across it, no mean athletic feat, and taking advantage of each sheltering shadow, darted into the alley and from there down silent, deserted Nineteenth Street.

CHAPTER XI.

HALF A TRUTH.

DANCING was just being resumed in the dining-room as Kent appeared again in the doorway and he made his way as quickly as possible among the couples, going into all the rooms on that floor, but nowhere could he find Detective Ferguson. On emerging from the front drawing-room, he encountered the steward returning from down-stairs.

"Have you seen Mr. Clymer?" he asked hurriedly.

"Yes, Mr. Kent; he just left the club,

taking Detective Ferguson with him in his motor. Is there anything I can do?" observing Kent's agitation.

"No, no, thanks. Stay, where is Colonel McIntyre?" giving up further pursuit of the detective. He would find him later at headquarters.

The steward looked among the dancers. "I don't see him," he said. "But there is Mrs. Brewster dancing in the front room; the colonel must be somewhere around. If I meet him, Mr. Kent, shall I tell him you are looking for him?"

"I will be greatly obliged if you will do so," replied Kent, and straightening his tie, he went in quest of the pretty widow. He had found her a merry chatter-box in the past, possibly he could gain valuable information from her. He found Mrs. Brewster just completing her dance with a fine-looking Italian officer whose broad breast bore many military decorations.

"Dance the encore with me?" Kent could be very persuasive when he wished, and Mrs. Brewster dimpled with pleasure, but there was a faint indecision in her manner which he was quick to note. What prompted it? He had been on friendly terms with her; in fact, she had openly championed his cause, so Barbara had once told him, when Colonel McIntyre had made caustic remarks about his frequent calls at the McIntyre house.

"Just one turn," she said, as the foreigner bowed deeply and withdrew. "I am feeling a little weary to-night—the strain of the inquest," she added in explanation.

"Perhaps you would rather sit out the dance," he suggested. "There is an alcove in that window; oh, pshaw!" as a man and a girl took possession of the chairs.

"Never mind, we can roost on the stairs," Mrs. Brewster preceded him to the staircase leading to the third floor, and sat down, bracing her back very comfortably against the railing, while Kent seated himself at her feet on the lower step.

"Extraordinary developments at the inquest this afternoon," he began, as she volunteered no remark. "To think of Jimmie Turnbull being poisoned!"

"It is unbelievable," she said, and her vehemence was a surprise to Kent; he knew

her as all froth and bubble. What had brought the dark circles under her eyes and the unwonted seriousness in her manner?

"Unbelievable, yes," he agreed gravely. "But true; the autopsy ended all doubt."

"You mean it developed doubt," she corrected, and a sigh accompanied the words. "Have the police any clue to the guilty man?"

"I don't know, I'm sure," Kent spoke with caution.

"You don't?" Her voice was a little sharp. "Didn't Detective Ferguson give you any news when talking to you on the porch?"

"So you recognized the detective?"

"I? No; I have never seen him before." She nodded gayly to an acquaintance passing through the hall. "Colonel McIntyre told me his name. It was so odd to meet a man here not in evening clothes that I had to ask who he was."

"Ferguson came to bring me some papers about a personal matter," explained Kent. He turned so as to face her. "Did you see a white envelope lying on the table when you walked out on the porch?"

She bowed her head absently, her foot keeping time to the inspiring music played by the orchestra stationed on the stair landing just above where they sat. "You left it lying on the table."

"Yes, so I did," replied Kent. "And I believe I was so ungallant as to bolt into the dining-room in front of you. Please accept my apologies."

Behind her fan, which she used with languid grace, the widow watched him.

"We all bolted together," she responded, "and are equally guilty—"

"Of what?" questioned a voice from the background, and looking up Kent saw Colonel McIntyre standing on the step above Mrs. Brewster. The music had ceased and in the lull their conversation had been distinctly audible.

"Guilty of curiosity," finished the widow. "Colonel de Geofroy's farewell speech was very amusing, did you not think so?"

"I did not stay to hear it," Kent confessed. "I had to return to the porch and get my envelope."

"You were a long time about it," com-

mented McIntyre, sitting down by Mrs. Brewster and possessing himself of her fan. "I waited to tell you that Helen and Barbara were worn out after the inquest and so stayed at home to-night, but you didn't show up."

"Neither did the envelope," retorted Kent, and as his companions looked at him, he added. "It had disappeared from the table."

"Probably blew away," suggested McIntyre. "I noticed a strong current of air from the dining-room, and two of the windows enclosing the porch were open."

"That's hardly possible," Kent replied skeptically. "The envelope weighed at least two ounces; it would have taken quite a gale to budge it."

McIntyre turned red. "Are you insinuating that one of us walked off with your envelope, Kent?" he demanded angrily. Mrs. Brewster stayed him as he was about to rise.

"Did you not say that Detective Ferguson brought you the envelope, Mr. Kent?" she asked.

"Yes."

"Then what more likely than that he carried it off again?" She smiled amusedly as Kent's expression altered. "Why not ask the detective?"

Her suggestion held a grain of truth. Suppose Ferguson had not believed his statement that the papers in the envelope were his personal property and had taken the envelope away to examine it at his leisure? The thought brought him to his feet.

"Good night, Mrs. Sherlock Holmes," he said jestingly, "I'll follow your advice—"

There was no opportunity to say more, for several men had discovered the widow's perch on the stairs and came to claim their dances. Over their heads McIntyre watched Kent stride down-stairs, then stooping over he picked up Mrs. Brewster's fan and sat down to patiently await her return.

Kent's pursuit of the detective took longer than he had anticipated, and it was after midnight before he finally located him at the office of the Chief of Detectives in the District Building.

"I've called for the envelope you took

from my safe early this evening," he began without preface, hardly waiting for the latter's surprised greeting.

"Why, Mr. Kent, I left it lying on the porch-table at the club," declared Ferguson. "Didn't you take it?"

"No." Kent's worried expression returned. "Like a fool I forgot the envelope when that cheering broke out in the dining-room and rushed to find out what it was about; when I returned to the porch the envelope was gone."

"Disappeared?" questioned Ferguson in astonishment.

"Disappeared absolutely; I searched the porch thoroughly and couldn't find a trace of it," Kent explained. "And in spite of McIntyre's contention that it might have blown out of the window, I am certain it did not."

"The windows were open, and I recollect there was a strong draught," remarked Ferguson thoughtfully. "But not sufficient to carry away that envelope."

"Exactly." Kent stepped closer. "Did you observe which one of our companions stood nearest the porch-table?"

Ferguson eyed him curiously. "Say, are you insinuating that one of those people took your envelope?"

"Yes."

A subdued whistle escaped Ferguson. "What was in that envelope, Mr. Kent?" he demanded, "to make it of any value to that bunch?" and as Kent did not answer immediately, he added. "Are you sure it had nothing to do with Jimmie Turnbull's death and Philip Rochester's disappearance?"

"Quite sure," Kent's gaze did not waver before his penetrating look. "I have already told you that the envelope contained old love letters, and I very naturally do not wish them to fall into the hands of Colonel McIntyre, the father of the girl I hope to marry."

Ferguson smiled, understandingly. "I see. From what I know of Colonel McIntyre there's a very narrow, nagging spirit concealed under his frank and engaging manner; I wish you joy of your future father-in-law," and he chuckled.

"Thanks," dryly. "You haven't an-

swered my question as to who stood nearest the porch-table, Ferguson."

The detective looked thoughtful. "We all stood fairly near; perhaps Mrs. Brewster was a shade the nearest. Mr. Clymer was offering her a chair when that noise came from the dining-room. There's one thing I am willing to swear to"—his manner grew more earnest—"that envelope was still lying on the table when I hustled into the dining-room."

"Well, who was the last person to leave the porch?" Kent demanded eagerly.

"I don't know," was the disappointing answer. "I reached the door the same moment you did and passed right around the dining-room to get a view of what was going on. I thought I would take a squint at the tables and see if there was any wine being used," he admitted. "But there was nothing doing in that line. Then Mr. Clymer offered to bring me down to headquarters, and I left the club with him."

Kent took a turn about the room. "Did Mr. Clymer go to the Cosmos Club?" he asked pausing by the detective.

"No, I heard him tell his chauffeur to drive to the Saratoga. Want to use the telephone?" observing Kent's glance stray to the instrument.

By way of answer Kent took off the receiver and after giving a number to the operator, he recognized Clymer's voice over the telephone.

"That you, Mr. Clymer? Yes, well, this is Kent speaking. Can you tell me who was the last person to leave the porch when Colonel de Geofroy made his farewell speech to-night at the club?"

"I was," came Clymer's surprised answer. "I waited for McIntyre to pick up Mrs. Brewster's fan."

"Did he take my letter off the table also?" called Kent.

"Why, no." Clymer's voice testified to his increased surprise. "Mrs. Brewster dropped her fan right in the doorway just as McIntyre and I approached; we both stooped to get it and, like fools, bumped our heads together in the act. He got the fan, however, and I waited for him to walk into the dining-room, before following Mrs. Brewster."

"As you passed the table, Mr. Clymer, did you see my letter lying on the table?" persisted Kent.

"Upon my word I never looked at the table," Clymer's tone carried conviction. "I walked right along in my hurry to know what the cheering was about. I am sorry, Kent; have you mislaid your letter?"

"Yes," glumly. "Sorry to have disturbed you, Mr. Clymer; good night," and Clymer's echoing, "Good night" sounded faintly as he hung up the receiver.

"Drew blank," he announced turning to Ferguson. "Confound you, Ferguson; you had no right to touch the papers in my safe. If harm comes from it, I'll make you suffer," and not waiting for the detective's jumbled apologies and explanations, he hurried from the building. But once on the sidewalk he paused for thought.

McIntyre must have picked up the white envelope; there was no other feasible explanation of its disappearance. But what had attracted his attention to the envelope—the red seal with the big letter "B" was its only identifying mark. If Helen had only told him the contents of the envelope!

Kent struck his clenched fist in his left hand in wrath; something must be done, he could not stand there all night. Although it was through no fault of his own that he had lost the envelope entrusted to his care, he was still responsible to Helen for its disappearance. She must be told that it was gone, however unpleasant the task.

Kent walked hastily along Pennsylvania Avenue until he came to a drug-store, still open, and entered the telephone-booth. He had recollected that the twins had a branch telephone in their sitting-room; he would have to chance their being awake at that hour.

Barbara McIntyre turned on her pillow and rubbed her sleepy eyes; surely she had been mistaken in thinking she heard the telephone-bell ringing. Even as she lay striving to listen, she dozed off again, to be rudely awakened by Helen's voice at her ear.

"Babs!" came the agitated whisper. "The envelope's gone."

"Gone!" Barbara swung out of bed. "Gone where?"

"Father has it."

Down-stairs in the library Mrs. Brewster paused, on her entrance, by the side of a piece of carved Venetian furniture and, laying her coronation scarf on it, she examined a white envelope—the red seal was intact.

At the sound of approaching footsteps she raised a trap-door in the piece of furniture and only her keen ears caught the faint thud of the envelope as it dropped inside, then, with a happy, tender smile, she turned to meet Colonel McIntyre.

CHAPTER XII.

THE ECHO OF A LAUGH.

COLONEL MCINTYRE tramped the deserted dining-room in exasperation.

Nine o'clock and the twins had not come to breakfast, nor was there any evidence that Mrs. Brewster intended taking that meal down-stairs.

"Will you wait any longer, sir?" inquired Grimes, who hovered solicitously in the background. "I'm afraid, sir, your eggs will be overdone."

"Bring them along," directed McIntyre, and flung himself into his chair at the foot of the table. He had been seated but a few minutes when Barbara appeared and dutifully presented her cheek to be kissed, then she tripped lightly to Helen's place opposite her father, and pressed the electric bell for Grimes.

"Coffee, please," she said as that worthy appeared, and busied herself in arranging the cups and saucers. "Helen is taking her breakfast up-stairs," she explained to her father.

"How about Mrs. Brewster?"

"Still asleep." Barbara poured out her father's coffee with careful attention to detail. "I peeked into her room a moment ago and she looked so 'comfy' I hadn't the heart to awaken her. You must have been very late at the club last night."

"We got home a little after one o'clock," McIntyre helped himself to poached eggs and bacon. "What did you do last night?"

"Went to bed early," answered Barbara with brevity. "Helen wasn't feeling well."

McIntyre's handsome face showed concern as he glanced across the table. "Have you sent for Dr. Stone?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Helen—I—we—" Barbara stumbled in her speech. "We have taken an aversion to Dr. Stone."

McIntyre set down his coffee-cup with unwonted force, thereby spilling some of its contents.

"What!" he exclaimed in complete astonishment, and regarded her fixedly for a moment. His tolerant manner, which he frequently assumed toward Barbara, grew stern. "Dr. Stone is my personal friend, as well as our family physician—"

"And a cousin of Margaret Brewster," put in Barbara mildly.

"Well, what of it?" trenchantly, aware that he had colored at mention of the widow's name.

"Nothing." Barbara's eyes opened innocently. "I only recalled the fact of his relationship as you enumerated his virtues."

Colonel McIntyre transferred his regard from her to the butler. "You need not wait, Grimes." He remained silent until the servant was safely in the pantry, and then addressed his daughter.

"None of your tricks, Barbara," he cautioned. "If Helen is ill enough to require medical attention, Dr. Stone is to be sent for, regardless of your sudden dislike to him, for which, by the way you have given no cause."

"Haven't I?" Barbara folded her napkin with neat exactness. "It's—it's intangible."

"Pooh!" McIntyre gave a short laugh as he pushed back his chair. "I'm going to see Helen. And, Barbara"—stopping on his way to the door—"don't be a fool!"

Barbara rubbed the tiny mole under the lobe of her ear, a trick she had when absent-minded or in deep thought. "Helen," she announced, unaware that she spoke aloud, "shall have a physician but it won't be—why, Grimes," awakening to the servant's noiseless return. "You can take the breakfast dishes. Did Miss Helen eat anything?"

"Not very much miss," Grimes shook a troubled head. "But she done better than

at dinner last night, so she's picking up, and don't you be worried over her," with emphasis as he sidled nearer. "Tell me, miss, is the colonel courtin' Mrs. Brewster?"

"Ask him?" she suggested and smiled at the consternation which spread over the butler's face.

"Me, miss!" he exclaimed in horror. "It would be as much as my place is worth; the colonel's that quick-tempered. Why, miss, just because I tidied up his desk and put his papers to rights he flew into a terrible passion."

"When was that?"

"Early this morning, miss; and he so upset Thomas, miss, that he gave notice."

"Oh that's too bad." Barbara liked the second man. "Perhaps father would reconsider and persuade him to stay."

The butler looked unconvinced. "It was about the police-dogs," he confided to her. "Thomas told him that Miss Helen wanted them brought back, and the colonel swore at him—'twas more than Thomas could stand and he ups and goes."

"Did Thomas get the dogs?"

"You wait and see, miss." Grimes was guilty of a most undignified wink. "Thomas ain't forgiven himself for not being here Monday night, miss; though it wouldn't 'a' done him any good; he wouldn't 'a' heard Mr. Turnbull climbing in or his arrest, away up-stairs in the servants' quarters."

"Grimes." Barbara retraced her footsteps and placed her lips very close to the old servant's ear. "When I came in on Tuesday morning I found the door to the attic stairway standing partly open—"

"Did you now, miss?" The two regarded each other warily. "And what hour may that have been?"

The butler cocked his ear for her answer—he was sometimes a little hard of hearing; but he waited in vain, Barbara had disappeared inside the library.

Colonel McIntyre had not gone at once to see his daughter Helen, as Barbara had supposed from his remark. Instead, he went down the staircase and into the reception-room on the ground floor. It was generally used as a smoking-room and lounge.

McIntyre looked over the prettily upholstered furniture, then strolled to the window and carefully inspected the lock: it appeared in perfect order as he tested it. Pushing the catch back as far as it would go, he raised the window—the sash moved upward without a sound, and he leaned out and looked up and down the path which ran the depth of the house to the kitchen door and servants' entrance. There was an iron gate separating the path from the sidewalk always kept locked at night, and McIntyre had thought that sufficient protection and had not put an iron grille in the window.

McIntyre closed and locked the window, then, pulling out the gilt chair which stood in front of the desk, he sat down, selected some monogrammed paper and penned a few lines in his characteristic though legible writing. Picking up some red sealing-wax, he lighted the small candle in its brass holder which matched the rest of the desk ornaments, but before heating the wax he looked for his signet ring, and frowned when he recalled leaving it on his dresser. He hesitated a moment, then, catching sight of a silver seal lying at the back of the desk, he picked it up and moistened the initial. A few minutes later he blew out the candle, returned the wax and seal to a pigeonhole, and carefully placed the envelope with its well-stamped letter "B" in his coat-pocket, and tramped up-stairs.

Helen heard his heavy tread coming down the hall toward her room, and scrambled back into bed. She had but time to arrange her dressing-sack when he entered.

"Good morning, my dear," he said, and stooping over, kissed her. As he straightened up the side of his single-breasted coat turned back and exposed to Helen's bright eyes the end of a white envelope. "Barbara told me you are not well," he wheeled forward a chair and sat down by the bed. "Hadn't I better send for Dr. Stone?"

"Oh, no," her reply, though somewhat faint, was emphatic, and he frowned.

"Why not?" aggressively. "I trust you do not share Barbara's suddenly developed prejudice against the good doctor."

"I do not require a physician," she said evasively. "I am well."

McIntyre regarded her intently. He could not decide whether her cheeks were flushed from fever or the result of exertion or excitement. Excitement over what? He looked about the room; it reflected the taste of its dainty owner in its furnishings, but nowhere did he find an answer to his unspoken question, until his eye lighted on a box of rouge under the electric lamp on her bed-stand.

"Don't use that," he said, touching the box. "You know I detest make-up."

"Oh, that!" She turned to see what he was talking about. "That rouge belongs to Margaret Brewster."

McIntyre promptly changed the conversation. "Have you had your breakfast?" he asked.

"Yes; Grimes took the tray down some time ago." Helen watched her father fidget with his watch-fob for several minutes, then asked with characteristic directness. "What do you wish?"

"To see that you have proper medical attention if you are ill," he returned promptly. "How would a week or ten days at Atlantic City suit you and Barbara?"

"Not at all." Helen sat up from her reclining position on the pillows. "Yor forget, father, that we have a house-guest; Margaret Brewster is not leaving until May."

"I had not forgotten," curtly. "I propose that she go with us."

A faint "Oh!" escaped Helen, otherwise she made no comment, and McIntyre, after contemplating her for a minute, looked away. "Either go to Atlantic City with us, Helen, or resume your normal, everyday life," he said shortly. "I am tired of heroics; Jimmie Turnbull was hardly the man to inspire them."

"Stop!" Helen's voice rang out imperiously. "I will not permit one word said in disparagement of Jimmie, least of all from you, father. Wait," as he attempted to speak. "I do not know what traits of character I may have inherited from you, but I have all mother's loyalty, and—that loyalty belongs to Jimmie."

McIntyre's eyes shifted under her gaze. "I regret very much this obsession," he

said, rising. "I will not attempt to reason with you again, Helen, but"—he made no effort to lower his voice—"the world—our world will soon know what manner of man James Turnbull was, of that I am determined."

"And I"—Helen faced her father proudly. "I will leave no stone unturned to defend his memory."

Her father wheeled about. "In doing so, see that you do not compromise yourself," he remarked coldly, and before the infuriated girl could answer, he slammed the door shut and stalked down-stairs.

Some half-hour later he opened the door of Rochester and Kent's law office and would have walked unceremoniously into Kent's private office had not John Sylvester stepped forward from behind his desk in the corner.

"Good morning, colonel," he said civilly. "Mr. Kent is not here. Do you wish to leave any message?"

"Oh, good morning, Sylvester," McIntyre's manner was brusque. "When do you expect Mr. Kent?"

"In about twenty minutes, colonel," Sylvester glanced at the wall clock. "Won't you sit down?"

McIntyre took the chair and planted it by the window. Never a very patient man, he waited for Kent with increasing irritation, and at the end of half an hour his temper was uttermost.

"Give me something to write with," he demanded of Sylvester, and, accepting the clerk's fountain pen without thanks, he walked over to the center-table and, drawing out his leather wallet, took from it a visiting-card and, stooping over, wrote:

"You have but thirty-six hours remaining—McIntyre."

"See that Mr. Kent gets this card," he directed. "No, don't put it there," irascibly, as the clerk laid the card on top of a pile of letters. "Take it into Mr. Kent's office and put it on his desk."

There was that about Colonel McIntyre which inspired complete obedience to his wishes, and Sylvester followed his directions without further question.

As the clerk stepped into Kent's office McIntyre saw a woman sitting by the

empty desk. She turned her head on hearing footsteps and their glances met. A faint exclamation broke from her.

"Margaret!" McIntyre strode past Sylvester. "What are you doing here?"

Mrs. Brewster's ready laugh hid all sign of embarrassment. "Must you know?" she asked archly. "That is hardly fair to Barbara."

"So Barbara sent you here with a message"—Mrs. Brewster treated his remark as a statement and not a question, and briskly changed the subject.

"I can't wait any longer," she pouted. "Please tell Mr. Kent that I am sorry not to have seen him."

"I will, madam." Sylvester placed McIntyre's card in the center of Kent's desk and opened the door for Mrs. Brewster.

As the widow stepped into the corridor she brushed by an overdressed woman, whose cheap finery gave clear indication of her tastes, and hardly noticing another's presence she turned and took McIntyre's arm and they strolled off together, her soft laugh floating back to where Mrs. Sylvester stood talking to her husband.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE FACE AT THE WINDOW.

HARRY KENT rang the bell at the McIntyre residence for the fifth time, and wondered what had become of the faithful Grimes; the butler was usually the soul of promptness, and to keep a caller waiting on the doorstep would, in his category, rank as the height of impropriety. As Kent again raised his hand toward the bell, the door swung open suddenly and Barbara beckoned to him to come inside.

"The bell is out of order," she explained. "I saw you from the window. Hurry, and Grimes won't know that you are here," and she darted ahead of him into the reception-room. Kent followed more slowly; he was hurt that she had had no other greeting for him.

"Babs, aren't you glad to see me?" he asked wistfully.

For an instant her eyes were lighted by her old sunny smile.

"You know I am," she whispered softly. As his arms closed around her and their lips met in a tender kiss she added fervently. "Oh, Harry, why didn't you make me marry you in the happy bygone days?"

"I asked you often enough," he declared. "Will you go with me to Rockville at once?"

Her face changed and she drew back from him. "No," she said. "It is selfish of me to think of my own happiness now."

"How about mine?" demanded Kent with warmth. "If you won't consider yourself, consider me."

"I do." She looked out of the window to conceal sudden blinding tears. There was a hint of hidden tragedy in her lovely face which went to Kent's heart.

"Sweetheart," his voice was very tender. "Is there nothing I can do for you?"

"Nothing." She shook her head drearily. "This family must 'dree its weir.'"

Kent studied her in silence; that she was in deadly earnest he recognized, she was no hysterical fool, given to sentimental twaddle.

"You came to me on Wednesday to ask my aid in solving Jimmie Turnbull's death," he said. "I have learned certain facts—"

Barbara sprang to her feet. "Wait," she cautioned. "Let me close the door. Now, go on"—with her customary impetuosity she reseated herself.

"Before I do so, I must tell you, Babs, that I recognized the fraud you and Helen perpetrated at the coroner's inquest."

"Fraud?"

"Yes," quietly. "I am aware that you impersonated Helen on the witness-stand and *vice versa*. You took a frightful risk."

"I don't see why," she protested. "In my testimony I told nothing but the truth."

"I never doubted you told the truth regarding the events of Monday night as *you* saw them, but the coroner's questions were put to you under the impression that you were Helen." Kent scrutinized her keenly. "Would Helen have been able to give the same answers that you did without perjuring herself?"

Barbara started and her face paled. "Are you insinuating that Helen killed Jimmie?" she cried.

"No," his emphatic denial was prompt. "But I do believe that she knows more of what transpired Monday night than she is willing to admit. Is that not so, Barbara?"

"Yes," she acknowledged reluctantly.

"Does she know who poisoned Jimmie?"

"No—no!" Barbara rested a firm hand on his shoulder. "I swear Helen does not know. You *must* believe me, Harry."

"She may not know," Kent spoke slowly.

"But are you sure she does not suspect some one?"

"Well, what if I do?" asked Helen quietly, and Kent, looking around, found her standing just inside the door. Her entrance had been noiseless.

"You should tell the authorities, Helen," Kent rose as she passed him and selected a seat which brought her face somewhat in the shadow. "If you do not, you may retard justice."

"But if I speak I may involve the innocent," she retorted. "I"—her eyes shifted from him to Barbara and back again—"I cannot undertake that responsibility."

"Better that than let the guilty escape through your silence," protested Kent. "Possibly the theories of the police may coincide with yours—"

"What are they?" asked Barbara impetuously.

Kent considered before replying. If Detective Ferguson had gone so far as to secure a search-warrant to go through Rochester's apartment and office it would not be long before the fact of his being a "suspect" would be common property; there could, therefore, be no harm in his repeating Ferguson's conversation to the twins. In fact, as their legal representative, they were entitled to know the latest developments.

"Detective Ferguson believes that the poison was administered by Philip Rochester," he said finally, and watched to see how the announcement would affect them. Barbara's eyes opened to their widest extent, and back in her corner, into which she had gradually edged her chair, Helen emitted a long, long breath as her taut muscles relaxed.

"What makes Ferguson think Philip guilty?" demanded Barbara.

"It is known that he and Jimmie were not on good terms," replied Kent. "Then Rochester's disappearance after Jimmie's death lends color to the theory."

"Has Philip really disappeared?" asked Helen. "You showed me a telegram—"

"Apparently the telegram was a fake," admitted Kent. "The Cleveland police report that he is not at the address given in the telegram."

"But who could have an object in sending such a telegram?" asked Barbara slowly.

"Rochester, in the hope of throwing the police off his track, if he really killed Jimmie," Kent looked straight at Helen. "It was while searching our office safe for trace of Rochester's present address that Ferguson obtained possession of your sealed envelope."

Helen plucked nervously at the ribbons on her gown. "Did the detective open the envelope?" she asked.

"No."

"Are you sure?"

"Positive; the red seal was unbroken."

"Tell us how the envelope came to be stolen from you?" coaxed Barbara.

"We were in the little smoking-porch off the dining-room at the Club de Vingt," Barbara smiled her remembrance of it, and motioned Kent to continue. "Ferguson had just put down the envelope on the table and I started to pick it up when cheering in the dining-room distracted my attention and I, with the others, went to see what it was about. When I returned to the porch the envelope was no longer on the table."

"Who were with you?" questioned Helen.

"Your father, Mrs. Brewster—"

"Of course," murmured Barbara. "Go on, Harry."

"Detective Ferguson and Ben Clymer," Barbara made a wry face, "and," went on Kent, not heeding her, "each of these persons denies any further knowledge of the envelope, except to declare it was lying on the table when we all made a dash for the dining-room."

"Who was the last to leave the porch?" asked Helen.

"Ben Clymer."

"And he saw no one take the envelope?"

"He declares that he had his back to the table, part of the time, but to the best of his knowledge no one took the envelope."

"One of them must have done so," insisted Barbara. "The envelope hadn't legs or wings."

"One of them did take it," agreed Kent. "But which one is the question. Frankly, to find the answer, I must know the contents of the envelope, Helen."

"Why?"

"Because then I will have some idea who would be enough interested in the envelope to steal it."

Helen considered him long and thoughtfully. "I cannot answer your question," she announced finally. She saw his face harden, and hastened to explain. "Not through any lack of confidence in you, Harry, but I do not know what the envelope contains."

Kent stared at her open-mouthed. "Then who requested you to lock the envelope in Rochester's safe?" he demanded, and, receiving no reply, asked suddenly: "Was it Rochester?"

"I am not at liberty to tell you," she responded; her mouth set in obstinate lines and before he could press his request a second time, she asked: "Philip Rochester defended Jimmie in court when every one thought him a burglar; why, then, should Philip have picked him out to attack—he is not a homicidal maniac?"

"No, but the police contend that Rochester recognized Jimmie in his make-up and decided to kill him, hoping his death would be attributed to *angina pectoris*, and no post-mortem held," wound up Kent.

"I don't quite understand"—Helen raised her handkerchief to her forehead and removed a drop of moisture with a dainty pat. "How did Philip kill Jimmie there in court before us all?"

"Ferguson believes that he put the dose of aconitine in the glass of water which Jimmie asked for," explained Kent, and would have continued his remarks, but a scream from Barbara startled him.

"There, look at the window," she cried. "I saw a face peering in. Look, quick, Harry, look!"

Kent needed no second bidding but, although he craned his head far outside the open window and gazed both up and down the street and along the patch to the kitchen door, not even a trace could he find of any one.

"Was it a man or woman?" he asked, turning back to the room.

"I—I couldn't tell; it was just a glimpse," Barbara stood resting one hand on the table, her weight leaning upon it, not for words would she have had Kent know that her knees were shaking under her.

"Did you see the face, Helen?" As he put the question Kent looked around at the silent girl in the corner; she had slipped back in her chair and, with closed eyes, lay white-lipped and limp. With a leap Kent gained her side and his hand sought her pulse.

"Ring for brandy and water," he directed as Barbara came to his aid. "Helen has fainted."

Twenty minutes later Kent hastened out of the McIntyre house and, turning into Connecticut Avenue, boarded a street-car headed south. After carrying Helen to the twins' sitting-room he had assisted Barbara in reviving her. He had wondered at the time why Barbara had not summoned the servants, then concluded that neither sister wished a scene. That Helen was worse than she would admit he appreciated, and advised Barbara to send for Dr. Stone. The well-meant suggestion had apparently fallen on deaf ears, for no physician had appeared during the time he was in the house, nor had Barbara used the telephone to summon Dr. Stone. Kent had only waited long enough to convince himself that Helen was out of danger, and then had departed.

It was nearly one o'clock when he finally stepped inside his office, and he found his clerk and a dressy female bending eagerly over a newspaper. They looked up at his approach and Sylvester came eagerly forward.

"This is my wife, sir," he explained, and Kent bowed courteously to Mrs. Sylvester. "We were just reading this account of Mr. Rochester's disappearance; it's dreadful, sir,

to think that the police believe him guilty of Mr. Turnbull's murder."

"Dreadful, indeed," agreed Kent; the news had been published even sooner than he had imagined. "What paper is that?"

"The noon edition of the *Times*," Sylvester handed it to him.

"Thanks," Kent flung down his hat and spread open the paper. "Who have been here to-day?"

"Colonel McIntyre, sir; he left a card for you." Sylvester hurried into Kent's office, to return a moment later with a visiting-card. "He left this, sir, for you with most particular directions that it be handed to you at once on your arrival."

Kent read the curt message on the card without comment and tore the pasteboard into tiny bits.

"Any one else been in this morning?" he asked.

"Yes, sir." Sylvester consulted a written memorandum. "Mr. Black called, also Colonel Thorne, Senator Harris, and Mrs. Brewster."

"Mrs. Brewster!" The newspaper slipped from Kent's fingers in his astonishment. "What did she want here?"

"To see you, sir, so she said, but she first asked for Mr. Rochester," explained Sylvester, stooping over to pick up the inside sheet of the *Times* which had separated from the others. "I told her that Mr. Rochester was unavoidably detained in Cleveland; then she said she would, in his absence, consult you, and I let her wait in your office for the good part of an hour."

Kent thought a moment, then walked toward his door; on its threshold he paused, struck by a sudden idea.

"Did Colonel McIntyre come with Mrs. Brewster?" he asked.

"No, Mr. Kent; he came in while she was here."

"And they went off together," volunteered Mrs. Sylvester, who had been a silent listener to their conversation. Kent started; he had forgotten the woman. "Excuse me, Mr. Kent," she continued, and stepped toward him. "I presume, likely that you are very interested in this charge of murder against your partner Mr. Rochester?"

"I am," affirmed Kent, as Mrs. Sylvester paused.

"I am, too, sir," she confided to him. "'Cause you see I was in the court-room when Mr. Turnbull died and I'm naturally interested."

"Naturally," agreed Kent with a commiserating glance at his clerk; the latter's wife threatened to be loquacious, and he judged from her looks that it was a habit which had grown with the years. "And what took you to the police court on Tuesday morning?"

"Why, me and Mr. Sylvester have our little differences like other married couples," she explained. "And sometimes we ask the court to settle them." She caught Kent's look of impatience and hurried her speech. "The burglar case came on just after ours was dismissed, and seeing the McIntyre twins, whom I've often read about, I just thought I'd stay. Let me have that paper a minute."

"Certainly." Kent gave her the newspaper and she ran her finger down the columns devoted to the Turnbull case with a slowness that set his already excited nerves on edge.

"Here's what I'm looking for," she exclaimed triumphantly, a minute later, and pointed to the paragraph:

"Mrs. Margaret Perry Brewster, the fascinating widow, added nothing material to the case in her testimony, and she was quickly excused, after stating that she was told about the tragedy by the McIntyre twins upon their return from the police court."

"Well, what of it?" asked Kent.

"Only this, Mr. Kent"—Mrs. Sylvester enjoyed nothing so much as talking to a good looking man, especially in the presence of her husband, and she could not refrain from a triumphant look at him as she went on with her remarks—"There was a female sitting on the bench next to me in court; in fact, she and I were the only women on that side, and I kinder noticed her on that account, and then I saw she was all done up in veils—I couldn't see her face.

"I caught her peering this way and that during the burglar's hearing; I don't reckon she could see well through all the veils."

Now, don't get impatient, Mr. Kent: I'm getting to my point—that woman sitting next to me in the police court was the widow Brewster."

"What!" Kent laughed unbelievably. "Oh, come, you are mistaken."

"I am not, sir." Mrs. Sylvester spoke with conviction. "Now, why does Mrs. Brewster declare at the coroner's inquest that she only heard of the Turnbull tragedy from the McIntyre twins on their return home?"

"You *must* be mistaken," argued Kent. "Why, you admit yourself that she was so swathed in veils that you could not see her face."

"No, but I heard her laugh in court." Mrs. Sylvester spoke in deep earnestness and Kent placed faith in her statement in spite of his outward skepticism. "And I

heard her laugh in this corridor this morning and I placed her as the same woman. I asked Mr. Sylvester who she was, and he told me. I'd been reading this account of the Turnbull inquest, and I recollected seeing Mrs. Brewster's name, and my husband and I were just reading the account over when you came in."

Kent gazed in perplexity at Mrs. Sylvester. "Why did Mrs. Brewster laugh in the police court?" he asked.

"When Dr. Stone exclaimed to the deputy marshal: 'Your prisoner appears ill!'" declared Mrs. Sylvester; she enjoyed the dramatic, and that Kent was hanging on her words she was fully aware, in spite of his expressionless face. "Dr. Stone lifted the burglar in his arms and then Mrs. Brewster laughed as she laughed in the corridor to-day—a soft gurgling laugh."

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.



SUPPOSE you were the richest man in the world, and, suddenly, were catapulted from established marts of trade to a bandit-ridden, sea-bitten desert—what would you do?

Or, inversely, suppose you were the finest mechanic that civilization had developed, and were thrown into a great city where nobody was turning a single wheel of constructive industry—what would you do?

Dr. Rhodes said that the "value of money and labor is a mere matter of place;" and

then he attempted to prove it. It is for you to judge of his success.

Introducing Dr. Robert Folwell Rhodes, M.A., Ph.D., the following brief excerpt from his latest published work may be quoted:

Habit and custom, therefore, are a simple matter of geography, as are the relations of capital and labor. For instance, long veils and baggy pants would be quite inappropriate, if worn by American women-folk on a New Jersey bathing beach, whereas bare arms and legs, and even faces,

would be equally *outré*, if exhibited by the ladies at a Mohammedan watering place. And while the gentlewomen of the Caucasian races whiten their teeth, certain South Sea sisters blacken theirs; and each woman, according to geographical standards, thereby makes herself beautiful. By the same token, one wears a ring on her finger—the other in her nose.

Then, as to the relations of capital and labor: The average rich man, accustomed to the casual acceptance of things that civilization brings to his hand, would be helpless if thrown into a wilderness and put on his own resources for food and shelter. The woodsman, the mechanic, the laborer, would be equally helpless, if, suddenly, he were dropped in a great city, and found no one there to give him employment.

Therefore, it would seem that capital and labor are interdependent; yet capital appears to exact an unreasoning toll, wherever geographical and political and economic position permits it to exercise its power. Labor, however, has been, and is, and always must be the actual foundation of capital.

There was a great deal more to the article, of course, but the points enumerated were those that impressed themselves on the mind of Miss Millicent Maltby Smith. Indeed, Miss Smith never before had looked at the matter in that light—if, forsooth, she ever had given the subject any serious thought. For naturally, having had naught to do with labor, other than to order what she wished, and have somebody—father, brother or suitor—pay the bill, she regarded money as omnipotent.

Miss Smith, be it said, was a descendant of the great Smith, who had distinguished his branch of the family by trapping enough muskrats, a century before, to establish the nucleus of a vast fortune. Her father had dissipated most of his share of the ancestral estate; but a loving mother and a doting sister expected Millicent to make up the deficiencies that they suffered.

The one best bet appeared to be James Bragmore Cuddles. Tight son of a loose sire, James Bragmore, by canny business tactics, had doubled an inheritance of a hundred millions. During the war, he had not worn a uniform, although he had enjoyed uniform profits therefrom. For the one, his ostensible excuse was poor eyesight; for the other, his secret boast was a most excellent foresight. He was fortunate in being interested in industries that netted large returns.

Just now, it had been decreed—though he didn't know it—that Miss Millicent Maltby Smith should be one of his netted returns. He had the money, she possessed family traditions, her devoted mamma was determined—and Millicent was quite agreeable. Which accounts, perhaps, for mamma's sudden headache at Fort Myers, down on the west coast of Florida, and her insistence that the young folks go off for the day on Jimmie's cruiser, waiving the formality of a *duenna* such as she.

It was then that the strong hand of circumstances reached out of the infinite—as it does, often, in weaving the complex threads of that great mystery that carpets our paths of life.

No one could foresee that Jimmie's cruiser, a perfection of motor-boat construction, was going to break down at Naples, that tiny, end-of-the-world place forty miles to the south, from which one jumps into swampland and savagery; none could fancy that, to while away drear moments, Millicent should turn the pages of a popular magazine to a recondite article dealing with the philosophy of capital and labor, and become absorbed thereby; nor could one surmise that, at the psychological moment, the author of that article should be rusticated at that one of few such remaining frontier towns.

However, all of these seemingly inconsequential things happened. Which is relevant to an earlier paragraph in this story, introducing Robert Folwell Rhodes, M.A., Ph.D. For it was Dr. Rhodes who came to the rescue.

In very soiled white ducks, Dr. Rhodes rubber-shoed across the porch of the miserable little hotel, just as Mr. Cuddles was hearing from his skipper that they probably would have to send to Tampa for an engine part, and couldn't possibly get away before the following day—most likely the day after.

"How do you do, Mr. Cuddles?" greeted the doctor pleasantly. "In trouble?"

Mr. Cuddles adjusted his thick glasses and gave Rhodes an insolent stare.

"Don't let my troubles concern you, sir," he retorted tartly. "I can afford to settle any difficulties I may encounter."

"Oh, I'm not concerned, I assure you." Rhodes laughed easily. "I thought only to aid you and Miss Smith, if—"

"You know Miss Smith?" Cuddles flashed a suspicious, ratlike glance from one to the other.

"Why," she interrupted brightly, "the gentleman is—is—"

"Rhodes—Robert Folwell Rhodes," snapped the doctor. Then, turning to Cuddles: "I have the honor to be professor of political economy at the university that is maintained chiefly by your gracious bounty." And at the end of his informative statement, the doctor gave a Chesterfieldian bow that concealed the sneer on his lips.

"Oh, I see—one of my instructors," said Cuddles, in a conciliatory tone.

"Yes; one of *your* instructors," agreed the doctor. "In the illness of the president of the university, I had the honor, last June, to present you to the graduating class—or should I say that I had the honor to present the graduating class to you? You may remember that you handed out the diplomas."

"Quite so; yes, I remember the incident. But I meet so many persons, and I have such a poor memory for faces—well, you'll pardon me, won't you, Rhodes?"

"Oh, it's *Doctor* Rhodes!" Miss Smith had just awakened. "Why, Jimmie, I remember Dr. Rhodes, I was at the commencement, you know, and he was very, very nice to me. And this is his article that I have been reading—this wonderful, wonderful article, all about capital and labor, and—"

"Rotten stuff!" rasped Mr. Cuddles. "But pardon me, Rhodes. You know, I—"

"Don't spare me," interposed the doctor.

"Well, I read the article to which Miss Smith refers." Mr. Cuddles ventured a twisted smile, and his little, pig eyes twinkled through their heavy lenses. "I can't agree with you, of course, because you give labor the better end of the argument. You say that capital could not exist without labor, while I contend that labor cannot live without capital behind it. I've had a lot of experience with both sides—and I know."

"I wrote, if you'll notice," reminded the doctor gently, "that the relative power of

capital and labor was governed by a mere matter of place."

"Then, name a place," demanded Cuddles, "where labor is not dependent on capital—for its opportunity to work, for its tools, for its markets! If a man has the money, he can buy anything he may want, anywhere—labor included."

"All right, Mr. Cuddles," laughed the doctor; "but I happened to overhear your talk with your skipper, and I'll bet you a cigar you can't get back to Fort Myers this afternoon, unless you accept an invitation, herewith extended, to go in my boat—and I'll bet you another cigar that you can't buy my boat."

"Let's go in the doctor's boat," beamed Miss Smith. "Mamma will be terribly worried if we don't get back; and it would be awfully bad form, you know, and maybe a scandal, and—"

"I yield to the argument and forfeit the bet," grinned Cuddles. "Here, Rhodes, are your two cigars. I accept your invitation. Where's your boat?"

Mr. Cuddles, by quick mental calculation, reasoned that two cigars were little enough price for passage back to Fort Myers. Indeed, by his gracious acceptance, he had effected quite a shrewd bargain.

"Thanks," said Rhodes; "I never smoke."

So Mr. Cuddles placed the cigars, which had cost him fifty cents each, back in his case. His bargain really was better than he could have anticipated. Besides, they were the last two in the case.

"Follow on," directed the doctor, and led the way down a narrow path to the crumbling dock, a hundred yards distant.

"Is it true, Dr. Rhodes," inquired Miss Smith in dismay. "I—I'm afraid of sailing vessels."

"Best little catboat on the Gulf," boasted the doctor.

"Yes," reassured Mr. Cuddles, after a critical squint at the lines of the little craft. "I should account her safe. Let us hasten."

"By all means," agreed the doctor. There was a queer, self-satisfied glint in his eyes, like that of a cat with a mouse under its paw; but neither Mr. Cuddles nor

Miss Smith observed it. "And we *can* make haste, too," he added, "for the sea is smooth and the wind is in our favor."

They were off at a good six-knot clip, with a stiff breeze dead astern. It was easy sailing along the desolate, barren keys.

"Is it true, Dr. Rhodes," inquired Miss Smith, "that the country hereabouts is infested with outlaws?"

"Quite true," replied the doctor. "This, perhaps, is the most lawless section of the United States remaining to-day. Hundreds of criminals have found refuge here; and because of the wildness and isolation of the country, are practically safe from pursuit.

"They live chiefly by agriculture, and in mutual distrust of the stranger. If the latter possess anything of value, they rob him; if he have nothing, they suspect him of being a detective or revenue officer—and probably kill him."

"Nice little piece of territory," commented Mr. Cuddles. "I'd hate to be shipwrecked along here." And Mr. Cuddles instinctively turned the diamonds that adorned his ring, worth several thousands of dollars, into the palm of his hand.

Dr. Rhodes treated himself to a wicked smile. The wind shifted to a point abaft the port quarter, and blew harder. A cloud scurried across the sun and spat a cupful of warm rain in their faces. The sea kicked up, and white horses began to race across the chop. Dr. Rhodes trimmed his sail, edged shoreward, and again smiled his wicked smile.

"It—it's getting a bit rough, isn't it?" inquired Miss Smith nervously.

"It may be rougher," replied the doctor ambiguously.

"Is it advisable to run so close in?" Cuddles wanted to know. "We might go aground, and then those outlaws—"

Came a shriek of wind to drown his words. The little catboat heeled over, righted herself as Rhodes slightly moved the tiller, and clipped a faster pace before the rising gale. She was like a mad thing, glorying in her freedom, dancing to the shrill tune that whistled through her strained rigging.

"Man! man!" cried Cuddles. "We're running ashore! Put her about!"

"I'm doing my best," shouted Dr. Rhodes. But again that wicked smile wrinkled the corners of his mouth.

In a moment, then, it happened. The little boat shivered as her keel grated on a shoal; then, lifted by a huge comber and driven by a venomous squall, she seemed almost to leap into the air. Swift as an arrow she darted forward; and in one cataclysmic instant came a crash, a deluge of water, the groan of strained timbers, the triumphant screech of the wind—and the three occupants of the catboat found themselves piled in the tiny cockpit, one on the other.

Rhodes, the first to untangle himself, sprang over the side, knee-deep in the surf. The water here was boiling white, but the force of the driving waves was broken by the bar over which they had scraped their way.

"Come on!" cried the doctor. "We're safe, anyway."

"You fool!" chortled Cuddles. "You could have prevented this. Did you ever sail a boat before?"

He was a picture of ludicrous discomfiture, huddled in the fore part of the pit, glaring malevolently through his thick glasses. Miss Smith, however, had lost no time in accepting the doctor's proffered aid, and allowing herself to be carried ashore.

"Better get out while you have the chance," admonished the doctor, again indulging in that queer little smile.

He waded back to the catboat, stowed away the sail, gathered up a few tools and, carrying a line ashore, made it fast to a sturdy shrub that grew close to the water's edge. Meanwhile, Mr. Cuddles, growling oaths to himself, clambered out of the cockpit and splashed to the beach.

"Well, now, Rhodes," he grated, "I suppose we are at the mercy of those gentle outlaws whom you described—due to your fool handling of a perfectly good boat."

"Swearing doesn't help matters, Jimmie," interposed Miss Smith. "And I think that Dr. Rhodes deserves great credit for avoiding the dangers of the storm and landing us in safety."

Dr. Rhodes smiled his gratitude for the vote of confidence, and said:

"I doubt if we are in imminent danger from the outlaws. I think we are on one of the uninhabited keys, probably ten miles from the mainland. Of course, if they should learn that we are here, well—"

"Well, we're just as badly off, anyway," retorted the irreconcilable Cuddles. "We'll have nothing to eat, and—"

"Oh, yes you will," interrupted Rhodes. "Back in Naples, you will remember, you boasted that a man who had the money could get anything he wanted, anywhere in the world."

The Cuddles jaw dropped.

"But, man, you say we are on a desert island," he replied. "How can I buy anything to eat where there's nothing to eat, and nobody from whom to buy it?"

Dr. Rhodes laughed outright. The storm increased in volume. Terror was growing on the face of the delicate Miss Smith—perplexity on that of Mr. Cuddles. And Dr. Rhodes laughed again in a most aggravating manner, and, seemingly, at an exceedingly inopportune time. Surely, there was nothing in their situation to laugh about, and Cuddles began to fear that he had an insane man to deal with.

"Well, so far, we're not hungry," said the doctor. "Shelter must be our first thought. I'll rig up a hut for Miss Smith."

Dr. Rhodes had brought ashore a small box of nails and screws, a saw and a short-handled ax. With these tools, he attacked a copse of stunted pine and palm trees, and, within half an hour, had constructed a most serviceable and picturesque shelter.

The standards were of young trees, cut where they forked; sides and roof were thatched with the thick, glossy, waterproof leaves of the palm. He built the hut on the protected side of a long, low sand dune, and floored it with palm branches. These he covered with an Indian blanket, brought from the catboat.

"There, Miss Smith," he said proudly, "I offer you a home; and you will need it for two or three days, at least, because we're in for one of those 'southers,' as they call 'em down here. For myself, I shall use the cockpit of the boat, and hang a tarpaulin to keep the storm out."

Miss Smith expressed her gratitude rather

dubiously, and looked anxiously from Dr. Rhodes to Mr. Cuddles.

"Well—ah—that's all very fine, Rhodes," remarked Cuddles, "but where do I come in?"

"You?" Dr. Rhodes gave a fine imitation of amazement. "Why, Mr. Cuddles, you have money enough to buy anything you want, anywhere—"

An unexpected blast of the wind took the doctor's cap off, and sent his words scurrying away with it.

"I meant," he resumed, on recovering both cap and breath, "that you can take care of yourself, because you have money to buy anything."

"But there's nobody on this beastly strip of sand to buy it from," reminded Cuddles plaintively.

"Why don't you built yourself a shelter?" suggested Dr. Rhodes.

"For the simple reason, my dear fellow, that I'm not a mechanic; always too busy with big affairs to concern myself with manual labor. But if you will lend me your tools—"

"Lend you *my* tools!" Dr. Rhodes laughed, with affected amazement. "Supposing, Mr. Cuddles, that I should call at your iron mill in Pennsylvania, and tell you that I wanted to open a foundry of my own; and although I knew nothing of the business, I'd try it out, if you would lend me your furnaces and rolls. You'd think I was crazy, wouldn't you?"

"I think you are crazy now. You are attempting to compare the equipment of a great iron plant, costing millions, with your saw and ax, worth, at most, five dollars."

"Exactly," agreed the doctor. "You see, the principle is the same; but you are losing sight of the fictitious value caused by the law of supply and demand. On this key, my saw and ax are worth more than your iron mill. In Pennsylvania, with money enough, I could build a bigger foundry than yours. If you can purchase a better saw and ax than mine down here—well, that's your privilege. It's a mere matter of place, you know."

"In other words," sneered Cuddles, "you wish me to buy your tools at an exorbitant price—a hundred dollars, say?"

"Not at all. They are not for sale; and if they were, under present circumstances, they would cost a man who could afford it at least fifty million dollars, as you reckon money."

Mr. Cuddles gasped, Miss Smith laughed, Dr. Rhodes smiled in a masterful way, and the wind shrieked its nascent menace.

"As I have said," reiterated the doctor, "value often is gauged by geographical place. During the war, I happen to know that you profited in iron and steel; you were in with the leather pirates, and you had a finger in the butter and poultry ring. You squeezed the defenseless consumer of his last nickel. Your storage-house fowl flew to an amazing perch on the family cost sheet."

"Now, on this key, you can go out and catch a wholesome bird, if you are hungry, and can gather all the eggs you like, free of cost; but you can't buy a five-dollar saw and ax for less than fifty million dollars!"

The wind howled a new alarm; the surf was beating hard; another splash of warm rain gave reminder of the growing storm. Miss Smith shivered—from sheer nerves, of course, because the day was warm—and shrank into the little hut that Dr. Rhodes had made for her.

"All right," retorted Cuddles testily. "But let's be done with this foolish argument. The facts now are that a terrific storm is rising—that I need a shelter—that you have the tools and are adept at such labor, and that, if I had your saw and ax, even as a gift, I'd have a mighty hard time doing anything with them. Will you fix a place for me?"

Dr. Rhodes pondered—and smiled. "Do you prefer the sea front or is the woods better to your liking?" he asked blandly.

"Don't be absurd, Rhodes," snapped Cuddles. And then, with a sting of significance: "Remember that I support the university that employs you."

"And remember, Mr. Cuddles, that I am the dictator of the island that supports *you*. I have a saw and an ax, and the ability to use them. You have two hundred millions of dollars, but they are not giving you either food or shelter."

"I really don't wish to be any more ab-

surd than you fellows who charged fifty-five cents a pound for chicken and fifteen dollars for shoes. But, if I remember rightly, you paid five millions of dollars for your Lake Shore home. Now, here, I'll give you an ocean-front house for a paltry two millions, or a place in the woods for half the price."

Miss Smith got the point of the situation, and laughed again, quite heartily. Mr. Cuddles seemed to suffer a sudden spasm of pain. Dr. Rhodes, seemingly quite indifferent, started toward his boat.

"I say, Rhodes," called Cuddles, raising his voice above the shriek of the wind. "You know, I haven't more than forty dollars in my pocket; but you may have that, if you—"

"Don't care for it, thanks. I couldn't spend it here. But your promissory note would be good. Check? Oh, no, thanks! You could cancel that. But I'll accept your note, if you like—two million dollars for a sea-front house, and half that for one back in the woods."

With which Dr. Rhodes tucked his precious saw and ax under his arm, and, head down to the wind, waded through the fringe of surf to his stranded catboat.

He saw Miss Millicent Smith laughing immoderately, and noted a dour expression on the face of Mr. Cuddles, who was pacing the storm-racked beach. Dr. Rhodes smiled softly, and, without alarm, cast an eye to the weather.

It was getting worse—the weather. He doubted the safety of remaining aboard the catboat, because of the rising surf. Therefore, he bundled up a pair of blankets, a tarpaulin, a small cask of drinking water, a box of canned goods, a few cooking utensils and his tools. He got them ashore in two trips.

Mr. Cuddles gave no heed as he lugged his paraphernalia to the shelter of another dune, a hundred yards distant from Miss Smith's hut. Mr. Cuddles, incidentally, was squatting glumly at the door, watching the increasing tempest. He deigned an occasional glance in the direction of the doctor, as the latter sawed and chopped and fashioned a crude house, similar to the one that he had constructed previously.

Meanwhile, the wind had reached the proportions of a gale, and the tide was rising. There might be a chance of saving the catboat, now dancing like a feather in the spuming surf. Dr. Rhodes strode down to the beach, and began hauling on the mooring line.

"I say!" shouted Cuddles: "I'll help you save that boat, if you'll build me a—"

"Oh, I'll help drag it out," volunteered Miss Smith, putting her small strength to the line.

"Thanks, Cuddles," replied the doctor, "but it's as much to your interest to save the boat as it is mine." Then, to the girl: "Thanks; that's awfully good of you."

Cuddles took hold without further parley, and, with little difficulty, they hauled the twenty-foot craft up beyond the teeth of the smashing combers.

"And now," said Cuddles peremptorily, catching hard for his breath, "what about that—that house?"

"Your note, Mr. Cuddles, on the terms that I—"

"All right," snapped Cuddles. "I'll buy the best, of course. I'll draw up a note and sign it."

"Thanks," retorted the doctor. "I'll spare you the trouble of drafting the note. Permit me."

He led the way into Miss Smith's hut, pulled an old envelope and a fountain pen from an inner pocket, and wrote:

West Coast of Florida,
March 15, 1919.

Ninety days after date, for value received, I promise to pay to Robert Folwell Rhodes, or order, the sum of two million dollars (\$2,000,000).

"Sign," said the doctor tersely.

"Before I get the house?" grumbled Cuddles.

"No, you may have the one I've built for myself."

With very ill grace, Mr. Cuddles affixed his signature to the promissory note, which was quite as legal and binding as though it had been drawn in a Wall Street bank.

Miss Smith, meanwhile, was taking a keen delight in the proceedings. She chuckled softly, and gave the doctor a coy side glance that seemed entirely out of keeping

with the situation. However, Mr. Cuddles was too perturbed to notice it.

"Thanks," beamed Rhodes pleasantly.

The doctor hastened to the hut that he had just sold, and removed his belongings to a favorable spot, fifty yards to the other side of Miss Smith's domicile. There, in a jiffy, he threw up a third hut, this one assuredly for his own use. He had just about finished his labor, when Cuddles, head down to the gale, pressed to his side.

"I say, Rhodes," he rasped, "how about a blanket? You don't expect me to lie on green palm leaves, do you?"

Dr. Rhodes gave him a surprised look.

"You may cover yourself up in the sand, if you like," he said.

"In the sand? Why, you impertinent—" Mr. Cuddles was speechless for a moment. "Do you think I'm a sand crab? Do—"

"Not exactly that kind of a crab," replied the doctor suavely.

"But you have two blankets here, and—"

"I didn't sell you a *furnished* house," the doctor interposed urbanely. "Did the contractor for your lake-shore home include blankets, Mr. Cuddles?"

Mr. Cuddles glowered.

"Well, how much do you want for a blanket?" he sneered. "Would a hundred thousand dollars be enough to satisfy your rapacity?"

"Just about," agreed Rhodes smilingly, "as there are only two blankets on the key, and I need one of them."

"How much for both?" snapped Cuddles.

"Well, for the remaining blanket, since the demand is so great, about four hundred thousand dollars—five hundred thousand in all. Shall I draw another note?"

"Draw your note, you fiendish robber," snarled Cuddles.

"Enough of that!" The doctor assumed a very stern aspect. "As ostensible master of this place, I might also draw you into durance; and as Supreme Court judge, exact a heavy fine. Please be careful of your language. You see, Mr. Cuddles, having the power to do so, I've elected myself a combination of Poo-Bah and American profiteer. Incidentally, here's your note for the blankets."

And Mr. Cuddles gave his written promise to pay half a million dollars for ten dollars' worth of merchandise.

"Very, very good of you, Rhodes," he chortled, on receipt of his bundle and with his best attempt at irony. "Have you a match?"

"A few," admitted the doctor; "but they are *terribly* expensive."

"Hah!" snarled Cuddles, as he fared forth into the screeching gale.

With the gentleman who could buy anything gone, Dr. Rhodes arranged his tarpaulin to give himself comfort. It was large enough to provide both mattress top and cover, if he should require the latter. He rather felt that he should need covering, as approaching night brought a perceptible chill.

The doctor swept sea and sky with an eye trained by experience to Gulf Coast squalls. Half a mile to the north, he noticed a flock of sea-birds settling down for the night. He fashioned a rude hamper of tough grass, and, braving the storm, stalked up the beach. He foresaw that, presently, somebody would be hungry. And it was very easy, as the shadows fell, to catch and wring the necks of a couple of the sea birds. It was easier still to put a dozen eggs in his hamper.

As Rhodes returned, he noticed that Cuddles and Miss Smith were engaged in earnest conversation at the doorway of her hut. He smiled at the expense to which the eminent Mr. Cuddles had been put in a day. And then, before night should let down her mantle, he hastened to gather a pile of dry wood from the stunted forest growth. He fancied that, ere long, some one also might like a fire.

Here, indeed, was a strange assortment of jewels, thrown into a setting of God-wrought desolation—a multimillionaire, a girlish splinter from the social tree, a mere college professor with ideas. The Florida key was swept by a shrieking storm; and night crashed ominously, with its horror of black desolation.

And then Dr. Rhodes, sheltered by his palm-thatched hut and a heap of sand, struck a match and set his camp-fire flaming. He smiled, with an air of supreme

satisfaction, as he began plucking a bird for the pot. And as he had suspected, Mr. Cuddles and Miss Smith lost little time in coming over.

"I'm awfully hungry," she announced frankly. "May I—"

"I invite you to dinner," hastened Dr. Rhodes.

"So'm I," added Cuddles plaintively. "What 'll dinner cost *me*—about fifty thousand dollars, since there are no other diners to be bought here?"

Rhodes laughed heartily, and caught, in turn, an amused glance from Miss Smith.

"It's probably worth it," said the doctor, "but if you will honor me by being my guest, I shall be charmed."

Mr. Cuddles made haste to accept, and, for the first time in many hours, actually smiled. Mr. Cuddles had money to pay for anything, as he had boasted; but, like anyone else, Mr. Cuddles enjoyed getting something for nothing. He was particularly overjoyed when Dr. Rhodes produced a small bottle of brandy.

"No, doctor," he protested affably, "I insist that that shall not go with the dinner; I'll give you a note for a thousand dollars, just for a drink."

"And then," countered the doctor sapiently, "you could prove that I was bootlegging in the dry State of Florida, and shoot me off to jail—eh? No, thanks."

Cuddles lowered his eyes, as if guiltily. The doctor turned to Miss Smith.

"Will you see if the stars are shining?" he asked. She complied. Then, softly, to Cuddles: "You said you had forty dollars in cash, and—"

Certain motions were exchanged, and Mr. Cuddles, after having parted with forty dollars, got a drink of brandy; and there was no evidence that Dr. Rhodes had violated the excise law in the sovereign State of Florida.

"Now, as a reward for gazing after stars that were hiding on me, might I have a drink of water?" asked Miss Smith.

Rhodes made haste to get out his little cask. It held about a gallon of the only fresh, drinkable water on the key, so far as he knew. He filled a tin cup and passed it to the girl.

"I suppose," sneered Cuddles, "I might purchase a cup of that fluid for my own consumption—for, say, a thousand dollars?"

"No, I am charging two thousand a cup for water," replied Rhodes nonchalantly.

"Draft a note for two cups at that rate and I'll sign it," snarled Cuddles.

Dr. Rhodes did so, in quite a matter-of-fact manner. Meanwhile, the wind howled derisively. Millicent passed a subtle, friendly smile to the doctor, and Cuddles gulped his two cups of water.

"That materially cuts the supply of drinking water," announced the doctor gravely. "To-morrow, I expect the market price to be at least double."

"I'll give you ten thousand dollars now for what's left—about three pints, isn't it?" said Cuddles quickly.

Dr. Rhodes laughed merrily.

"And to-morrow, when I probably should be parched, you'd sell it back to me at about ten thousand dollars a drop, eh?"

The doctor turned a can of peas into his steaming pot, thickened the broth with a dash of flour, and, in a few minutes, served a meal that was both satisfying and savory. The minor fact that the sea bird tasted slightly of the fish on which it had been subsisting, without knowing or caring, of course, that its epicurean diet would cost forty cents a pound in the New York markets, detracted nothing from the enjoyment of three very hungry persons.

And during the interim, the souther piled up its shrieking complaints against the joy of living on a desolate Florida key.

Then, his stomach filled, Mr. Cuddles began to think of sleep. His piggish eyes glanced from the embers of the doctor's camp-fire to the weather, thence toward his own inhospitable hut, obscured in the wind-swept darkness beyond. The temperature had fallen considerably, and sent a chill to the marrow.

"I say, Rhodes, a little fire over there wouldn't be at all bad. If I may take some of your wood, and a match or two—"

"And wouldn't you like a cigar?" interposed the doctor graciously.

"Well, yes, I would," beamed Cuddles. "I've smoked all I had in my case."

"But," purred the doctor, "you must understand that I did not bargain to supply a heated house, nor to furnish you with matches and fuel. Of course—"

"Of course," grated Cuddles, "you wish additional compensation. Shall we call it fifty dollars for each—firewood and match?"

That quiet little laugh of the doctor's must have been very irritating. Then he made an investigation of his pockets, and deliberated.

"I have," he said, "just three cigars and seven matches. I think, under the circumstances, that I shall have to ask ten thousand dollars each for the cigars, and five thousand each for the matches. Fire wood, sufficient to last through the night, is worth ten thousand, and you must do your own hauling."

Mr. Cuddles trembled with rage—but he was helpless.

"I'll take," he said, "one cigar, three matches and the wood. Draw your note."

Dr. Rhodes smilingly drafted a note for \$35,000 and passed it over.

"And you may boast," he said, "that you have smoked the most expensive cigar ever bought or sold. I paid five cents apiece for them at Naples, to give to the black boys on the dock."

Mr. Cuddles bit off the end savagely, and, conserving his matches, lighted his cigar from an ember in the fire.

"Charge anything for that?" he asked sarcastically. He took several deep inhalations, then smiled: "Say, Rhodes, you've got the most hellish nerve of any man I ever knew. Talk about profiteers—why, you—"

"Merely a matter of place, as I have stated," interposed the doctor urbanely. "It's merely a question of supply and demand, and the economic condition of the buyer. Soak him as much as he can stand! Isn't that your business motto, Mr. Cuddles?"

"I'm going to bed," remarked Mr. Cuddles irrelevantly. "Where's my wood?" He laughed, then, as though he were beginning to appreciate the joke on himself.

"Let me light your way," suggested the doctor.

He took a brand from his own fire, and led the little party through the storm. Then he stuck the flaming torch in the sand.

"Start your fire with that and save a match," he suggested. "It was rather good to see you lugging wood."

"I suppose so," chortled Cuddles. "But Miss Smith will need—"

"Nothing, thank you," she cut in. "If I do, I shall appeal to Dr. Rhodes. Good night."

She flounced off to her own cold, dreary, wind-blown hut, indignant at Cuddles for his selfish inconsideration. An hour later, unable to sleep, shivering in the blast, she looked out on two cheersome fires. She ran headlong to one—and surprised Dr. Rhodes, as he was closing an entry in his pocket note-book.

Then, for a long, long time they talked—for he was a very interesting man, and she was quite an attractive young woman. It was, indeed, a strange circumstance—an ambitious girl of the ultra-social set and a poor college professor, down there on a key at night, their faces lighted by the fitful glare of a dying camp-fire, with the moan of the wind and the hiss of the sea in their ears. Came a silence, and he was thinking, classifying her, in his philosophical way:

"Great girl, worthy of a fine love; too mercenary, though; no higher ambition than to be a society leader, which requires a lot of money; Cuddles can give her what she wants: should have a real love and wake up; great girl, however."

She, too, was thinking:

"Fine fellow, this Rhodes; splendid mind, efficient, knows just what to do at the proper moment; heaps nicer than Cuddles; too bad he's poor; but he isn't—he's made over two million dollars from Cuddles!"

And as they were thinking thus, the wind continued to cry its menace and the sea to bellow its mockery. And he, after all, now was more than a millionaire, and he was nicer than Cuddles, and—

Miss Smith sighed—and shivered. The fire was getting low and the hour was late.

"Will you take me over—over home?" she asked.

"Whenever you wish me to," he answered.

During the night, to the surprise of Dr. Rhodes, the storm spent itself. The small party on the key managed to push the cat-boat off, and, by early afternoon, had covered the twenty miles to Fort Myers. On the way up, Dr. Rhodes tossed a little bundle in the lap of Mr. Cuddles.

"That forty dollars you paid for the drink of brandy," he said.

"I won't have it," protested Cuddles. "The drink was worth the price; and besides, you taught me something. I'll see, too, that my bankers honor those notes, as soon as you present—"

"Just like this," interposed Dr. Rhodes, with a laugh. He took the notes from his pocket, tore them into bits, and gave the fragments to the wind and the sea. "I'm glad I taught you something," he added.

Mr. Cuddles vented a sigh that seemed as if it might have been born of infinite satisfaction.

"Well, anyway," he said, with magnanimous insistence, "I'll endow that teachers' pension fund that you have been advocating."

Miss Millicent Smith suffered a little inward shiver. That nice man, Dr. Rhodes, no longer was to be rated as a millionaire. She turned sweetly to Cuddles:

"Deary," she asked, "do you suppose mama will be dreadfully worried?"



A DISTINCTION

BY CARLYLE SMITH

FAME'S very sweet, yet we should careful be
That it is fame, not notoriety;
'Tis satisfaction small, none can deny,
To be a cinder in the public eye!

No Fear

by Captain Dingle

Author of "The Clean Up," "The Pirate Woman," "Steward of the Westward," etc.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SHAME.

HOLLIS stared helplessly after Paul, whose convulsed face, almost black with turbulent blood, was a thing to shudder at. Down the channel, just stealing into sight, the gray bulk of the steamer lengthened out and took definite shape as she headed for the eastern entrance. Simultaneously with the bestial roar that burst from Paul as he saw the ship, Hollis felt a hand on his arm and turned to find Dormur beside him, her own face white and wondering. "We must go after him," she said. "I cannot imagine what is the matter with Paul."

"Seems to be bent on intercepting the steamer, doesn't he?" returned the professor. "It's all a mystery. Let's get a boat. Shall we take some men? Rollins may be hard to deal with. He's so hard set just now. Look at his face."

While jerking out the sentences, Hollis pulled and hauled at the lines of a boat. He kept his face averted, for he knew very well that telltale nervousness was fixed upon him like a mask; and now, for perhaps the first time, he disliked the idea of being thought afraid.

Dormur glanced around, saw the fisherman loitering as usual of late, before beginning their day's work, palpably aware that they lacked a leader or commander; then she picked out Tolomew and Diaz, and they came at her call, not willingly, yet with an air of wishing to be of service to the girl, even at the cost of helping others whom they despised.

"Row me out, please," she said simply. Mr. Rollins is very ill; he doesn't know what he's doing."

"We think much better he no come back," growled Diaz, and Tolomew cuffed his lips warningly. "Come on, missy, we go for you," Tolomew said, and the men seized oars, Dormur at the tiller, as a warning siren-blast came down the wind from the ship, and an answering bellow burst from Paul.

"Oh, he'll be run down!" cried Dormur, leaning forward intently, her eyes fixed on the erratically speeding boat and the rapidly approaching steamer. Another wisp of steam floated from the siren, and the sound followed immediately. The ship was perilously near now.

Paul rowed as never man rowed before, his great shoulders working heavily, his suffused face at last lowered in grim purpose; and his boat headed straight for the line of the ship's foaming stem. Then he paused for an instant, turned to look, and his oars dropped, he staggered to his feet and flung aloft his arms, roaring an inarticulate message at the vessel, upon the deck of which a jaunty figure waved adieu to the boats and the cluster of huts on the shore.

"That's your brother," Hollis remarked, recognizing Dick.

"Look at Paul!" cried Dormur, then urged her rowers to greater efforts.

Rollins stumbled, tripped over athwart, recovered, and seemed to grope toward the ship with his hands. The steamer held her course, curious eyes watching from her bridge the little drama being enacted almost alongside.

This story began in the All-Story Weekly for December 6.

Most curious of all now was Dick Lascelles; his attention no longer fixed on his sister or his camp, but, full of wonder, upon Rollins. As all eyes held their gaze upon him, the big fellow succumbed to choking rage, uttered an awful roar, and pitched headlong overboard, his face set shipwards, his great body frenziedly attempting to reach her fast-moving side.

"Pull! Pull harder!" cried Dormur nervously, and lent her small strength to push on 'Tolomew's oar.

They reached Rollins as he was rolled over and over by the steamer's swell; and whatever the impulse that induced his mad attempt, the swimmer fought viciously to offset the efforts of his rescuers. Not even Dormur's earnest pleading availed to calm his struggles.

Hollis's hands, seeking a grip of his clothes, brought from Paul savage resistance in the shape of a bite which drew blood. Diaz and 'Tolomew, less nice in method, out of all sympathy with the object of their errand, stood up with raised oars; and despite the girl's angry protest let fall the heavy wood upon Paul's head, effectually quieting him. Then, with the combined strength of all, he was pulled into the boat and taken shorewards as the steamer turned the channel and passed from sight.

"I wonder what possessed Paul to do that," Dormur reflected, when, an hour later, she and Hollis stepped outside after a stormy session with the rescued man.

"I haven't any idea," Hollis replied.

"Madness, I should say; although since those fellows hit him over the head he seems less insane than furious. Did you see the look he favored them with when he opened his eyes?"

"The chap's a volcano, likely to erupt at any minute. I wish Dick had waited a bit. With Paul in this condition I don't see how you can possibly manage here; and just when I have contrived to capture Jambi and his crew, too."

"What!" the girl's exclamation was not so much question as incredulous protest. She forgot for the moment all her troubles and stared blankly at the man who made so amazing a statement so simply.

"Oh, yes, I've got him. I forgot to tell

you before," he said, as he might have announced the discovery of a piece of stone. He related the events leading up to the imprisonment of the crew in the cave, then added as simply as he had told the rest: "I have found that treasure, too."

"Mr. Hollis, if you are joking I think your joke is in bad taste," Dormur told him. "This is not the time for pleasantry. I'm far too worried to see the humor in it."

"Come with me. I'll convince you," the professor smiled with deep kindliness, leading the way toward the ridge. "Dick told me his plans promised to fall through because of the loss of his smokers. He went away so suddenly that perhaps what I have done will be useless after all, unless you can persuade Rollins to take charge again in a decent way, without venting his temper on these men."

"But the treasure?" she cried. "Do you mean to tell me you have discovered a fortune, and still talk about the failure of our business?"

"As I told you, Miss Lascelles, I am not greatly interested in this hidden hoard. Perhaps I might have been had I not received a certain answer to a certain question which concerned me far more intimately—in fact, to the exclusion of all else."

Dormur colored warmly and walked beside him with lowered head. And he led her to the aperture above the cave, removed the piece of rock which covered it, and motioned her to look down. Side by side they peered through the hole, and up from the depths came the sound of money-mad men, snarling at each other as curs snarl, grouped around a mass of wreckage which represented bursted kegs, dominated by the savage figure of Jambi, who vainly attempted to silence them.

"You've lost it!" the girl whispered, fascinated by the scene below, a satanic group touched by the glimmer of lanterns; for although it was bright forenoon, in the cavern no light entered now that the entrance was closed, and those two faces were pressed to the aperture above.

"No. I've not lost it. Before they can have it, or their shares, they must first comply with some conditions I have prepared for them. Listen."

He called down sharply, and called again before his voice penetrated the roar of the men. Then Jambí looked up, and the pure savagery in his voice forced attention from the rest.

"You let us out this place very quick or I kill you!"

"How will you do that?" inquired Hollis coolly, and the girl at his side glanced up at him in astonishment. 'This was an unsuspected side to a perplexing nature.

But the answer came swift and convincing, at least as to purpose. A knife whizzed upward, the point clanged sharply against the roof, and the weapon fell back at the thrower's feet to be instantly snatched, up and flung again.

"Keep back a little," Hollis warned the girl; then, holding the piece of covering rock as a shield, he spoke slowly and distinctly.

"Jambí! Listen to me. You are entitled to one-half of that money, as I promised you—"

"All!" shrieked the Malay, and his mates joined chorus.

"One-half," the professor corrected him imperturbably. "I will give it to you when you and your men have returned to your work in the smoking-sheds for one month—"

The rest of his speech was drowned in a hurricane bellow of fury from below; and in the first lull he called down his ultimatum.

"You have stores and water. When they are gone perhaps you will feel differently about this. I will come for your answer every day. Think it over."

He rose, replaced the piece of rock, and the girl joined him in the walk back to the bungalow.

"But how on earth do you propose to manage those men, even if they agree?" asked Dormur in amazement. She saw the great possibilities which Jambí's return held out; for her knowledge of the trepang business was complete, and she was well aware of the troubles that had cropped up since Paul's tempestuous assault on the men.

"I think it can be done," was the reply. "Perhaps we can persuade Rollins to cool down. He's just the chap to handle them

if he'll only play the man instead of the giddy goat for a while."

How far Paul was ready to play the man was not to be seen that day; for when they reached the house they met with a fresh and surprising shock, notable even in an eventful day. Instead of finding Paul prostrate with weakness, they found him raging about the place like a caged lion, fully dressed for visiting.

"Why, Paul, what is this?" cried Dormur, astounded, for it was the first time Rollins had donned the clothes of respectability since the camp was formed. He glared over her head at Hollis, and murder shone in his glance; but he governed his temper toward the man, and replied to the girl:

"Means this: You and me are going right down to town to get married—"

"Paul! Are you demented?"

"Right away! Get your things on. I'm ready."

Hollis smiled indulgently. He felt very sure that the big fellow's complicated hurts had unbalanced his mind. A glimpse of the girl's troubled face gave him the needed courage, and he stepped out and faced Paul.

"I say, old chap, isn't this rather abrupt for Miss Lascelles? You'd better rest—"

"See here"—Paul shot out a great hand and gripped the professor by the coat-collar—"you keep your squeaker silent, mister. Understand? Miss Lascelles is going to marry me before sundown, and you're not even invited to be best man."

Rollins presented a picture of feverish energy. But it required no very expert eye to see that he was impelled and kept up by a tremendously agitated spirit, aided by a brutal determination.

The girl stood transfixed, seeing his state, yet fearing that he was all too capable of carrying out his intention; and she had no idea of dumbly following after him. She shook off her inertia when he spoke to Hollis, and stepped between the men, facing Paul with flashing eyes and quivering lips.

"Paul Rollins, I won't stir one step with you this day or any day until Dick returns. What kind of man do you call yourself to attempt to rush matters like this the moment my brother is away? If you are cad

enough to think of such a thing. I will recall my promise to you for all time. Understand that now."

Rollins listened with a cruel sneer curling his lips. His blazing eyes darted from the girl to Hollis, and back again, all the brute in him very near the surface.

"I understand," he snarled in reply. "I understand, Dormur. I understand that between the three of you there is a nice little plan cocked up to euchre me. Sending Dick to New York to ferret out—"

"Be quiet!" the girl cried furiously. "How dare you say that? Dick has gone without saying a word to anybody, unless you sent him in order to give you this chance to affront me!"

"Do you believe that?" Paul asked very quietly, in vivid contrast to his recent attitude. He gazed darkly at her face, and a pang of pain seemed to cross his own. "Do you believe I am cur enough to do that, Dormur?"

"Yes, I do!" she retorted. "The proof is that you have affronted me the very first minute the chance offers. You have acted like a beast, a cad, a coward—"

It was as if some one had struck Paul across the face with a whip. He staggered back, all the fury gone from his face, groping with his hands as if blinded. Hollis cut in with an attempt to smooth things:

"About Lascelles going North," he said, "I can only say that he told me he was going; but I had no notion he could leave so soon. I expected he would come back here, and we'd all talk it over."

He stopped, conscious that he was alone. Dormur stood in the doorway, gazing after Paul's stumbling figure, now almost at his own shack door.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE TAMING OF THE BRUTE.

ATENSITY had crept into the situation which made Hollis too uncomfortable for ease of mind, and he plunged into an arduous pursuit of records in rock strata in order to recover his calmness. The sack he carried was half full when he again wandered near the ridge, and

his curiosity led him inevitably to the hole above the cavern.

He peered down and gasped; for the treasure-maddened crew below were behaving as treasure has caused men to behave ever since the first pirate concealed the first hoard. Utterly oblivious to, or forgetful of their position, the mongrel crew were fighting and snarling over the heaps of coin which lay between them; and all the time they had passed since Hollis sent down his ultimatum had not sufficed to bring them to an intelligent frame of mind.

Three crouching figures on the rim of light told of conflict; the rest of the men faced each other in attitudes of desperate hatred. It was plain that, if he wanted men to carry on the trepang smoking, he must very soon get them out, or they would solve the problem with steel. Hollis thrust his head into the opening and called down:

"Jambi!"

His voice split the crew into starting units, and it was apparent that if sides had not been taken already the men were ready to divide then.

"Jambi! Listen to me," he repeated, and Jambi upturned his malevolent face. "Jambi, you must stop fighting each other down there and do as I say. Stop! If you throw that knife I shall have to drop some dynamite among you!"

A concerted howl of rage welled up, and searing curses in low Malay and villainous pidgin made the professor draw back shocked. Knives flew and rang against the rock which sheltered his face; and the man of peace found himself lacking in the crisis. He thought of Paul, volcanic, full of a turbulent temper which would not permit his injured body to surrender to its weakness.

"By Jove! he must listen to me and help me," Hollis muttered desperately. "He may be different now. He certainly looked different when he left Dormur. I'll go and see him."

He went and found Paul sitting huddled up in the lee of his shack, chin on hands, elbows on knees, gazing gloomily down the seaward vista beyond which the steamer had vanished. The stricken giant started up in fury at the interruption; then, with a tremendous effort, he relaxed again, and

permitted the professor to speak without restraint.

"And I can get Jambi and most of his crew to work, if you will help me, Rollins," he said, after outlining the rest of the story. The announcement brought only a swift upglance from the giant, a glance full of unbelief; the next sentence wrought results. "Besides, I have found that treasure, and now the work can go on as usual."

"What?" barked Paul harshly, leaping to his feet and peering into the professor's calm face.

"I have indeed," was the quiet reply; but for all its quietness the reply only partly concealed a great fear in the face of the awful expression that made Rollins's face hideous. The great hands clutched and clawed nervously; the massive chest rose and fell in a tumult of panting breath.

"You have! Damn the treasure! What do you know about the work going on? Why shouldn't it go on, hey? Tell me, Hollis, or by Heaven I'll not answer for myself!"

Paul stepped back a pace as if to restrain himself from laying hands on the quiet man before him; and Hollis wondered what influence had entered the giant's breast to whisper restraint to him, for, in all his recent experiences of the man's temper he had never yet seen him so convulsed, and no physical harm resulted from it now.

"I say, Rollins, I think you're not in condition to speak calmly at present," he began, and Paul stopped him.

"Tell me! Hey? What do you know? Quick!"

"Well, then, I know that Lascelles told me the business was likely to go to pieces for lack of funds, you know. I—er—that is, he asked—or rather I offered to lend him funds in order to go to New York to look up some agent chap who should have remitted cash which hasn't arrived.

"And he said the trouble now was with the smokers; without them this present lot of trepang will be spoiled and that will be the end of things. That's about all; except that, of course, I didn't expect him to fly away at a minute's notice, y'know. Nor did you. Did you?"

For a moment Paul stared down at the

professor, and into his dark eyes a fire leaped, a fire of unbelief mixed with growing anger; but in a flash the fire died and the eyes became as soft as such eyes ever could; the man underwent a change which amazed Hollis, made him doubt the evidence of his own senses.

"No, I didn't know," Paul said quietly. He raised his head, and from his towering height gazed long and earnestly at the idle camp. His gaze wandered to the bungalow which sheltered Dormur, but lingered there only a second. He asked, without looking at Hollis:

"Is that all you know? All Dormur knows?"

"Really, now, I cannot say what Miss Lascelles knows, Rollins. I believe she is as surprised as we are about Dick going away."

"She'll know soon enough now," was the bitter response, and Hollis pitied the giant from his heart, for the utter weariness that seemed to attack him. All the splendid vitality was gone; the man's huge frame was as a withered oak, sapless and without resiliency; and the powerful, rugged face was gray and haggard. When Paul spoke again the words sent a volcanic shock through Hollis.

"Hollis, would you say I was a cad and a coward and a cur?"

"Oh, I say, old fellow, I can't—"

"Would you?" The demand was fiery again. "Answer me."

"Confound it, Rollins, you saved my life twice—"

"Would you call me a cad?" The words were jerked out as if from a chest laboring in death.

"I think you—er—acted like one to-day, Rollins," breathed Hollis, and quivered in expectation of the reprisal his enforced answer must surely bring. The rejoinder staggered him more than the expected blow could do.

"Thank you." It was a boy acknowledging a merited reproof. "Dick said I was one—Dormur said so, too—now you. Hollis, I know you're not my kind—I was never anything else but a rough brute—never knew anything else except animal impulses and the devil's own temper. But I didn't

realize that I was that—didn't realize what it meant."

"Oh, please let us change the subject. Won't you come and help me with those men? I can help a little with the work afterward."

"In a minute. I am thinking. I'm a cad, and you're a gentleman. So's Dick, but not like you. Shut up!" he barked, halting a protest. "Tell me something else. Would a gentleman force a woman into marriage against her will?"

"Oh, come, Rollins, I can't discuss these things, you know. I believe you refer to Miss Lascelles, and I don't care to discuss her private affairs."

"If you don't answer me, I'll kill you!" stormed Paul, and all the old passions flamed anew in his face. In a moment he took a grip on himself and pursued evenly: "Why does she hate me? Why does she look at you as if you were the man she was promised to and not me?"

"Now, confound you, Rollins, you *are* a cad!" cried Hollis angrily, and he met Paul's stormy eyes fearlessly. "You are a cad and a beast to speak of a lady in this way. By Godfrey, sir, defend yourself!"

The slightly framed man of science quivered like a sapling in a hurricane, yet he advanced. His face had gone deathly white, but his blue eyes flashed with indomitable resolution; his will to defend the name of a lady, one of his own class, overpowered the trembling insufficiency of his body.

Rollins glowered down at him, his lips moving as if in silent communion with himself; but the giant made no motion to accept the challenge, perhaps for the first time in his stormy life. Hollis stepped nearer, his pitifully inadequate hands balled into puny fists, his head unguarded like the veriest novice in battle. Then slowly Rollins thrust out one huge hand, pressed it on his challenger's breast, and held him there as easily as if it were a steel brace.

"Don't fuss yourself, Mr. Hollis," he growled slowly. "I see right here where's the difference between you and me. You're a gentleman, and can't be a coward. I admire you for that. I wouldn't lay a hand on a brave man like you."

"I've seen all I want to see. If Dormur

loves you—" Hollis uttered a shrill warning and tried to step forward. "Wait a minute. I know it. I believe, too, you love her. And after I've finished saying my piece, you can jump in and soak me. I won't stop you. But give me a chance."

"No man ever loved a woman as I love that woman. I'm wanting in everything you've got. I've got everything you despise—and she despises. I want a chance to make good. Then, if Dormur still looks at me as she has done lately I'll drop out."

"Don't speak to me again for ten minutes. Take me to the cave, and I'll see what can be done."

The spell that had held Paul passed with the first glimpse of the wealth in the cavern. As he put his head to the aperture, and saw what lay beneath, Hollis heard him pant with excitement. The great shoulders heaved, and his hands seized the surrounding rocks as if he would tear them apart and hurl himself bodily among the fierce ruffians snarling around the heaps of coined money.

"Don't do that," Hollis warned him. "Half is theirs by my promise; the other half belongs to me because I hold the lease on this ground. But my half is of no importance to me; I simply want to use it to help you all out of your difficulties. Let us get the men out."

Paul stared at him in disgusted astonishment; then shrugged his shoulders and laughed harshly.

"I thought a gentleman wouldn't lie," he snarled. "Oh, well, let's see what you think when you get your hands on the stuff. Let's get the men out. How're you going to do it, now you've plugged up the hole?"

"That seems to be simple, if you can help control them when they're out," replied Hollis, ignoring the swift transition from humble to sneering. "I threatened to drop dynamite among them if they made any trouble. Can't we make them send up the money in sacks by a rope? Then we can pull them up one by one, and disarm them as they come."

Rollins gave him one comprehensive look. It said as plainly as words that the man of peace had uncovered still another astounding side to his peaceful composition. But

softness had fled from Paul now. His face was grim, and his black eyes dwelt hungrily upon the treasure—fiercely upon the men.

"You've about hit it," he said, and briefly bidding Hollis wait, he went off to get rope and crowbars and dynamite.

CHAPTER XX.

A LULL IN THE STORM.

DYNAMITE as a persuader proved all that had been expected of it; and perhaps the professor loomed rather large in the eyes of Paul and Jambi's crew when, after fifteen minutes of parley and an hour of work, twelve sacks of jingling coin lay in the storeroom of the bungalow, and eight scowling, cursing men gathered around the smoke-house to hear their orders.

"So you go to work, see?" barked Paul, taking from the near-by professor the initiative. "You, Jambi, will split your gang into watches as before, and get busy. You, Tolomew, stand guard over one lot, and you, Diaz, over the others, and I'm watching all of you, see?"

"First sign of funny business I see, up goes your number. Get this shipment of slugs smoked and away, then we'll split up camp and you can all go to your own special hells in your own sweet ways."

Rollins spoke like a jubilant greenhorn who has just found fool's gold; while there was nothing left unsaid in his orders, the tone he used caused many evil faces to gather closely in discussion the moment his back was turned; and the brand-new guns the boss had given Tolomew and Diaz seemed somehow to fail in inducing respect in the rest, perhaps on account of the riflemen's willingness to let them be examined by anybody who cared to.

But orders were followed; and when Hollis followed Paul into the house, and both looked back from the doorway, a thin curl of smoke was eddying from the chimney-hole of the smoking-sheds, and a nimble figure was seen climbing over the roof to draw the shutter which would confine the smoke until the shed was filled.

"We got 'em right now," laughed Paul, yet gave no credit to the author of the coup.

His eyes flashed as he sought the precious sacks; and neither men, nor fishing, nor even Dormur, had power to swerve his attention from them. Hollis watched him curiously, and from time to time swept a look of quizzical humor at Dormur; for he recalled the giant's moment of softness not so long ago, and could not fail now to see the utter change that had come over him.

The girl seemed not to see anything remarkable in Paul's attitude toward the unexpectedly acquired wealth, until the thought rushed upon her that none of it belonged to him, or in fact to anybody on the place except the finder.

Suddenly she met Hollis's gaze fixed upon her, and a rich color swept into her face. He was looking at her, not as if he were thinking of money or Paul, but as if both had started in his mind a new train which led to and stopped at her.

"Don't you think somebody ought to watch those chaps?" he asked, directing the question at Rollins, though looking at the girl. She glanced at Paul, and with a little shudder realized how far he had come under the thrall of greed. His gruff reply bore out her fears.

"Go to the—go down yourself," he growled without looking up. "I'll count this stuff first."

A smile broke over the professor's face, and for a minute a reply trembled on his lips, a reply to the effect that perhaps it would be as well to leave that task to the legitimate owner, a reply which must certainly precipitate an outburst. But Dormur caught his eye in time, and indicated with a gesture that she would accompany him; and Hollis went out without a word more than a brief "All right."

Dormur joined him, and together they walked slowly along the shore, keeping above hide-tide mark, where, with a bark and a whine of pleasure, the biggest, ugliest dog of the mongrel pack of hounds, Rough, joined company with them, capering madly about the girl.

"Down, Rough!" she cried, and the dog looked up at her, then ran in front, ever looking back, and ever trotting toward the huts of the men, about which lay the appearance of desertion. The man on the roof

had vanished; at sea, at the edge of the surf, the boats rocked idly to their painters, the killicks sunk in the sand, their crews not in sight; but as they approached the huts, voices could be heard, and they were traced to the dark, noisome smoke-hut, toward which the great hound bounded, growling deeply.

"Here, come here!" Dormur ordered in a penetrating whisper, and again the dog came to heel, but reluctantly, and Hollis remarked:

"Paul really ought to see to this, don't you think?"

"He ought to, but I'm afraid he won't, now he's got something more vital to look at. I'm frightened of him now. Oh, I wish Dick had not gone away!"

"I'm trying to take his place, but I feel woefully inadequate," smiled Hollis. "Stay here a moment. I'll go and talk to the men."

"I'll come as well," stated Dormur decidedly. "Perhaps they'll listen to me."

Together they appeared at the door of the shed, and in an instant the voices ceased, and a mob of almost invisible figures stirred uneasily inside. Then out of the shadows came Tolomew and Diaz, their faces revealing shame at being caught off guard, but softening somewhat at sight of the girl:

"Why are you not working?" Hollis demanded in his quiet, level tones. His hand was in his pocket, and he faced the men without anger, yet without fear. They ignored him, or his question, although their eyes never left his pocket, and replied to the girl:

"We go now, missy. All the men they make fire for smoking. Soon the boats go out. All right, now; you no afraid. Me an' Diaz watch them good."

The words were ingratiating, but out of the darkness rumbled a volume of growling dissent, and above the rumble more than one lurid threat rose shrilly. It made the girl shiver, and she felt for and gripped the professor's arm nervously. He returned the grip reassuringly, and answered for her, forcing a laugh meant to carry conviction to the growling crews.

"Very well, old chaps," he said. "I think

ten minutes more should see the boats out, I've got some more dynamite here."

He moved his hand half from his pocket as he spoke, and there was a swift exodus from the shed. Evil faces scowled at him and his companion as the mob surged past, but obedience went with the scowls, and quickly the boats were manned and shoved off from the beach.

"They don't seem to threaten you so much as me," remarked Hollis musingly, when the last man of the sea fleet had embarked, leaving only Jambi's crew in the shed.

"They have never threatened me," she replied thoughtfully, "but I know they are not to be trusted, and I'm afraid Paul will cause trouble unless he leaves that money and takes them in hand. I'm sorry you ever found it, or at least that you ever told him of it. Isn't it possible to make him understand that it is not his, but yours?"

"I can tell him again, of course. I told him that one-half belonged to Jambi's crew, and the rest to me; but I also told him I cared little about it, and he refused to believe me. You see, I had an idea that I could help keep this business going for you and Dick by offering Jambi a portion in return for carrying on the work."

"Yes, and if I'm not mistaken Jambi has taken all the rest into his counsel, and now it will require strong measures to keep them from trying to take all of it. You ought to take it all away somewhere. It's too great a temptation here."

They returned in silence to the house, to find yet another Paul. The big fellow met them with gleeful grins, rubbing his hands together. His appearance was only a cause for curiosity to the professor; but the girl went white with something akin to terror at what her eyes detected in his.

"Don't leave me," she whispered to Hollis piteously, and shrank back as Paul stepped toward her. But Paul made no attempt to touch her, as she seemed to fear; grinning broadly, yet with more than a suspicion of low cunning in the grin, he stooped before them both and spoke with a harshness that made a poor substitute for the enthusiasm he sought to inject into the words.

"There's enough money here to set a man up for life," he said. "Set a man up for life, d'ye hear? Enough to tempt the best woman who ever stepped!" and he leered at Dormur. "But let it lay, shall we? I'll get busy about the fishing, and when the time's good and ripe we'll all see what we'll see, hey?"

Not waiting for a response, nor seeming to expect one, he leered once more full into both faces and left the house, plowing off toward the sheds full of vigor, swinging his arms, surging along as if in the past few days he had never known hurt or weakness. And if his companions harbored doubts of him they were dispelled when he reached the smoking-shed and reappeared with Jambi, who could be seen, even at that distance, full of surprise mingled with dread and hate, in a few minutes to be replaced by apparent submission to Rollins's orders.

And as the hours went by, and other men appeared, Paul gave every indication of having laid aside everything except strict business. When the men ceased work for the day, they gathered about him, at first in doubt, later with ready acceptance, and when he went down to the boats they followed him as in the days before he started any trouble at all.

"That's rather marvelous," Hollis remarked, watching with Dormur. "There's much that's good in that big frame, I believe, if one can only discover it." He recalled that soft moment of Paul's, but could not mention it to the girl. "I wonder what he's going to do now?"

"He looks like the Paul I first knew," replied Dormur, witching pensively. "If only his terrible temper will let him, perhaps after all we may rebuild what he's broken down. See, he's having all the boats examined. He's not troubled about that for a long time."

One after another Rollins had the fleet hauled up and turned over, and with a crowd of now willing men was subjecting each craft to a searching scrutiny. All the gear was laid out on trestles, and when he was satisfied, apparently, his great voice resounded along the beach, and men seized rollers and ran one boat into the boat-house. Fifteen minutes after, silence fell upon the

place, the men went to their evening meal, and Rollins returned briskly to the house for his own supper.

He found two people very ready to greet him with approval; and he accepted it all with a quiet grin, but in that grin was a quality which kept doubt alive, poignantly alive, in Dormur's breast. If the professor noticed it, he gave no sign, but devoted himself to keeping the chuckling giant in that chuckling humor which seemed to promise so much in work accomplished.

"When Dick comes back he'll be surprised, I'll bet!" roared Paul, slapping Hollis heavily on the back. He looked at the girl, and for a moment seemed about to accost her as boisterously; but perhaps he saw the glint in her eyes, or found no invitation in her blood-red lips, so vividly set in the pallor of her face, and when she hurried to the stove to prepare the meal he made no move to follow her.

With Paul's tempestuous good humor, and the determination of the others to meet his mood, the evening passed more smoothly than an even had gone for many a day. Dormur regained some of her own cheery poise as Hollis chatted without bringing a surly word from Paul; and she was almost herself again when, at his own suggestion, the jovial giant and Hollis both decided to remain at the house for her safety, instead of one of them going back to Paul's shack to sleep.

CHAPTER XXI.

A MESSAGE FROM DICK.

A PERIOD of peace descended upon the fishing community; a period so devoid of alarms as to bring back the roses to Dormur's fair face and the soft, steady light in her deep gray eyes. She sang from morning to evening, imitated the cardinal's song and imbued the camp with her cheerfulness.

Rollins governed his men with consummate discretion; gratifying results accrued, and the smoking-shed turned out day's work after day's work of goods of commercial value; the professor went about his own beloved pursuits with vim, yet found time

to join in and help in the general work. And Paul permitted him to lend a hand with great good-will.

In between supervising trips the boats were overhauled one by one, until only the largest boat was left, and that seemed to present a problem calling for different treatment. The craft was propped up at high-water edge, on rollers, held by dog-shores like a vessel building, while Paul went over her exterior and interior with expert thoroughness.

Yet the boat always appeared to need one more touch. Calking and pitching the seams seemed not to satisfy; here and there a butt was opened and a new piece of plank inserted; at bow and stern the gunwales were raised, amidships short stanchions were set, bored for life-lines, and stout steps placed forward and aft seemed to smile in readiness for the masts which were being shaped alongside.

"I'm getting ready to start that anchovy fishery you spoke about, Hollis," Paul grinned in reply to a question, and the answer lent additional gratification to the atmosphere of tranquillity pervading the place. Even the men—Jambi's men, too—worked as they had not worked since the very outbreak of dissatisfaction, and scowling faces were conspicuously non-evident.

So the days passed, until the steamer was almost due back from New York, and Dormur brightened still more in anticipation of her brother's return. Her song became a lilting melody, and her natural high spirits urged her to ebullient merriment, which wrought its spell over John Hollis. He found himself again regarding her with the warm glow of adoration; and their daily walks about rocks and shores were voyages of delight, accentuated by the unaccountable indulgence with which Paul left them to themselves.

It was not in human nature that such comradeship be entirely barren of more intimate feelings; and, beneath his scientific shell John Hollis was wholly human. An evening, moonless, yet dazzling with the brilliance of a heavenful of amazing stars that almost glowed warmly; a soft southerly breeze that creamed the beach with whispering foam; the overpowering scent of

lilies and hibiscus and roses, the gentle, seductive croon of mating birds, all helped toward the inevitable; and on the rocks above the ravaged treasure cave Hollis surrendered his self-control and seized Dormur's unresisting hand.

"Dormur," he whispered, "I shall be leaving here soon, and I imagined I could leave unsaid that which I find impossible. You told me you were promised to Paul; because of that I have kept silent when my soul shrieked with the stress of the effort.

"I cannot remain silent. I must tell you, repeat it, and repeat it again, that I love you, love you, love you! If you can tell me that it is hopeless, that you love Paul, I shall never speak of it again. My heart has carried away reason, principle, everything, and I snatch at the straw of hope that, in spite of Paul's claim, your heart is free."

Dormur swayed giddily, leaning against the rock for support, and for many breaths, deep-drawn, agitated breaths, words failed her. Her hand remained in his, and she felt his free hand rest on her shoulder; knew that his blue, calm, dignified eyes gazed hungrily on her face. Slowly she turned her head and met his gaze, and under the blazing stars the deep gray depths of her eyes flashed back the brave, pure soul of her.

"I care nothing for the right or wrong of this," she said. "My heart, too, will not be governed by reason. I am glad to have heard you say, and say over, that you love me. If I went to my death in the next moment I would smile in that knowledge.

"I shall be as frank as you, my friend. I don't love Paul. I am afraid of him. I shiver at his look, and shiver doubly in anticipation of his touch. But my promise is given, and more than a promise a fearful duty demands that I become Paul's wife.

"Please, please, let us put this subject beyond the pale. I shall treasure the memory of this hour; but believe me when I say that I shall keep my promise to Paul unless Dick tells me I need not. Please don't ask me more."

Reverently, softly as the touch of a dove's wing in alighting, Hollis kissed her fingers; then without further speech led her back toward the bungalow. And as their

figures became vague and shadowy in distance Paul Rollins rose from among the rocks where he had crouched in trembling fury, and stood gazing long and darkly after them.

"Glad to know he loves her!" he muttered. "Afraid o' me, and shivers even at sight o' me. God o' Love! why didn't he grab her an' kiss her, so's I could jump in and smash his body into a bloody pulp along with his soul?"

A tremendous paroxysm of emotion shook him, and he glared upward at the skies, speechless, with upflung arms, his strong, scarred features working hideously. Then slowly he strode in the direction they had gone, but passed the house and entered his own bare hut, to sit upon his bed and glare between his hands at the floor until the soft sunlight of dawn aroused him to another day.

That morning a youth rode along the road on a bicycle with a radio message from Dick on the steamer for his sister, and Rollins received it. He started toward the house to deliver it, and stopped short. His face darkened, and he muttered under his breath; then went to his own place again and deliberately opened the message. His black eyes glowed like coals and his breath came with difficulty as he read:

Arrive to-morrow. On no account let Paul leave the camp.

It was signed Dick, and the scowl on Paul's dark face hinted at a soul in travail. With painstaking exactness he resealed the message and then went to deliver it; and, not waiting for Dormur to remark on the strange wording, he wrote a message himself, addressed it, and watched the road until a man came along to take it in.

Men using that road were not many, for the camp had acquired an unenviable notoriety; and it was noon before one appeared. Then, returning for the midday meal, Paul was met by Dormur at the door.

"Paul," she said, holding out the message she had received, "I think Dick has very good news. He wants you to be sure to be here when he arrives to-morrow. I do hope he's run down that agent."

"You can be sure he has, Dormur," re-

plied Paul, and he regarded her with a gaze so earnest, yet so intensely troubled, that for once she did not shiver under it. Rather she yearned to offer him womanly sympathy, for she could not guess his trouble, only see that it was there. He sat silent through the meal, staring down at the table unseeing; then, before leaving, he suggested, in so changed a tone that even the professor looked up in wonder:

"If you're agreeable, Hollis, I'll have that money moved to my place. I haven't felt easy thinking it was here, where Dormur is staying. I've got the men pretty well in hand; but no man can know what such scum will do next where money is concerned."

The suggestion seemed so eminently reasonable that both Hollis and Dormur gladly assented; and when the crews were all out on the fishing grounds, Jambi's crew with them while the smoking shed was closed on a batch, the precious sacks were carried down to the small shack, abreast of which lay the newly rigged boat Paul had worked so carefully on.

Then Paul sculled out in his own small skiff and joined the fishermen, lending a hand here and there, supervising everywhere, until a full catch closed the day's work. He led the crews ashore, and they gathered about him in visible eagerness, gesticulating and uttering noisy arguments which he met with unflinching calmness.

Something, unheard from the house, where Hollis and Dormur watched him, awaiting his return, suddenly seemed to split the crowd into two parts, and each smaller mob faced the other with obvious doubt and distrust. Then Paul spoke a sharp command to them, in his own old tone which carried far down the shore, and left them staring after him as he walked homeward.

Never once looking back he came to the house, and then, with the others, he looked and saw the crews, each gathered about a leader, and their vociferous voices drowned the voice of the incoming tide on the sands.

Another silent meal followed, and after it was over Dormur went to his side, laid her arm across his shoulders, and gently asked his trouble.

"I know something is wrong, Paul," she said, "and I want to know what it is. Perhaps I could help you, you know."

John Hollis, sitting in the window poring over his specimens, was jarred by the sudden sense of fate hanging over all, and he looked up in mild wonder. The girl repeated her words to the giant who seemed deaf; and every line of Paul's attitude reminded Hollis of wilful boyhood, detected in wrong, assuming a bravado yet trembling on the verge of capitulation to a mother's pleading. Then Paul spoke, and his voice sounded far off and strained.

"Dormur, my trouble is not for me to tell you. You can help me though, if you will. Will you kiss me, girl?"

So utterly unlike the Paul of old was this new, despondent giant, that all the warm womanliness in her welled to her lips, and Dormur impulsively placed her hand on his rough cheek and kissed him.

Then he rose abruptly, yet staggered as he stood. For a long breath he gazed down at her slight, graceful figure, his black eyes seemed to devour her piquant, upturned face, then he swept her into his arms fiercely, pressed a passionate kiss on her hair, and rushed out without further speech. But Hollis, seeing him as he passed the window, knew that something terrific had come over Paul Rollins; for his face was the face of a man going to a known and awful ordeal, which seemed to overwhelm him.

With generous purpose the professor hurried out after him, and overtaking him volunteered assistance if any were needed. Paul's savage reply amazed him.

"Go back to the house!" he snapped, with glaring eyes that held red sparks. "D'ye hear me? Go back and stay with that girl! Can't you see where you're wanted and where you're not?"

"Don't talk like that, Rollins—"

"Go back!" roared Paul, and his body tensed as if he were about to launch a murderous assault.

Hollis returned, and as he faced Dormur in the unlit dimness of twilight both felt the sense of impending events which neither could name. The evening grew into night, and the feeling of uneasiness was present long after Dormur said good night and re-

tired; she to doze restlessly, Hollis to count many sheep before sleep relieved his turmoiled brain.

CHAPTER XXII.

PAUL PAYS.

HALF an hour before that darkest hour preceding dawn, which would seem purposely ordained for forays and robberies and mutinies, Hollis was aroused by a pressure on his chest and a hand over his mouth. His eyes sought to distinguish his disturber; but the room was black, and even the square of the window revealed no light of stars.

"Keep quiet, and hurry yer clothes on," was hissed in his ear, and he recognized the voice of Paul Rollins, vibrant with some subtle quality which could not be excitement, yet must have been excitement in any other man. Hollis attempted to ask reasons. The great hand pressed against his mouth again, fiercely, and the voice sounded agonizingly impatient:

"Gawd's own sake don't waste time talking! Get ready to quit. I'm going to wake Dormur. You'll need all yer wind and courage. It's life or death fer both o' you."

The professor sprang from his couch and groped for his clothes, listening keenly for sounds which might hint to him the reason for this ghostly awakening. He heard faintly Dormur speaking to Paul inside; then outside the house, far down the shore it seemed, a dog's bark, Rough's unmistakable bark, was cut short with a suddenness that suggested swift steel and a severed throat.

Dormur came out and joined them, feeling for each in the darkness, and her breath came sharply audible when Paul jerked out: "Quick and quiet now! You have just twenty minutes before this house is fired. Follow me, and don't talk. Dick will tell you all about it in the morning."

And not another word could they get out of him until the moment when he left them. Like wraiths they crept down shore in his footsteps, crouching as he crouched, running where he ran, until they came to the place where he had been working on the last boat; then the empty stocks loomed up

like blasted timber, and the blacker blot against the surfless high tide edge grew into the boat afloat, riding to a grapnel lightly buried in the sand.

Wordlessly Paul commanded them to climb aboard, and his fierce strength assisting them left them no alternative. The dark hour, the awful stillness of sea and shore, the sense of brooding tragedy that insistently assailed them, silenced speech even had Paul not commanded silence. Hollis fell across some sacks, and uttered a muffled exclamation.

"Yours!" growled Paul, and fiercely lifted at the grounded bow to free the boat before other explanations were called for.

"But I haven't this many specimens!" whispered the professor, dazedly, for he knew all about his cherished sacks of rocks, and in the boat were many more than that number. Paul's reply was to fling the grapnel on board, thrust his great shoulder to the stem, and rush the boat down into deep water.

Instinctively Dormur felt for the gear of the two loosed lugsails bent to the short masts; she felt the tiller fly athwartships as the rudder was driven against the hull by the backing of the craft; seizing it she held it amidship while Paul drove the boat off, waiting for him to clamber on board and perhaps explain when all were clear.

Although his manner had enforced silent obedience, neither of the two persons he had led were able to guess at the reason for their sheeplike following. But Dormur saw the dim shape of Paul, waist-deep in the sea, remain while the boat slipped away, and her cry went up:

"Paul! Aren't you coming? Oh, hurry!"

The giant struggled with something in his shirt bosom, and as the girl cried out to him he flung it into the boat; then, turning shoreward, he saw what had prompted her last utterance. Leaping down the shore from the sheds, making the night hideous with rageful curses, it seemed as if the sheds were spewing forth a cohort of devils to blacken the blackness of night; foremost of them roared Jambi, and as his shrill yell pealed down Paul laughed grimly, and shouted at the boat: "Get out quick till morning, and remember Paul paid at last!"

Then he plunged forward to meet the howling pack, and out of the darkness where he had vanished came the ring and crash of an ax on wood and the hubbub of conflict.

"By Jove, look at that!" cried Hollis, staring in stupefaction at the bungalow which was now ablaze with light. Windows and door were yellow as gold, and in the radiance moved swift figures laden with shapeless burdens. "I say, Miss Dormur, we must go back. See? They're piling into Paul, now, and those ruffians are stealing all our money bags!"

The girl was gazing raptly at the very edge of the circle of light; it reached down to the boats, and touched up in dancing relief a scene of terrible grandeur. Surrounded by men who still seemed loth to attack him, Paul plied his ax on boat after boat, giving back a laugh for each increasingly savage demand made on him for speech.

Then the bungalow burst into open flame, roof and walls, and from the clustered figures by it, who had set down their burdens, pealed a howl of rage which was swiftly taken up by the men around Paul; and with one chorussed snarl they closed on him like wolves.

"We must go, yes," Dormur whispered, fascinated by the awful sight. "They will kill Paul! Come!" and she trimmed the sheets by the wind to tack inshore on the faintest of airs. Then above the noise rang Paul's deep shout, and it held the healthy timber that had characterized his voice of old.

"Get to sea!" he roared. "Hollis, you're responsible for that girl. Take her clear, or take my everlasting curse!" He made a fierce onslaught to gain room, then, as he hacked again at another boat he shouted in panting fragments: "For God's sake go! Dormur, please go! Oh, Lord, have I offered payment for nothing!"

The fire blazed more brilliantly for a moment, and in the glare the couple in the boat saw Paul sink to his knees, and his agonized cry came as he fell, for at that instant Jambi seized a rifle from Diaz and fired the first shot, while three of his crew detached themselves from the mob and ran

to seize the only remaining small boat not ruined by Paul's ax.

The shot fired by Jambi hummed past Hollis's head, between him and the girl, who was frantically trying to coax the boat back to the shore against an air that scarcely moved.

"Crouch low!" he warned her, and both sat on the bottomboards, still watching the devilish drama about the boats. Then the three men launched their boat, and the throaty, triumphant yell they sent up was echoed by a last despairing cry from Paul, who struggled to his feet amid a pyramid of knifing, tearing human beasts.

"Hollis, go, damn you! All Heaven can't help you else!"

Men upshore who had been turning over the contents of sacks pillaged from the bungalow, hoping to find wealth and finding only stones, now ran from Paul's own shack which they had searched in desperation and left in flames, and hurled themselves into the fight.

The small boat was afloat, and men fought for places at the oars. Others ran the craft out toward the slowly turning sailboat, and into their midst plunged Paul, ax upraised, his rugged, anguished face gleaming bloodily in the fireglow.

"Take an oar. We must do as he says. We cannot help it!" gasped Dormur, and drove the tiller over, hiding the sight from her streaming eyes with her free hand.

Hollis tugged at his oar, facing the beach, and his blood ran cold at the closing scene of Paul Rollins's sacrifice. Uttering a choking roar, the giant smote with his ax, and smote again; not at his foes, but at the boat's planking, while upon his face and head fell knife strokes and hammer blows, beating him down time and time again.

But the ax fell, and the boat took water, to open and fill to the shrieks of frenzied men, and to slowly sink as the murderous steel conquered at last. Paul's ax dropped from his lifeless grasp, and he sank beneath the water with a dying howl of triumph, to rise no more.

A groan burst from Hollis's laboring chest, and the girl moaned piteously, not daring to look, but sensing that the tragedy was complete. And in the east the pearly

dawn crept up, touching the shore and sea with gray light that revealed yet another peril to meet.

Along by the ridge lay the professor's own boat, unseen until now; and the howl of blood-crazed demons arose as one of the crew saw it and flung an arm out toward it. Now the mob waded ashore from the sunken boat and ran down to the ridge, and there was no strong arm to halt them.

"John," whispered Dormur intensely "promise me they shall not take me!"

"Alive, no!" he gritted, and strained anew at his oar while the lug-rigged boat crept out with agonizing tardiness.

Exultant shrieks rang out. The boat took the water, and the sail flew up to savage hands as Hollis's own little craft was headed out to its owner's undoing.

The lagging sun sent shafts of steely light above the horizon to brighten the gray; and the sluggish air of night was freshened by the morning breeze. Far down the seaward channel a gray blur came into being. It grew and developed into the incoming steamer, bound up to town; and as the howling crews saw it, and redoubled their efforts to reach the lugger, from the westward appeared yet another apparition, which as yet only the two fugitives could see.

Hollis gazed intently at it, unbelieving; then a prayer of thankfulness burst from his lips, and he cried hoarsely:

"Courage, Dormur! There are soldiers!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

AND THEN—

A VOLLEY of ball cartridge gave the fishermen only slight pause; it required the sight of fixed bayonets to show them their game was up. A shot which hit the planking brought the small boat back with savagely chagrined crew, and the lugger grounded on the sand a few minutes later, to be seized and hauled up by the soldiers.

"Are you Rollins?" demanded the officer of Hollis.

"I'm afraid Rollins is dead," was the reply, and Dormur choked down a sob. The

soldiers stared at the scene in astonishment, for neither Hollis nor the girl was injured, there were no bodies lying about the shore, yet all of the scowling prisoners showed vivid signs of having been in a furious fight.

"Did he do all this before he died?" asked the soldier, indicating with a sweeping gesture all the visible injuries. Hollis nodded, and assisted Dormur out of the boat. Then the officer inspected the boat, uncovering the sacks, and sufficient stores to last for a great many days. He hauled a sack to the gunwale, and it clinked metallically.

"Come, sir," he said sternly, "an explanation is necessary. I received a message signed Paul Rollins, to the effect that serious trouble might be avoided down here by the presence of a platoon of infantry; and I find Rollins dead, you and this lady getting to sea in a boat loaded with stores and sacks of money, and all these men trying to stop you, apparently."

"Did Paul send for you?" whispered Dormur, wide-eyed.

"Yes, madam, but I want your friend's explanation. What is the trouble about?"

Hollis thought long before replying. In his pocket he felt the tightly twisted paper which Paul had cast into the boat as he pushed it afloat; he tried to fathom all the mysteries of the swift, lurid night, and failed. A generous impulse, as well as the as the more palpable indications, prompted him to answer:

"It's very simple, sir. You know this is a trepang fishery, of course? Well then, these men you have in charge are our fishermen. During my own geological researches I stumbled upon this money, buried in a cave close by, and the whole matter is that the men tried to get away with it.

"Rollins turned the tables on them by putting us in the boat first, and he lost his life while smashing the other boats to prevent pursuit. This is all, except that Mr. Lascelles, the lessee of this ground, is on board the steamer just gone up, and will be here shortly."

"H-m! I'll wait and see him. Perhaps this is a matter for the police rather than the military. These chaps killed Rollins, you say?"

"They did, and they shot at us!" cried Dormur. She saw Tolomew and Diaz making frantic signals to her, and added with a rush of remembrance: "Those two men there are not as bad as the rest, I believe," indicating the frantic pair, whose swarthy faces lost much of their fear as they caught the substance of words.

"I'll consider that in my report," the officer promised, then set his men to carrying the sacks up the beach, where a guard was put over them. The prisoners were herded together under loaded rifles, and Dormur prepared food for the men out of the boat's stores.

In less than an hour a carriage dashed along the road, stopped abreast, and Dick leaped the hedge and ran to the beach with wild alarm in his face.

"What on earth has happened?" he shouted, glaring around for Paul. "I saw there was trouble as the ship passed. Where's Paul? Have you let that—let him go?"

Dormur ran to him and flung herself into his arms, sobbing. But her trouble did not eradicate her sense of fitness, and she whispered.

"Dick, don't speak of Paul—yet. Send these soldiers away with our men quickly, and let us talk alone, just we three. This concerns nobody else."

Lascelles walked aside with the officer for a while; and when he returned his expression was puzzled. But he said nothing more until the soldiers had departed with their captives, leaving two men to stand sentry over the money sacks until ownership could be satisfactorily established.

Then brother and sister and professor entered the ruins of Paul's shack, and faced each other in silent inquiry. Hollis toyed uneasily with the twisted paper in his hand, Dick seemed loth to reveal the contents of papers which he had produced, and Dormur, pale as a lily, seemed oppressed by the feeling of suspense that fell over all.

Silence was no longer possible to her. She must speak or scream. And quietly, intensely, she related the ghastly events of the dark hours for Dick's information. Hollis added a word where she faltered, and gradually into her brother's face crept

amazement, incredulity, belief, and approval in swift succession.

He glanced at the professor, and nodded toward the paper he held, then slowly opened his own paper and scanned it over. It contained notes in his own handwriting, notes of a condition which had impelled him to send that message to hold Paul.

"I think you'd better look at that, Hollis," he said. "If Paul threw it at you as he went to his death, it deserves a reading."

Hollis untwisted the paper, straightened it out, and began to read:

"I'm paying in full. A cad can't be expected to do more. And writing this is harder than the other part of the payment I shall make before dawn. When I asked Dormur to kiss me, she didn't know how much depended on her answer. But she did, so I'm paying. If she had refused me, I'd have forced her to keep that promise; but that kiss showed me the gold of her and the rottenness of me, and I saw things I'd done in a different light.

"Now listen. Dick will have plenty to say against me, so I'm getting mine in first. I told that agent to hold up our funds, so that I could have a bigger pull on Dick. Dick's found out all about it by now. Then I decided to break away from here before he came back, and had fixed things to take your money and to take Dormur, too. Oh, yes, I played it right across. I kept the men quiet by telling them I was fixing things for them to come with me; but told them one half at a time, and each half thought the others were not in it.

"That's how it comes the boat is stored and watered and the money is aboard. But then Dormur kissed me, and I couldn't do it. I'd have got you away in daylight, but I was watched every minute. I didn't have a chance until I got the crew into a gamble for shares of the loot.

"You know the rest. If you don't, ask Dick. And Hollis, may your heart turn to ice, and your blood to water, and your marrow to hellfire if you give that girl one minute's sorrow. Tell Dick I'm sorry. That's all."

Only the boom of the rising surf broke the deep silence in the shack when Hollis ceased reading. Dormur stared moist-eyed at Dick, and he returned the stare with suspicious brightness in his own eyes. While the professor had been reading he had nodded from time to time as the statement agreed with his notes regarding the agent.

But the rest, the end, found no counterpart in his notes. He glanced from Dormur to Hollis, and back, and back again, when

the words were read which hinted at the true state of their mutual feelings; and what he saw in both faces decided him. He tore his papers across, deliberately, and doubled and tore them again and again, until they fluttered to the floor in minute scraps incapable of imparting information. Then he stepped into the sunlight, and drew the others with him.

"Hollis," he said, "I don't know whether Paul wrote that letter to shield the real culprits, or whether he was a bit out of his mind through worry and injuries. It would be just like him to shield a fellow.

"That agent has flown with our money. So don't believe what Paul said about conspiring with him for such a shameful purpose. He's shielded me, too. Perhaps some day Dormur may tell you how. The best thing we can do now is to try to find his body and give him the sort of burial such a splendid chap deserves."

Dick, who had dashed to the camp from the ship to denounce Paul as a scoundrel, now really believed every word he uttered; so did the others; and the big man in body, who had proved great in heart in the crisis, may have received the message of their forgiveness while in flight to the Valhalla of all such men.

They found him when the tide turned, and the soldiers helped give him burial, while Hollis chipped out a headstone that would resist the ages.

Then Dick mentioned business. "During the morning he had forgotten that those two sentries guarded a heap of wealth belonging to one of the three survivors of the trepang fishery. His trip had satisfied him about that industry, at least, and now he told Hollis:

"Our business is gone up, old chap. So I don't know when I'll be able to repay that loan. I suppose you will want to gather up your huddle now and fly for parts unknown, eh?"

"Not at all, Lascelles," smiled the professor. "If this money is decided to be mine, I'm going to invest a lot of it in that anchovy fishery I mentioned, and you can handle it if you like, with plenty of reserve funds behind you.

"It will be easy compared with the tre-

pang business, because you can manage it with the natives of the island, and won't have to hire pirates, and therefore you won't require overseers to keep them in hand by fear."

"I believe I'd like to try it," replied Dick thoughtfully. "Do you mean that you are going to actually work at it?"

"Not at all. You will be in sole command. I have a year's work ahead of me here among these rocks and caverns. But before I make up my mind to spend that year I want to speak with your sister. Will you go to town and see what arrangements you can make for nets and boats—yours

are all smashed up, you know—and fishermen?"

Dick started off light-heartedly, hope once more rising out of the ruins, and with smiling faces, Dormur and Hollis watched him stride along the road.

Then, suddenly, each became aware that the other was near, and the smile on Hollis's face grew softer, Dormur's smile became a rosy, soft-eyed blush. Their hands met, and in one swift second she was swept to his breast, crushed unresistingly in arms no longer futile, while her lips warm-pressed to his told him the age-old story her lowered lashes concealed in her eyes.

(The end.)



The Fire Drill

by Harry Hamilton

MR. FURBUSH was a man of action. So, when the idea occurred to him, he at once translated it.

"What a ghastly farce it is," he remarked, "that people never get acquainted with their own fire-escapes until there is a fire. We have all kinds of drills except fire-escape drills for the tenants of apartments. We flat-dwellers trust to luck, and hope it will be good.

"We never think of familiarizing ourselves with the iron stairway; never experiment to see if we know how to slide the ladder into its groove. As in everything else, we just take a chance. If a fire comes, we make our first trip down a fire-escape, trusting that we won't get nervous or dizzy, and that we'll reach the ground without mishap. It's bad, bad dope; that's what it

is," said Mr. Furbush, "and I for one won't stand for it."

"What are you going to do?" asked Mrs. Furbush. "Organize a fire-escape drill among the people of this house?"

"It would be a mighty sensible idea if I did," rejoined Mr. Furbush, "but I sha'n't undertake a big contract like that, at least not yet. Safety-first begins at home. I shall first of all familiarize myself with the fire-escape; and then teach you. That will do for a starter. And we'll begin right now, this minute."

The Furbush apartment was on the third floor. There was one above it, and there were two below. The fire-escape was a modern affair, consisting of an ample platform at every floor, and a ladder that was almost a stairway connecting them. The

ladder had a guard-rail, and altogether it inspired confidence. Mr. Furbush opened a window and stepped out.

"Please be careful, James," cautioned Mrs. Furbush, from behind the curtains. "It's enough to make your head swim out there."

"Think how much more it would swim if there was the added nerve-strain of a fire," answered Mr. Furbush.

"Wear this old golf cap or you'll take cold," said Mrs. Furbush, passing it out.

From the iron platform Mr. Furbush looked up, then down, and finally decided upon the up route.

"I'll try the roof first," he thought. "Oftentimes the way to the ground is blocked by flame and smoke. So here goes to the roof."

Cautiously he climbed. It was a trifle unnerving. All the more reason, therefore, for practise. Up he went until his eyes were on a level with the window of the apartment above.

Mr. Furbush gasped.

"Gosh!" he said to himself. "I'll be pinched for a *Peeping Tom*, sure. Why don't people pull their shades down when they're dressing, especially when they're on a public thoroughfare like a fire-escape? I'll get out of this."

With catlike tread, Mr. Furbush descended to his own level.

"Now I'll go down instead," he decided, after a brief pause to recover himself. "I'll see if I know how to operate that ladder."

Suiting the action to the word, he grasped the guard-rail and began his "drill" anew. He had almost reached the second floor platform when something bade him pause. It was a woman; a woman screaming. There was something decidedly personal in her screams; personal and piercing.

"Pol-e-e-e-e-e-e-e-e-c-e!"

It was not over as quickly as that, but such was its general purport. It spoke volumes.

"Lord!" cried Mr. Furbush. "Those new tenants on the floor below. Whoever she is, she doesn't know me from Adam. I can't argue with a hysterical woman."

This time, Mr. Furbush forgot where he was, and went up the fire-escape, two steps

at a time, to the Furbush floor. The Furbush window was open and he darted in.

"Oh," cried Mrs. Furbush, "thank Heaven you're safe! I went away just for a minute to answer the telephone, and while I was out of the room, I heard somebody scream. I thought you had fallen. I thought you were killed."

"I would have been, had either of two women had a chance at me," replied her husband. "There's absolutely no privacy on a fire-escape. A man tears his character into shreds the minute he steps out on one. Look out the window, just sort of—~~or~~—carelessly, will you, and see if you see or hear anybody?"

Mrs. Furbush dutifully did so, and then reported the result.

"I think the people down-stairs were just shutting and locking their window," she told her husband. "And there were several women at the windows in back of us who seemed unduly interested, I thought. One of them seemed almost excited. They probably heard the screaming, too."

"I'd like to know what it was. Do take off that golf cap. The way you have it pulled down over your eyes, you look positively tough in it."

Mr. Furbush threw the golf cap across the room and dropped into a chair.

"Did you find out how to work the ladder in the groove?" asked his wife.

"I did not!" replied Mr. Furbush, with a savage abruptness that seemed quite uncalled for.

"Why not?" persisted Mrs. Furbush, puzzled. "I thought you said—"

There was a very determined ringing of the Furbush bell at the end of their private hall. It was followed by some equally determined knocking, as if by several fists.

"Gracious," cried Mrs. Furbush, "I just felt that something was the matter, and now I'm sure of it. Perhaps it's murder!"

Mrs. Furbush ran up the hall toward the door. Mr. Furbush followed, with quaking knees.

"That woman up-stairs *did* see me, I betcha!" he thought. "Saw me and recognized me, and now I'm in for it. Sent her husband down, probably, to find out what I mean by peeping in her window."

Meanwhile, Mrs. Furbush had reached the entrance, and there, on the stair landing without, through her parted door-curtains, she saw two policemen and the janitor. Each of the policemen seemed about nine feet in height. And they were red faced and breathing hard from climbing the three flights.

She opened the door.

"Lady," said one of them, "we want to take a look through your flat. We think a second-story man—a feller we've been watching—got in here. A woman in one of the houses back of you saw him out on your fire-escape and telephoned the station."

The policeman did not wait for answer. With drawn revolvers, they had already begun their search. Mr. Furbush heard them and quickly ducked into a convenient bedroom.

"It was my husband, I guess, they saw," faltered Mrs. Furbush.

One of the officers turned and regarded her with such a look of suspicion that Mrs. Furbush flushed.

"What was your husband doing out on the fire-escape?" he asked.

"Well, I told him to be careful, but he would—"

"Where is he now?"

"Why, here. Somewhere," said the flustered Mrs. Furbush.

At this instant, there was a booming voice from the room which opened on the fire-escape.

"Hey, Mike," cried the booming voice, "ain't this Slippery Ike's cap?"

The party followed—all save Mr. Furbush.

"Where'd you find that, Joe?" asked Mrs. Furbush's inquisitor.

"Here on the floor, just under the bureau."

"It's a dead ringer for the one Ike had on the day he gave us the slip. Who's hat is that, lady?"

"It's my husband's," said Mrs. Furbush weakly. "I gave it to him because I thought he'd catch cold."

"Better guard the door, Mike," said one officer to the other, icily.

"S all right," replied his partner. "He

can't get away. Leary's on the roof and Connor's down in the basement hall."

Mrs. Furbush felt herself "coming back."

"James Furbush, where are you?" she called in a commanding voice.

James Furbush stepped forth with attempted jauntiness. It was a bad job.

"Is this man your husband?" asked the cop called Mike.

"He is."

"Anybody else in the house know him besides you?"

Mrs. Furbush glared, but the janitor saved the situation.

"How you do, Mr. Furbush?" he said. "We are sorry we give you all this trouble, but—"

The officers looked distinctly disappointed, but they wouldn't give him up just yet.

"What were you doing out on the fire-escape when there wasn't any fire?" asked the largest of the nine-footers.

"That was just it," said Mr. Furbush, moistening his lips with his tongue. "I went out to practise. People shouldn't wait until there is a fire before familiarizing themselves with their fire-escape. They should get used to it."

The officer turned the thing over in his mind.

"S good idea," he said finally; "more people ought to do it. But you want to be careful, next time you do it, not to raise the neighborhood."

"I never made a sound," protested Mr. Furbush.

"Well, maybe you should have," said the officer. "You don't want to scare people like this—and takin' our time, too. You ought to tell your neighbors when you're thinkin' of doin' that again. It'll save a lot of trouble."

"I'll not do it again, unless there's a fire," snapped Mr. Furbush.

"Why, James," said Mrs. Furbush, "I thought you said that everybody ought to—"

"Cut it out," said Mr. Furbush, "can't you!"

And he kicked the golf cap viciously—it was too reminiscent of Slippery Ike.

A Buccaneer in Spats by Achmed Abdullah

Author of "The God of the Invincibly Strong Arms," "Bucking the Tiger,"
"The Master of the Hour," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXVII.

SALAAMS TO WALY AL-DIN.

THE situation was distressing: the two Oriental women, one of them slightly the worse for drink, the other bursting into crude cachinnations that caused her fat flesh to quiver like jelly; the ogling men, exchanging amused whispers and comments; the Maltese head-waiter, stifling his laughter behind a grimy napkin; a couple of ragged Arab street urchins, looking in through the feathery palm screen and swapping decidedly broad observations on the top of their lusty young lungs—a situation awkward enough to daunt even the hereditary leader of Washington's cave-dwelling set.

But Violet was obstinate—a characteristic which she had from her father.

Masamdansena had been her personal maid for several years. She had found her, a scrawny, half-starved child of twelve in the blue slime and degradation of Calcutta's Colootallah section, had bought her for a handful of rupees from an opium-soaked old woman who called herself her mother, and had brought her up cleanly and decently.

Madamsena had sworn undying fidelity. And she had been faithful, courteous, thoroughly trustworthy, modest—and now—

The pink drink—the generous showing of tight, black-and-gold brocaded trousers—the arrogant words—the leering, half-caste woman across from her!

What could have happened?

"Come here! At once!"

Lady Violet's words dropped like icicles.

"No!" said Madamsena.

"Indeed no!" echoed the half-caste woman.

"*Mais non alors—nom d'une pipe!*" guffawed the Marseillais commercial traveler, appreciatively studying the English girl's trim figure.

"Masamdansena—"

Violet paused, interrogatively.

But there was no reply; and, making up her mind, she crossed the palm garden and walked straight up to the table, with that long, hip-swinging British gait of hers, British, too, in the chilly superciliousness with which she treated the jesting crowd and the calm, clipped words with which she addressed the mutinous *ayah*:

"I say—come along now."

"No."

"If you don't—why—I'm through with you, for good, my dear girl."

Masamdansena took another sip. She looked up, smiled.

"By Shiva!" she replied. "It is *I* who am through with you, *mem-sahib*! I told you. I have quit!"

"You—you—what?"

And then the half-caste woman cut in with a gross rumbling:

"She is no more your servant—no longer your maid!"

"Maid?" echoed Madamsena. "Serv-

This story began in the All-Story Weekly for November 29.

ant? I? No! I shall be a *burra mem*—a great lady. I shall have servants of my own—black slaves whom I shall beat with many painful beatings. Soon! Very soon! Pipe wallahs I shall have, and punkah wallahs, and slipper wallahs, and a special woman to dye my toe nails scarlet with henna!”

“Whom are you going to marry?” interrupted the commercial traveler. “Some South American cattle king?”

“Cattle yourself, O grandson of a pimple!” was Madamsena’s discourteous retort, as she arose and drew up her tiny figure. She was a little unsteady. “And—as to kings—know, all you, that I shall be the best beloved of—”

“Hush—hush!” came the half-caste woman’s warning hiss, as she put her enormous hand over the other’s mouth.

She turned to the English girl, with something like sympathy.

“It is useless, *mem-sahib*,” she said. “You must find yourself another maid. There are plenty in this town. Come to me,” she added, always ready to earn a penny or a pound, honestly or dishonestly. “I have the pick of them all. Bibi Zaida is my name. Anybody in Tunis can direct you to my house. *Salâam*, little lady!”

Violet shrugged her shoulders.

If Madamsena insisted on making a silly little fool of herself, all right, she thought, it was her own lookout.

Yet, as she left the palm garden and re-entered her carriage, her cheeks were suffused with an angry rose-pink and, woman-like, for no logical reason she could think of or even tried to think of, she was inclined to blame Langley Hudson for the annoying contretemps.

Womanlike, too, was she in this, that she decided to punish the New Yorker for something of which he had not been guilty and, finally, to hurt herself in punishing him. She made the strictly feminine resolution—doubtless first thought of by Eve after the intermezzo near the tree of knowledge—to cut off her nose to spite her face.

For there was Waly al-Din.

She did not care to be alone with him, as a rule. She felt uncomfortable in his

presence. Though not disliking him, personally, as an individual, she disliked his psychic emanations.

Still—there he was! A clever instrument in a clever woman’s hands!

And there was Langley Hudson, jealous, for all his stubborn refusals to make love to her.

And here was she, herself, a woman who realized her own charm, her own sex appeal and sex attraction, and—

Yes!

“O Habeebah!” she called, when she had reached once more her father’s house.

“Yes, little soul—yes, Violet *djan*?”

“I am hungry. Serve my dinner now. And bring my *salâams* to Waly al-Din, and ask him to join me at the table.”

The old nurse shook her head.

“Waly al-Din has left,” she replied.

“Well—tell him as soon as he comes back.”

“He will never come back,” said Hebeebah.

“Never?”

“So I think.”

“But—Habeebah—I believed that—”

“Never!” repeated the old woman.

And she told Violet how, a few minutes earlier, she had gone to the young Arab’s room carrying a tray with his mid-day meal.

“I said to him—words!” she added.

“Oh?” smiled Violet. “What sort of words?” well knowing what was coming.

“Hot words! True words! By the same token, words of rich abuse!”

“But why?”

“Because of the disgraceful bargain he made with that swag-bellied money-bag, thy father! Because he—the son of a drunkard—aspired to thy hand, after thou didst promise thy father to—”

“There was a reason for my promise, Habeebah. Remember my mother!”

“I shall never forget her. Never.”

She was silent; then went on:

“So—I spoke to him—words! I told him that for him, to dream of thee, was like the frog who jumped on a lump of mud and said he had climbed the Himalyas and looked down upon the valley of Kashmere. Thus I spoke to him. Also did I say—oh—other things.”

The English girl smiled.

She could well imagine what the "other things" had been like and felt rather sorry for Waly al-Din, while Habeebah went on to say that whereas, during former scenes of a similar nature, the Arab had always replied with spicy jest and ridicule and mocking gesture, to-day he had asked her, sternly, to be silent.

He had told her that she need never worry again about her mistress's fate—at least, as related to his own fate. Lady Violet was safe from him. For he was going away.

"And it seems that he spoke the truth," Habeebah wound up. "For he took with him Mehmet Nur, the lodge porter of thy father's house, his racing dromedary, and a pack animal. All his fine raiment he took along, his perfumes, his traveling Koran, his boxes of devil drugs. He—ah," she coughed, "he borrowed from me whatever money I had, and he was in a gay mood as he rode away, at a gallop, down the street, his silken bournoose streaming behind him like a flag, a song on his lips. 'O peacock, cry again,' he warbled. And so—*Bismillah*—he was off!"

"Where to?"

"*Shaitan belade*—the devil knows! I only know that thy father will blame me—will hold me responsible—will swear that it was I who drove him away. The caravan trail! *Ahee!* The trail—the ambition of his life! Gone! *Ahee—ahoo!* He will make me eat much stick!"

And so Violet was deprived of her revenge and sat down to dinner which, in spite of her anger, she ate with a healthy British appetite, while Habeebah hovered about her, keeping up a running fire of remarks, some melancholily prophetic about the "stick eating" which would be her portion, others praises to Allah that Violet had escaped the fate which her father had prepared for her.

"Thou wilt not marry Waly al-Din, little soul," she said. "Thou wilt marry the foreign lord who has all the small devils of laughter in his eyes and on his lips."

She put her withered old hand on her mistress's shoulder.

"Too," she added, "is there love in his

eyes and on his lips—love quivering like the last response of life in the ecstasy of final creation—keen love curved like a simitar—love sweet like the perfume of the *babla* flower—love soft and purring like the cat that sits on the Prophet Mohammed's shoulder—peace on him—in paradise. Love like—"

"That's just the trouble," interrupted Violet, lighting a cigarette. "He won't speak of love—never did—except once—"

"Make him, soul of a thousand roses," smiled Habeebah. "It is always the woman who should speak first of love. That is why Allah rounded her breasts and curved her lips and made her hands narrow and gentle and knowing!"

"But—he is an American—a man of the West—he—"

"*Aughrrr!*" Habeebah spat. "East, West, North, or South—all men are alike. Stupid oxen carrying the yoke of their own conceit! Visionary fools setting barriers in their own beings! Stupid and credulous and blind—waiting for woman, a clever woman like thyself, to cast around them the colored shadow of her radiance! Try it, little soul!"

"I shall," Violet replied demurely.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE "BOSS" OF TUNIS.

MEANWHILE, Langley Hudson had arrived at the jail, that was surrounded by a crowd of people—relatives of the prisoners within its walls.

Good-naturedly, he pushed his way through.

"Sorry, old man," he smiled, as he bumped against a licorice-juice seller who was clanking his metal pots together; evaded skilfully the clutching hands of a sturdy beggar who called upon him to give alms—"For the sake of Allah! For the sake of Allah be merciful! I am the guest of Allah and the Prophet! My supper must be Thy gift, O Lord!" And, on the threshold of the jail, collided with Ali Abdelkader of Jangi-Dost, who was stalking by the side of a bent old man with the thick, satiny skin of the Hindu, the nose and lips

of the Jew, and the chilly blue eyes of the lowland Scot.

The New Yorker was not an expert in physiognomy, but he guessed the man's identity at once.

"Mr. Sassoon ben Yakoub Sami!" he called. "Out of jug? And where is—"

"And, sir, who may *you* be?" came the financier's query, as he turned and looked at him with a stony eye.

Then, as the Touareg, who had recognized Langley Hudson, whispered into his ear, he continued, rather excitedly:

"Go away! Go away! I want no dealings with you. I owe you nothing, nothing. Van Kraaft paid you in New York."

"Oh—is that so?" Hudson smiled. He buttonholed the other. "Then you know all about Van Kraaft and me—eh? Know all about the particular little Ethiopian in my particular little lumber yard? Well—well—"

"No!"

"Oh, yes, you do! Gave yourself away there, old socks!"

"No, no!" went on Mr. Sami, seeing that he had made a mistake, and that he must be careful not to compromise himself, now that the New York police had arrested Van Kraaft. "I know nothing. I want to know nothing."

"You'll know a lot before I get through with you, you second-hand, little, fish-eyed crook!" Langley Hudson was growing angry.

"How—how dare you insult me? I am—"

"A millionaire? My dear sir, that means nothing in my young life. Everybody is a millionaire nowadays. Why—there's that Greek hat-check boy at the—Wow there, Nellie, back up!" stopping the older man as he tried to brush past him. "Tell me first—"

"Ali! Ali Abdelkader!" screeched Mr. Sami.

But the New Yorker did not recede a step before the Touareg's towering, threatening bulk.

"Forget it," he said. "I am not scared of you, even though you do look like the villain out of the Arabian Nights. Come right along, if you want trouble!"

He struck a defensive attitude, crouching low, greatly to the amusement of the crowd and of half a dozen prisoners who nearly dislocated their necks trying to crane them through the window bars. There was a great deal of comment in Arabic, French, and Italian; too, some brisk betting led by a cockney sailor.

"Foive to one odds on the Yank? Who'll tyke foive to one odds and no 'edgin' fer plyce? Come on, 'Enery!' to another sailor. "And put yer bleedin' shirt on yer bleedin' fancy!"

"Myke it a plurry sweepstykes!" retorted 'Enery. "I'm fer the brunette gent—"

Sassoon ben Yakoub Sami was becoming nervous.

"Never mind, Ali!" he said. "Let's go. I do not want a brawl."

"Sure you don't," laughed the New Yorker, whose ill temper had disappeared as he thought that, after all, with the contracts once more in his possession he held the winning trump, could compel either the earl or the earl's rival to do his bidding. "You had enough of a brawl with old Knuteswold. And that's what I wanted to ask you about. How did you get out of jail? And where is the other fighting-rooster? Is he out of jail, too?"

"Is that all you wanted to know? You didn't intend to—"

"No. I'll attend to that little Van Kraaft matter after a while. Where is the earl?" Suddenly the financier laughed.

"He's still in jail," he replied.

"But—how did you—"

"Get out?"

"Yes, Mr. Sami."

"On bail, of course. Ali Abdelkader came with the cash as soon as he heard of my predicament."

"The earl, too, is a rich man," said Langley Hudson. "Surely he—"

The Hindu-Hebrew-Scot gave a mischievous cackle.

"That's what he said to M. Toussaint Lamoureux, the second deputy assistant French resident—and M. Lamoureux likes neither the earl nor myself. We squeezed him once in a little commercial fight we had."

"Well? What happened? Granted that M. Lamoureux is not in love with you or the earl, the law is still the law, and the French officials are rather sticklers when it comes to fine judicial points."

"Exactly. That's where M. Lamoureux had old Knuteswold! The local police law says that all bail must be in cash!"

"And—"

"The earl did not have cash, at least not enough, and he does not bank in Tunis. He offered a check on London, on Calcutta, or Paris, or New York. He offered his house here for security. But—no! The Frenchman insisted on cash—insisted on the letter of the law."

"But—surely," said the New Yorker, "the Tunis bank would honor the earl's check on London or Calcutta."

"The bank will do nothing of the sort," Mr. Sami chuckled.

"Why not?"

"Because *I* am the Tunis bank!"

"But there's more than one bank here."

"To be sure. But I have heavy deposits in every one of them."

"Oh—"

"Just so. And, as the earl is the leading nabob of Calcutta—"

"So you are the big noise here in Tunis. I get you. And none of the local merchants would have the nerve to—"

"Rightly guessed, young man," smiled Mr. Sami. "The result is that my rival is still in jail, and will stay there until he can furnish cash bail—twenty thousand francs—about four thousand dollars!"

"But—surely—he can telegraph to London—or to Calcutta—"

"He can indeed," replied Mr. Sami, winking at the Touareg who, gravely, winked back. "Oh, yes—he can send a cable. But—"

He coughed, and tried to look innocent; which was a signal failure.

For Langley Hudson, too, winked an eye, first at him, then at Ali Abdelkader.

"You mean to say," he asked, "that you are ace high with the local—eh—whatever you call the Western Union here and that you would—well—suppress the cable?"

"I? No—by the God of Abraham and of Jacob!"

"I always did have my doubts about Jacob," cut in the New Yorker. "The way he bilked his brother Esau—"

"No!" went on the financier. "I shall not suppress the cable. I always keep within the law—"

"Oh—you do?"—sarcastically.

"I do!" Mr. Sami rubbed his skinny hands. "So my lawyers assure me. But—"

"Well?"

"Young man," said the other, "you're inquisitive and—oh—"

"Fresh?"

"Yes. But, somehow, I like you." Mr. Sami was rich enough to be able to be outspoken. "You have a certain amount of charm."

"That's what they say in New York and Newport. That's how I earn my living. But—to return to our muttons. About the cable the earl is sure to send to his London bankers—"

"I can't suppress the cable. It wouldn't be legal. But there's a censorship here, and I know the censor, and perhaps the cable can be held up for a few days—"

"Very, very mustard!" commented the New Yorker admiringly.

"And at the end of a few days—"

"What 'll have happened?"

"A great deal of water will have run beneath a particular bridge I'm interested in, my inquisitive Yankee friend," laughed Mr. Sami, thinking of certain news Ali Abdelkader had brought him—news that dealt with Waly al-Din and Bibi Zaida and a golden-skinned Hindu girl.

And he walked away, down the street, arm in arm with the statuesque Touareg, while Langley Hudson asked to be directed to the office of M. Toussaint Lamoureux, second deputy assistant French resident, in charge of the department of justice.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE SECOND ASSISTANT DEPUTY RESIDENT.

THE moment he was ushered into the Frenchman's office and saw him there, ensconced behind an oak desk with all the pinchbeck pomp and puffery so dear to the heart of Gallic bureaucracy, Langley

Hudson felt conscious of a sharp antagonism, and showed it by his opening remark.

"Look here," he said, as he crossed the threshold. "What's all that frame-up you are trying to pull off on old Sir Do-Em-Brown Ten-Per-Cent?" strictly and enthusiastically American diction which was as intelligible to M. Toussaint Marie Lamoureux as Hottentot or ancient Peruvian.

"*Monsieur*," he replied, sonorously, stroking his silken, square-cut beard—the sort of beard which was not merely a hirsute ornament and a proof of its owner's masculine virility, but something almost ritual, almost sacerdotal—"parlez Français, s'il vous plaît!"

"Sorry," said the New Yorker, "but I can't spout a word of your language except, perhaps, green Chartreuse!"

"Ah—you are an American?"

The question was asked in clipped, metallic English, and held the suspicion of a sneer which Langley Hudson was quick to perceive, as quick to resent.

"Right," he admitted. "Move to the head of the class, sonny."

"An American! I thought so!" M. Toussaint Lamoureux curled his fleshy lips in an ironic smile. "Allow me to inform you that one does not jest in a French court of law. This is not the land of—ah—cowboys and Charlie Chaplin and revolvers!"

"Isn't it?"

"It is *not*! This, *monsieur*"—indicating his red-white-and-blue sash of office—"is the emblem of France. It stands for dignity—also for freedom and equality and justice."

"It doesn't—but it ought to!" came the New Yorker's slow drawl.

"*Monsieur!*"

"Stop *monsieur*ing me, and keep your shirt on, old fellow."

"*Monsieur! Monsieur!*" with a rumbling, minatory crescendo.

"I repeat," Langley Hudson went on, unheeding, "that the bit of bunting around your embonpoint *ought* to stand for justice. But—by Saint Tammany! It doesn't. Not a bit of it."

M. Lamoureux arose. He thumped his chest with a capable fist.

"I—"

"Well?"

"I warn you." His voice trembled. "I warn you that—"

"You know very well that the Earl of Knuteswold's check is as good as gold."

"The law decrees—"

"'Hell!' said the *duchess*. Law? It's the spirit of the law, not the letter that means justice. Why, man, you insist on cash just out of mere, mean, pettifogging, personal spite. Chicanery, that's what it is. What's the matter with you? Haven't you got an ounce of sporting blood mixed up with your adipose?"

Then, when the other glared at him, momentarily speechless with rage, the American continued, in a gentle tone meant to convey infinite tolerance for M. Lamoureux's moral obliquity:

"I s'pose you can't help it. It's the way your parents brought you up. But, by heck, if I'd been your father, I would have paddled your little stout back till you knew what it meant to be decent and just and—"

"How—how dare you?" The Frenchman trembled with fury. He leaned across the desk, his beard sticking out like a battering ram. "How—dare—you—"

"Cut out the *bel canto*. You sound like the fog horn of a soused Staten Island ferry-boat."

M. Lamoureux thumped the table with his clenched fist.

"Leave this room!" he shouted. "Immediately! Immediately!"

"I will just as soon as you release the Earl of Knuteswold on his own recognizance, or accept his check on London as bail. Come on! Be a regular fellow."

"Go!" commanded M. Lamoureux, pointing at the door with his right hand, while with his left he gave his beard a violent and painful tug. "Go, *monsieur*! At once!"

"Don't be so darned petty."

"You refuse to go?"

"That's about the size of it."

"All right!" cried the other. "One thousand million sacred thunders—you—"

"Smile when you say it," purred the New Yorker. "Smile—or—"

"Ah—*scrogniueugnieu!*"

"What's that mean?"

The second assistant deputy resident did not reply. He thumped the desk bell viciously, and, a few moments later, two armed prison wardens came into the room, and saluted.

"Duhamel!" said M. Lamoureux. "La-place! Take this person to jail!"

For a second, Langley Hudson was taken aback.

"To—where—"

"Jail!" M. Lamoureux smiled like the cat that has stolen the cream, and, while the wardens were subduing the New Yorker after a short, but fierce struggle: "You have offended me! You have offended the majesty of the law! You have offended the republic!"

Then, as the two sturdy Frenchmen led him off, fighting, he called after him:

"From you, too, I will accept bail. Twenty thousand francs. Cash! The same as from the Earl of Knuteswold. You will occupy the cell next to him. Perhaps you will console each other—you two rough customers. Ah—name of a curly-tailed guinea pig!"

"Curly-tailed guinea pig yourself!" shouted the American, as he was being rushed down the corridor and into a cell that was next, and at right angles, to another whose occupant stopped suddenly in the midst of a stream of foul invective.

"My word!" he asked. "Did you call that frog-eating monsoor in there a curly-tailed guinea pig?"

"I did." Langley Hudson smiled ingratiatingly. Here was a good opening to make friends with his father-in-law. "Fits him like a blister, doesn't it?"

"Gawd!" rumbled the Earl of Knuteswold. "I'll blister 'im all right, all right, when I gets out o' this 'ere dump!"

CHAPTER XXX.

JAIL.

LANGLEY HUDSON studied his cell neighbor with a great deal of interest.

A vulgarian? Of course. Both consciously and unconsciously. Loud, foul-mouthed, coarse, crude, purse-proud, ostentatious.

But, somehow, even in the ridiculous, undignified predicament in which the man was, in spite of his acrid, twangy cockney accent, he emanated strength and pluck and intelligence and lean, wire-drawn pithiness. Somehow, the New Yorker understood that it was not altogether his tremendous fortune and commercial and political influence which had put a coronet on his head and a crimson-and-ermine robe about his shoulders. Somehow, the man, both in his good and his bad qualities, seemed to epitomize that illogical, but eternal colossus, the British Empire, which had honored him with title and 'scutcheon.

Too, he was likable. Nor was it a sentimental back wash, the fact that he was the father of the girl whom Langley Hudson loved best in all the world, which caused the latter to reach a hand through the cell bars and invite the other to shake, with a laughing, good-natured:

"Hullo there, companion in misery!"

The other shook hands limply.

"Just wyte till I gets out of 'ere," he grumbled. "Aw—the things I'm goin' to do to that plurry, bearded frog-eater! Wot-oh! It 'll be a bleedin' shyme!"

Then he seemed to notice suddenly the other's hand which was still in his.

"Wot did they pinch *you* for, cully?" he asked.

Hudson smiled.

"For sassing the republic of France," he replied, "and telling that whiskered party with the red-white-and-blue sash what I think of him."

"Oh, yes. Called 'im a curly-tailed guinea pig, didn't you?"

"I did."

"'Ardly enough reason for poppin' you into clink, seems to me," suggested the earl.

"Wasn't altogether. That was only the apex, the final, withering, dramatic punch. I am here because—well—because I tried to do an act of Christian unselfishness."

"Against whom?"

"You were the object of my abortive attempt at altruism!"

The Earl of Knuteswold looked up, a wary glint in his eyes. He was a businessman. Therefore he distrusted unselfishness.

He said so now, with homespun directness.

"S'y!" he exclaimed. "I don't want any o' yer Christian unselfishness in mine. It's too expensive for the fellow wot's bein' unselfished, see?"

Langley Hudson was beginning to enjoy the situation.

But, from the start, though acting under subconscious influence rather than deliberately, he felt that it would never do to let his father-in-law get the best of him, to permit him to bully him in any way.

So his accents were the opposite of honeyed.

"You're too damned suspicious," he said, "and too damned rough."

"Well," rejoined the other, grinning a little, "I *am* a rough diamond. Can't 'elp it, old cock," he added, with a certain pride.

"All right," the New Yorker countered.

"But I do wish you had a little more of the diamond and a little less of the rough about you."

Again the Earl of Knuteswold smiled.

Then, very much as Sassoon had done a few minutes earlier, he remembered the homage which poorer, and thus lesser, mortals offered to his gold-clouted might.

"Look a-ere, young feller-me-lad," he demanded, "d' you know by any chance whom you're addressin'?"

"Sure. You are the Earl of Knuteswold."

"You do know then, do you?" crescendo.

"You bet."

"Aw!" said the earl, deep in his throat; a short, hacked, minatory exclamation that, in the past, had caused many a broker and merchant, in London and Calcutta and New York, to quail and to look at his bank balance.

But Langley Hudson gestured with a negligent and contemptuous hand.

"Why the 'Aw'?" he inquired. "Got a pain in your tummy-tum-tum?"

The earl's voice rose.

"Say!" he asked, "d'you know that I could buy and sell you a 'undred times over? D' you know that—"

"Forget it, old pomposity!" the New Yorker interrupted, while, farther down the row of cells, a Liverpool sailor awaiting

sentence for drunkenness and disorderly conduct, cheered him on with an enthusiastic hiccupy:

"That's right, me bucko! Tell that there bloody 'unk o' second-'and sausage meat wot yer thinks of 'im!"

"Thanks for the encouragement, mate," laughed Hudson.

And, in lower accents, to the earl:

"I know—I own up—one shouldn't measure millionaires by ordinary standards. One must give them a certain latitude of conduct to make up for the muckraking they have to undergo during life and the death-duties their estates have to pay after they've kicked the bucket—"

"Well?" said the other, a little mollified.

"But—even so—"

"What?"

"Even so there's that elusive quality called ordinary good breeding. And when a chap tells you, as I do, that he fought your battles with that French whiskerando in there—just out of plain, everyday unselfishness and sense of fair play—"

"I told you before I don't want any o' your unselfishness—"

"But—"

"And I don't want no shyster lawyer either, see? I got the tin! I got the bloody 'oof! I can 'ire every last plurry king's counsel from John o' Groat's to the cliffs o' Dover to look after my affairs. Don't you trouble yer 'ead about me—I tells yer I want no shyster lawyer buttin' in and—"

"I am not a shyster lawyer!"

"Ain't you? A' right! And I ain't the sort wot can be stuck for money by the first Yankee con artist wot 'ops along—not me!"

Hudson was beginning to lose his temper.

"Whom d' you mean by 'con artist'?" he asked thickly.

"I ain't a-sayin'. But, if the shoe fits yer tootsies, keep it, see? Wot the merry 'ell d' you imagine I needs o' the likes o' you, yer smooth-skinned young jackanapes? I'll get out of 'ere all right, all right—just as soon as I gets my bloomin' bail!"

Langley Hudson had quickly mastered his rising temper. He had promised Violet he would help her father. Too, there was the natural instinct of self-preservation—

with Adrian Van Kraaft arrested in New York and his own name mixed up with the affair, he could not afford to have the earl for an enemy, even though, in the actual possession of the contracts, he held at least one trump card.

"Telegraphed for the cash, didn't you?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Expect to get it?"

"Just as soon as my cyble reaches London."

"Exactly," drawled the other. "Just as soon as you cable reaches deah ole Lunnon—*just* as soon—and not a blessed moment sooner!"

The Earl of Knuteswold stuck his face close against the cell bars.

"Wot d' you mean by that 'just'?" he inquired.

Then, when Langley Hudson smiled a mystifying smile, without replying, he went on:

"D' you mean to s'y that there frog-eater of an assistant deputy resident will 'ave the infernal cheek to—"

"Hold up your cable? Not he. But—"

"Go on!"

"Sassoon will! Sassoon ben Yakoub Sami! Your old college side-kick!"

"Sassoon?"

"Yes."

"Look a-ere! Wot do *you* know about Sassoon? S'y—you knows a bloomin' sight too much, young feller!"

Langley Hudson checked himself, and executed a rapid volte-face when he saw that he had let on to more than was safe.

"Why," he said, "the tale is all over town by this time. Naturally—considering who Sassoon is and who you are—"

"Oh, yes, that's right," admitted the earl, rather pleased at the implied compliment, his suspicions lulled once more.

"And as to Sassoon holding up your cable," the younger man went on, "you know yourself that he can pull more wires here in Tunis than you—"

"Right as rain, young feller. Sassoon—blarst 'is ugly, warty 'ide—will 'old up my cyble, all right, all right. Not," he added, with honesty, "that I'm a-blymin' of 'im for it."

"No?" asked Hudson, astonished.

"Of course not. I'd do the syne if I was in 'is position. Yes," he groaned despondent, "'e'll 'old up my cyble. It 'll be three or four d'ys before I gets out o' this 'ere bloody cooler. And—my word—*when* I thinks of the things wot might 'appen in the mean time! Aw—fer a bloomin' dustbin!"

"Dustbin?" asked the New Yorker. "What for—of all things?"

"To bury my 'ead in, yer silly ass!"

Then, with a shriek of rage:

"It's enough to myke a cat bite 'er kittens! Aw Gawd—stop the bus!"

He was silent and paced up and down behind the cell bars like a caged jungle beast.

"Aw!" he mumbled. "Me a millionaire in pounds! Fancy it! And 'ere I am, just a-pinin' aw'y fer a measly four thousand dollars!"

"Four thousand of the ready!" he repeated dolefully.

And then, quite suddenly, Langley Hudson remembered.

He slapped his breast pocket where he still had the greater part of the messenger fee which Adrian Van Kraaft had paid him.

"Why," he exclaimed, taking out the roll of money and waving it triumphantly. "I'd clean forgotten! Here's a whole flock of simoleons that aren't working! Enough for you and me! Gee whiz!"

"Hey there, Mister Mustaffa Chocolate-Eclair!" he called to a half-caste prison attendant. "Tell that what's-his-name—that deputy assistant something-or-other that I have the cash bail here—for the Earl of Knuteswold and myself!"

CHAPTER XXXI.

CONTRACT, CONTRACT—

M. LAMOUREUX fretted and fumed. He examined the texture, engraving, and water-mark of every one of the bank notes which Langley Hudson put up for bail. He consulted a number of dusty, forensic tomes bound in pigskin to hunt for a legal subterfuge by the strength of which he might keep the American and the Englishman in jail.

But the law was the law, French, utterly logical, inexorable, unelastic, and, finally, he was compelled to see the Earl of Knuteswold and Langley Hudson, free men once more, cross the prison threshold and step out into the open, arm in arm, laughing like schoolboys, evidently the best of friends.

They were half-way across the pleasant Square of Sidi-bou-Said when, clear above the motley noises of the street, a voice screeched around the corner of a mosque—hiccaped, peaked, stammered—a voice that blended Hindustani and Hebrew and English with a guttural Highland accent—a voice that called upon the God of Abraham and of Jacob—a voice that had, as a dissonant undercurrent, a cloudy, gurgling trickle of abuse so obscene as to cause the lolling Arabs who squatted amongst the trees, sunning themselves, to look up with interest not unmixed by admiration.

"Sassoon ben Yakoub Sami—or I'll eat my 'at!" said the earl turning, with a smile. "I wonder wot's a bitin' of 'im."

Langley Hudson, too, smiled, wondered. Then, suddenly, he understood.

He pulled the earl by the arm.

"Come along," he whispered, walking faster.

But it was too late.

For, just then, Sami whirled into sight, with an amazing speed and agility for a man of his years, his bald head naked to the rays of the African sun, an extravagantly flowered dressing robe in virulent magenta streaming out behind him like a flag. He was followed by Ali Abdelkader and by an iron-gray, square-jawed American whose unseasonable pin-stripe worsted suit showed signs of having recently come into contact with cellar dust and refuse, and the two were dragging along between them, cuffing and kicking him, a young Arab who was viciously fighting every step of the way and whose green turban had become untwisted in the struggle so that it flopped about his bare, brown legs like an inebriated snake.

"Heavens!" muttered Langley Hudson. "McDonald—and my Coney Island friend!"

What was there to be done?

Somehow, McDonald must have got rid of his bonds and out of the cellar beneath

Moustaffa Aziz al-Ajami's little shop in the street of the perfume sellers; must have notified Sassoon ben Yakoub Sami that the contracts had been taken from him.

The contracts!

They burned in Hudson's pocket like red-hot coal. He was about to tear them up, to throw them away. Then he reconsidered. He said to himself that, well-played, at the psychological moment, they were amongst his trump cards.

With a "Sorry, old man," he abandoned the astonished earl's arm.

He looked about him.

The streets were barred by crowds of shouting, laughing natives who pressed in from all sides, and he plunged into a dense mass of tropical bushes that flanked a grass plot, just as the Hindu-Hebrew-Scot saw him and gave a cry like the triumphant view-haloo of the hunt, winding up with:

"Robber! Thief!" He pointed at the American who was scrambling among the bushes in a hasty and undignified manner. "Stop thief!"

"Wot *are* you doin', you silly ass? Why—you look like a bandicoot, diggin' among them there bushes!" exclaimed the earl, pulling at Langley Hudson's coat, while Sami, his protruding eyes glistening like well-polished shoe buttons, reiterated:

"Robber!"

He wheeled, twisted, sprang toward Hudson, caught his right foot in a rent of the lining of his dressing robe, tried to steady himself, cannoned against the earl of Knuteswold, and promptly bit the dust. He got up, his wrinkled old face smothered in liquid mud, but nowise daunted.

"You did that on purpose!" he shouted, shaking his finger beneath the earl's nose.

"You're a damned liar—that's wot *you* are!" came the nobleman's discourteous reply, and there would have been another battle royal between the two giants of commerce if Sami, recollecting himself, had not turned his attention once more to the young American.

"Thief!" he cried again. "Stop thief!" A dozen men, French, Italian, Arab, obeyed. Hands reached up and out and in, clawed, pummeled, dragged, the New Yorker defending himself valiantly,

A whistle shrilled from the distance.

A shout:

"*Les gendarmes! Les gendarmes!*" as a platoon of bluecoats came puffing up at an elephantine trot; and when M. Lamoureux, attracted by the noises, stepped to the outer gate of the prison, he had the satisfaction of seeing there Langley Hudson, caught once more in the noose of the law, side by side with a blaspheming young Arab, both handcuffed. Sassoon ben Yakoub Sami stood before them, his arms raised to heaven, like a bearded, Hebraic Nemesis, incoherent words bubbling on his lips, while pushing through the crowd came the earl of Knuteswold, true to his word that he would repay the New Yorker for having put up bail for him, protesting loudly and profanely that the whole thing was a frame-up—a dirty frame-up, by Gawd—and that 'e'd 'ave the law on anybody wot—

"Gentlemen, gentlemen!" implored M. Lamoureux. "A little self-restraint, if you please! A little dignity, *hein?* A little regard for the appearances!"

"I appeal to the law!" cried Mr. Sami, coherent again. "I—"

"You—and the law!" sneered the earl. "Why—you ruddy swine—you—"

"Silence!" thundered M. Lamoureux, thrusting forth his square-cut beard like a battering ram. "What is it, *enfin?* What are the charges against these two men—and who is preferring them?"

"Assault! Robbery! Theft!" declared Mr. Sami. "I gave some valuable papers to this man—" indicating Mr. McDonald.

"Who is he?" inquired the Frenchman.

"One of my New York agents—Mr. McDonald. And these two"—pointing at Langley Hudson and Moustaffa Aziz al-Ajami—"attacked him! Pulled him into a cellar! Gagged him! Tied him hand and foot! Robbed him of some very valuable contracts!"

"Robbed him of—*wot?*" demanded the Earl of Knuteswold, remembering the code cable which he had received that morning from New York and which spoke about the contracts stolen from his agent's safe, and rapidly putting two and two together.

The other beat a masterly strategical retreat.

"Robbed him of—n-n-nothing!" he corrected himself, one wary eye on his rival's clenched fist.

"But—say—there *were* those contracts!" said Mr. McDonald, in the innocence of his heart.

"Shut up, you fool!" came the Hindu-Hebrew-Scot's sibilant stage whisper, topped by the earl's sarcastic:

"Aw—there *was* them contracts, was there, eh wot?"

"There were not!"

"There was too! That there feller of yours said there was!"

"No!"

"Yes!"

"No!"

"Yes—damn you!"

"Liar!"

"Cheat!"

"Swindler!"

"Murderer!"

And again the two were about to fly at each other's throats, when M. Lamoureux interfered.

"Follow me to my office, all of you," he commanded, sternly, and, a minute later, enthroned behind his desk, pen in his right hand, gavel in his left, he asked that the charges against the prisoners be stated exactly and to the point.

By this time, Mr. Sami had spoken hectic, low-voiced instructions into Mr. McDonald's ear, and when the latter was ordered by the Frenchman to tell his tale, he said no word about the contracts, but preferred a simple charge of assault and battery against Hudson, the Arab shopkeeper, and—he added—"a young girl—she too—"

"Shut up about the girl," whispered Langley Hudson out of the corner of his mouth, stepping violently on his countryman's pet corn. "Come on—be a sport!"

"What girl?" queried the deputy assistant resident looking up, and Mr. McDonald, obeying a great appeal in the young New Yorker's eyes, lied like a gentleman.

"A slip of my tongue," he replied. "There was no girl," while Langley Hudson breathed heartfelt thanks, and while the Frenchman, in truly Gallic fury, stuffed a good half of his silken beard between his teeth, munched it with extraordinary rapid-

ity and determination, and finally spluttered forth:

"*Enfin*—gentlemen—what is it? A bedlam? A *maison de santé*? A mad house? A—*comment dire*—an institution for the cure of the congenitally inebriate? First there is a girl—then, suddenly—like this"—he snapped his fingers—"it appears that there is no girl, never was! Then there is a contract—then—*zut! comme ça! prestissimo!*—there is no contract at all—"

"Yes—the contracts!" The Earl of Knuteswold picked up the words like a battle slogan. "I am not deaf—I 'eard it with my own ears—"

"Oh—you did?" inquired Langley Hudson, with the self-conscious awkwardness of a candidate for society's favors opening her first charity bazaar.

"Didn't you?" retorted the earl. "Why—there was that there Sami a speakin' of contracts and then shuttin' up 'is ugly fyce like a sea bass with the mumps when 'e sees that I smells a bloomin' rat! Who's got them there sanguinary contracts—that's wot I wants to know!"

"And suppose there were such contracts," asked M. Lamoureux, sardonically, "what have you to do with them, milord?"

"They're mine! They were bloody well swiped from my New York agent!"

"They were not stolen! There never were any contracts! They did not belong to you! I never heard of any contracts!" exclaimed the Hindu-Hebrew-Scot, confused, frightened, denying and affirming in the same breath.

"Aw—you didn't, did you? Wot about the cyble I got from New York? Wot about the New York police 'avin' pinched Adrian Van Kraaft—"

"I know nothing about any contract—nothing—nothing!" cried Mr. Sami.

"What about them?" demanded M. Lamoureux of Mr. McDonald. "You ought to know. You were held up and assaulted!"

"There weren't any," came the reply, as Sassoon ben Yakoub Sami glared at him, warningly; and the New Yorker chimed in with a brazen:

"That's right. There weren't any. McDonald is the chap who ought to know."

"But—look a 'ere—" argued the Englishman, who was however cut short by the assistant deputy resident's solomonic judgment:

"There is only one way of straightening out this muddle. Here"—to the prison wardens. "Laplace! Duhamel! Search both the prisoners!"

Came commotion and excitement; Sassoon ben Yakoub Sami—for he had no intention in the world of seeing the contracts returned to the earl before he had had a chance of using them—appealing frantically to M. Lamoureux that there was no reason for the search, that there was no charge of robbery preferred by either him or by Mr. McDonald; the earl as frantically applauding the Frenchman's decision; Langley Hudson using the confusion and mix-up of the moment to step rapidly to Mr. Sami's side and whisper a few sharp words into his ears—words which caused the latter to look astonished, then, when Hudson, using the chance granted him by the earl and the Frenchman having a little private altercation on the side, insisted, to incline his head, to whisper back: "All right—I'll take a gambler's chance—though I don't exactly trust you, young fellow," and to raise no further objections when M. Lamoureux, pounding the desk with his gavel, repeated that the prisoners should be searched.

But though MM. Laplace and Duhamel went through the New Yorker's and the Arab's clothes thoroughly, minutely, and repeatedly, there was no sign of any contracts being hidden about their persons—which caused the earl to swear wickedly, and Langley Hudson to flash a significant wink at Sassoon ben Yakoub Sami, who winked back.

"All right," finally decided M. Lamoureux, "the charge is assault and battery."

"Bail?" suggested Langley Hudson.

"Yes," smiled the Frenchman, well knowing that the other had emptied his pockets of their last centime to get himself and the earl out of duress half an hour earlier, and that the latter, since he had not been able to raise sufficient cash for himself, would certainly be unable to do so for Hudson—"twenty thousand francs each! Cash! Ah—" leaning back in his chair, stroking

his beard, and looking very pleased with himself.

He turned to one of the wardens.

"Laplace! Enter the charges on the prison record. Assault and battery—held for trial. Prisoners' names"—to the Arab—"what is your name, fellow?"

"Moustaffa Aziz al-Ajami."

"And"—to the New Yorker—"yours is—oh, yes"—consulting the roster where the former charge of contempt of court had been entered—"Langley Hudson, isn't it?" He coughed. "As to—"

But whatever he was going to say next, was swallowed in the earl's thundering roar—for, up to this minute, he had not known what the New Yorker's name was:

"Langley 'Udson! So that's yer nyme! So you are the fellow wot—"

He whirled and faced M. Lamoureux, his face purple with rage.

"Look a 'ere!" he cried. "This man—'e's an accomplice of the guy wot swiped the contracts from my New York agent—"

"Contracts!" interrupted the exasperated Frenchman. "*Scrognieugnieu!*—here are these *sacré* contracts again! I will hear no more about them! Silence! Court is adjourned!"

The Earl of Knuteswold shook a threatening finger.

"You'll pipe a different tune in about 'arf a jiff," he growled. "I'm off to the British consul. I'll 'ave 'im wire over to the British consul general in New York. I'll 'ave an extradition request cybled over 'ere in the shyke of a lamb's tail. And"—to Sassoon ben Yakoub Sami—"I doubt if you'll dare interfere with government cybles, you blarsted sheeny you!"

And he swung out of the room.

CHAPTER XXXII.

"A YOUNG FOOL IN LOVE."

THE Earl of Knuteswold would have been doubtless surprised if, a minute after he left the court-room, he could have seen Sassoon ben Yakoub Sami amble over to M. Lamoureux and inquire in gentle accents:

"*Monsieur*, if you will permit me—ah—

may I go bail for these two unfortunate young men?"

"Why"—exclaimed the Frenchman—"was you yourself who—"

"Yes, yes, yes. I had them arrested. I know. But," Mr. Sami went on with glib hypocrisy, "I have reconsidered. Boys will be boys. Youth will be youth—strong-willed, careless, enthusiastic—"

"Do you call it enthusiastic to commit assault and battery and—"

"I am sure these two delightful young gentlemen meant no harm." Mr. Sami turned to them. "Did you?" he asked.

"No, by Allah!" said the Arab.

"Bet your life we didn't," echoed Langley Hudson. "Just a little old lark, that's what it was."

And, to Mr. McDonald:

"Bear me no grudge, do you?"

Mr. McDonald had not overheard what, a few minutes earlier, when the prospect of the search revealing the contracts in Langley Hudson's pocket had confronted Mr. Sami, the former had whispered to the latter. He was beyond his depth; as he put it afterward, to some friends in his downtown New York lunch club: "I'm used to the comparatively guileless simplicity of Wall Street, you see. You wouldn't understand how I felt—you, here, with the roar of police-regulated traffic in your ears, sitting in your easy-chair, smoking a bully two-bit cigar, smugly safe—but, there, in Tunis, between being given a set of contracts which couldn't possibly have been come by through honest means, being kidnapped, hog-tied, robbed, rescued, and then having my principal go bail for the two fellows who robbed me—no, gentlemen! It was too much for me!"

So he contented himself with being silent—in a slightly censorious, New England manner—and lighting a long, black cigar; and, fifteen minutes later, when Ali Abdellader, who had gone to the bank, had come back with the necessary cash bail and Moustaffa Aziz al-Ajami had returned to the bazaar—"do not worry, *effendina*," he had said in an aside to the New Yorker, on parting, "for very little money I shall get half a dozen proper and honorable witnesses who will swear, when our case comes

to trial, that at the time of the robbery we were in their company, smoking peaceful nargilehs and discussing harmless topics—yes”—with an atavistic throwback to his former Coney Island career—“ishkabibl!—we’ll put it all over them guys, kid!”—fifteen minutes later, Mr. McDonald felt still dazed, as he followed Sassoon ben Yakoub Sami out of the prison building and across the Square of Sidi-bou-Said where the afternoon sun, from its cloud-nest of somber, crushed rose-pink, was weaving a shifting, checkered pattern.

The financier was walking by the side of Langley Hudson.

“I did what you asked me to,” he said, just a little anxiously. “I got you out. And now—”

“I know. I piped you a little whisper, back in the court-room, that you had no call being nervous about their searching me—that the contracts are in a safe place—didn’t I?”

“You did. Let’s have them.”

“All right.”

Langley Hudson was silent. Then he laughed a youthful, infectious laugh.

“Say,” he asked suddenly, incongruously, “have you ever been in love?”

The other looked up suspiciously.

“Never mind switching the conversation and trying to be funny,” he said. “If you think you are going to—oh—”

“Welsh? Nary a bit. I just want you to answer my question. I want to know if you’ve always been a dried-up old money bag, a machine for the accumulation of simoleons, an accessory before—and after—the fact in the realm of financial culpability. I want you to tell me if ever, in all your life, your heart gave funny little side-way jumps when—”

“I understand, young man,” the financier interrupted, smiling a wintry smile. “I have been in—” He coughed, collected himself. “Never mind. The contracts—that’s what I want—where are they?”

“All right, all right. I’ll get them.”

“Where are they?”

“Over there—in that bit of first-rate African jungle scenery where I did my—what do the swimming experts call it—my—oh—belly-buster dive when you appeared

on the landscape and cried robber and thief. I thought that was not the auspicious moment to be caught with the goods, so I got rid of them. Wait for a moment till I retrieve ’em—”

He crossed over to the clump of bushes where, on the Hindu-Hebrew-Scot’s view-halloo, he had been dragged forth and returned with the contracts, holding them at arm’s length as the financier, with a triumphant chuckle, reached for them.

“Wait—wait!” he said. “Let’s hear first about that sentimental old love affair of yours—”

“What’s that got to do with it?”

“A whole lot. Tell me. Did you feel like committing every crime on the calendar for her, the one, and only one? Did you—pardon me if I seem lyrical—did you feel like taking all the world into your confidence—like shouting the secret of your love to the trees and flowers and the cute little birdies—like—”

“I suppose I did. I was a silly young jackass once—”

“Then—thinking back—you could—oh—sort of feel for—”

“Another young fool in love?”

“Exactly. Could you?”

“I guess so.”

“You would bear such a young fool no grudge if he—”

“No, no, no. I would not. Of course not. I could—”

“Understand? Forgive him?”

“Yes, yes. Anything. Anything at all. Let’s have those contracts!”

“All right. Here they are. You see, Mr. Sami, I am not welshing.”

The financier took the papers with a hand that trembled with eagerness—to feel them torn from his grip, the next second, by the New Yorker, who smiled engagingly.

“What—what do you mean?” demanded Mr. Sami, rushing after the other, who danced away, with quick side steps, like a prize-fighter.

“You told me yourself you’d understand and forgive—wow there, Nellie! Oh, no, you don’t—” as the older man made a grab for the papers. “Didn’t you tell me you’d forgive—”

“What? Whom?”

"A young fool in love—committing all sorts of crimes and misdemeanors—for the sake of the one and only one—"

"McDonald!" cried the financier. "Help—"

"If you call up reinforcements," laughed the New Yorker, "I'll tear up the contracts—I mean it—honest to God!"

"But—"

"But—nothing. Keep your shirt on, old thing—"

"But—damn it—"

"Mustn't swear—naughty, naughty! And"—suddenly he became serious—"keep your temper down and your mouth shut—and I promise you you won't lose by the transaction. You'll be taken care of when it comes to—what is the correct Wall Street term—the divvying up of the boodle, the cutting of the juicy old melon. Right here's where I am going to blend the softer emotions with a whole lot of up-to-date, constructive, harveyized-steel, nickel-plated, all-wool, five-ply-linen, financial business-isisity. Stick to me, kid, and don't get impatient."

"But—"

"One more thing. Did you ever hear of that sound American institution—that much-abused and much-lied-about essential of trade and progress by which, using reverse English, so many female and he-male sob-sisters used to make a more or less honest living during the good old muckraking days—I mean the trust?"

"Of course— Why?"

"Well—think about it—and—stick to me!"

And he sped down the street and disappeared in a rabbits' warren of crowded, native streets, while Mr. McDonald and Mr. Sami looked at each other, stunned, speechless.

The latter was the first to regain the use of his vocal cords, and, strangely enough, there was in his accents the suspicion of a chuckle.

"By the God of Abraham and of Jacob!" he said. "I think I'll take that young man's advice. Yes! I think I'll—oh—stick to him!"

The American looked astonished. He did not know, was not of the metal to realize, that part, at least, of the other's phenomenal business success had been due to his ability to think at right angles so to say, to surrender himself, completely, on the spur of the moment, to the gods of an enormous, sudden, almost pagan resolution that was the diametrical opposite of his resolution of a moment earlier, to tack and reef the sails of his financial ship according to the direction of the wind, and, in a tight corner, to make his common sense subservient to his imagination; and, just at that moment, his imagination was whispering to him to put his trust in Langley Hudson, in spite of appearances.

"Anyway," he said, as a sop to his common sense, "I can't afford to row about the contracts—I can't afford to go to law about them—what with the earl going about and roaring like the bull of Bashan. And that rascally young countryman of yours knows it!"

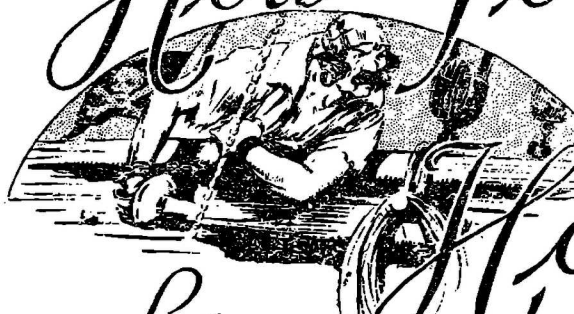
"I guess so," admitted Mr. McDonald. "He's got you by the short hair in the back of your neck, all right."

And they returned to Mr. Sami's house while, in the meantime, Langley Hudson hurried toward the earl's villa. Reaching the front garden, he bent low, dodged behind a flowering, entangling screen of exotic bushes and trees, and finally emerged in back of the house, near the kitchen door where he waited, silent, motionless, until he saw Habeebah's coquettish, rose-madder turban and shriveled, nut-brown face appear at the window.

He whistled softly, and the old nurse looked up, saw him, suppressed an exclamation, and pointed with her thumb to a little outhouse, in the heart of the back garden, an exquisite little arcaded building, its roof resting on narrow onyx columns, with high, foliated capitals—the netted, wandering sun rays drifting in with the scent of flowers, and interlacing a soft, arabesqued pattern on a silken divan in a corner—some dead Tunisian grandee's nest of love, thought the New Yorker, as, bending, dodging, he reached its shelter.

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.

How Portugues Came Home



by Walter Noble Burns

UP the sides of the galleon swarmed Portugues and his buccaneers with their cutlasses between their teeth. As they leaped over the bulwarks, the Spaniards, huddled in the waist, gave them a panic-stricken volley but it failed to check their whirlwind rush across the deck. Once at close quarters, the buccaneers worked deadly havoc as they laid about them with their swords. The heavy blades, swung with full-armed blows, sliced through flesh and bone. Spanish heads were lopped off as neatly as coconuts from palm-trees and rolled along the deck. The planking grew slippery with splattered blood; the scuppers trickled red streams.

Forty-two Spaniards lay dead out of a crew of sixty when the fight ended. Many of these had been killed by the buccaneer sharpshooters before the galleon was laid aboard. Those who did not fall in the fighting on deck threw down their arms and surrendered. The buccaneers lost only ten men, leaving twenty alive of their original company. With his prisoners under strong guard, Portugues leaned on his cutlass on the quarter-deck and surveyed his prize.

Rough veteran of many voyages was Bartholomew Portugues. Many a treasure galleon he had plundered on the Spanish main, many a town he had sacked. The fame of his exploits had been tossed on the winds the length and breadth of the Caribbean, and from Rio de la Hache to Vera

Cruz Spanish mothers hushed their babes to frightened silence at mention of his name.

He had sailed and fought with Mansvelt, Montbars, Pie de Palo, Roc Braziliano, and L'Olonnois the Terrible, while such promising young swashbucklers as Henry Morgan, Lorencillo, Van Horn and Grantom, whose names were beginning to be bruited on the tongues of men, looked up to him as a master in buccaneering craft and leadership. For years he had harried the treasure fleets of Spain and thrown away his plundered wealth with a free hand in the boozing kens of Tortuga and Port Royal. When he wished to go to sea on some new adventure to recoup his fortunes, he had only to announce a meeting place and all the bold spirits and tall fellows of the West Indies flocked to his banner.

A squarely blocked out, solid man he was, with tremendous, hairy arms on which the muscles stood out in cords and ridges; great hands that swung even with his knees; a shock of black hair that fell on his shoulders; and hard black eyes under massive brows. An old sword cut had left a livid scar that began on his forehead near the hair-roots and missing his eye, continued across his cheek to the jaw bone. A red handkerchief was bound turban-wise about his head. From a sash of pink silk that supported his blue velvet knee-breeches, the leather scabbard of his cutlas depended. Silver buckles gleamed on his shoes and loops of smooth gold in his ears.

Portugues thrilled with pride as his glance swept the vessel. Never had he captured a finer prize. His expert seaman's eye noted with pleasure the elaborate wood carving and brass work that ornamented the lofty stern castle; the high carved, overhanging bow; the broad bulwarks of logwood as redly rich and gleaming as polished mahogany; the brass carronades on their low wheel-carriages at regular intervals about the sides. The corpses cluttering the deck marred his enjoyment of the galleon's architectural beauty.

"Throw that rubbish overboard," he said with a wave of his cutlas.

The sailors caught up the dead bodies by the arms and legs between them and with a "One, two, three!" and a "Yo, heave, ho!" flung them into the sea; tossed after them, too, the several heads. Slowly the dead drifted astern, swarmed over by gulls, snapped at by sharks or drawn under with a rushing swirl in the teeth of some monster, whose long, lean body broke the surface and glistened for a moment gray in the sun.

The Spanish captain was brought before him.

"Well, Señor Captain," said Portugues, "I finished you off pretty neat. I never saw even Wankers fight worse. Sixty men and twenty great guns to keep us off and we took you with only thirty bold fellows to our name. It were a shame."

"You fought like devils, *señor*," replied the captain.

"And you like Spaniards."

"Spaniards know how to die like men."

"And if that's satisfaction, take it and welcome. But they don't know how to fight—that's sure. Give me sixty of my brave buccaneers and twenty guns and I'll take my chances with the tallest admiral in the Spanish navy. Where are you from?"

"Five days out of Porto Bello, *señor*, bound for Cadiz."

"Santa Marta, you call your galleon—eh? What's her loading?"

"One hundred and twenty thousand pounds' weight of bar silver from the Peruvian mines, shipped from the South Seas across the isthmus from Panama City; fifty thousand pieces-of-eight newly coined in the royal mint at Lima; a chest of pearls from

Margarita; and bales of silk and merchandise from Nombre de Dios consigned to La Habana."

Portugues gave a sharp whistle of surprise.

"So?" he exclaimed. "As much as that? By the powers, that's a sight of treasure. I've taken many a prize in my day but this lays over the richest of them. The devil takes care of his own; we're in luck this day."

"There's enough plate in the hold, *señor*, to do for a king's ransom."

"Right you are. But how comes a galleon with all this treasure aboard to be knocking about these seas without convoy?"

"She set out from Porto Bello with the annual plate fleet for Spain, but she got lost from the flota in a gale of wind two nights ago."

"How many sail in the flota?"

"Fifteen galleons convoyed by five ships of war."

"Where do you reckon they are now?"

"I'm at a loss to know. They might have rounded Cape San Antonio by this time and be heading east along the north shore of Cuba for Florida Straits."

"Then there's small chance of our falling in with them. Your galleon's slow. She wallows like a sea cow. Our little *piragua* walked up on her like she was anchored. Let me tell you there's a fast craft—a long, low, rakish little lady as can show a clean pair of heels to any galleon afloat. But if I transferred to her now, she'd be fit to sink with all this treasure. There's nothing for it but to sail aboard your galleon back to Port Royal; and a smart figure I'll cut on her quarter-deck with the crowd to see me come in.

"I'll put you and your men aboard our old *piragua*. You'll find plenty of pork, biscuit, and water on her to last you and if you take my advice, you'll head for the coast of Cuba hard by to the northeast."

The Spanish skipper and his crew were transferred aboard the *piragua* on which the buccaneers had set out on their adventure from Port Royal and soon passed out of sight over the horizon.

The Spaniard had spoken the truth. Portugues found the treasure-room in the hold

piled high with pigs of silver bullion and sacks bursting with pieces-of-eight. He opened a small chest and plunging in his hand, brought it out spilling over with pearls—lustrous gems that shimmered like white silk in moonlight, intended to adorn the proud beauties of Spain but destined now to gleam on the arms and throats of tavern wenches in Port Royal.

"Gather round, my bully boys," sang out Portugues as he emerged on deck, "and hark to good news. We've taken a prize that's worth all the dead men as paid for it. We're rich as Christmas. Before we come to port, we'll whack up the treasure fairly, man to man and a square deal all round, according to our articles, and every man jack aboard will have enough to live like a lord in parliament the rest of his days. There's plenty of liquor in the hold. Hoist up a keg of rum and we'll drink a round to our good fortune."

When he announced the value of the treasure that had fallen into their hands, the buccaneers heard for a moment in staggered silence. Then they burst into a cheer, tossed up their caps and danced about the deck. With a keg of rum set abroach at the mainmast, they celebrated their victory in deep potations and boisterous revelry. Out over the sea in rousing choruses rang their pirate songs.

"Of all the lives I ever saw
A pirate's be for I;
Hap what hap may, he's allus gay
And drinks and bungs his eye.
For his work he's never loath
And a pleasuring he'll go,
Though certain sure to be popped off,
Yo ho, with the rum below."

So darkness fell and, while the freebooters caroused and roared out their songs under the stars, the galleon stood homeward bound for Port Royal.

II.

PORTUGUES and Abel Barlicorn, his mate, paced the quarter-deck. A pleasant murmur rose from the galleon's prow as it cut through the waves of a breezy sea sparkling in the sunlight.

"Home again in a week, mate," said

Portugues, "and a fine treasure safe beneath our hatches. How does the old song run?"

"Back to old Port Royal with our pockets full of doubloons,
And we'll have our fill o' liquor when our ship's in port again."

"There'll be rough times ahead when the old hooker drops her anchor," replied Barlicorn. "Port Royal is a main place for rum and pretty wenches and no mistake."

"Spoke like a bold buccaneer, my hearty. Rum and women—that's it. If there weren't no rum and women, there'd never be no pirates. But listen to me, Abel, I'll not play the fool again this trip. No rum and wenches for me and squandering my loot at cards and dice. I've got money enough to do me and I'm going to settle down."

Barlicorn laughed.

"Many's the brisk lad I've heard say that before. They've talked big of setting up as gentlemen and riding in their coach-and-four. But did they? Not they. They spent their gold in the grog-shops and went to sea again for more with only their shirts to their backs; and a cart's tail and four feet of hemp rope, generally speaking, was the kind of coach and four they got."

"Do you mind a girl in Port Royal known along the water-front as Blond Peg of the Blue Anchor tavern?"

"Aye, that I do."

"A stalwart wench with a skin like cream and blue eyes like a baby's, though they've seen precious little but vice and wickedness and pirates boozing and dicing and fighting in taprooms. Smart as paint she is too, and drink?—shiver my timbers, that girl can outdrink a man. Many's the night she's put me under the table at the Blue Anchor—me that can carry my liquor with any sea-rover that ever comed ashore. As likely a wench, I say, as ever I fell in with in all my seafaring days. 'Well,' says Peg to me when I tells her good-by, 'come back, Portugues, with a fat swag and you and me'll go to St. Kitts and buy a little wharfside tavern that I know and settle down and live soft the rest of our days.'"

"Bartholomew Portugues a tavernkeeper

—eh? Keelhaul me, but that's as good as neat brandy."

"And like as not to be true as Bible."

"Which is a sight truer than that tavern wench will ever be to you."

"If she ain't, by thunder, I'll slit her pretty throat."

"Why, if the blessed old rum-puncheon ain't in love! Talking like a moonsick calf about splicing with a wench and settling down. That's a jolly go."

"And why not, you lubber? I've lived rough, I've took my share of prizes, I've cut throats and scuttled ships and what's it all got me, I want to know? A few noggins of rum and a fling among the wenches between hard voyages—that's all it's got me. I've took enough gold from the Wankers to pave a street—and where is it all? Them sleek, fat tavern-keepers, what grows rich on fool pirates, has got it stowed away in strong-boxes. That's where it is."

"But let me tell you that once a man's turned out pirate, a pirate he'll stay till he dies. You can't quit. The sea'll call you. Something in your blood 'll pull you back. You talk like a ditch-digger about spending of your swag. What's it for but to spend? 'A short life but a merry one,' that's the motto of us gentlemen of fortune. Life with a pirate is a go at the rum and death is the end of the bout. Let him dance a sailor's hornpipe at a rope's end and what's the odds? That's natural death for a pirate."

"I've had enough pirating, I tell you, and enough's enough. What's the good of risking my neck any more robbing Spaniards? It's safer to turn tavern-keeper and rob pirates. That's where all a pirate's money lands in the long run—in a tavern-keeper's till."

"It 'll be as good as drink to the jolly sea rovers as sails your way to see Portugues, the famous pirate as were a terror of the seas, with a neat white apron tucked around him, setting out bottles and glasses and a mopping off tables for drunken swabs."

"I've seen queerer sights in my day and, by the powers, it 'll be better than sun-baking in chains on a gibbet. A pirate's a tall lad and a bully boy when he's comed

ashore from a voyage with the gold bursting from his pockets. He owns the town, he does. They set out the best bottle for him and there aren't nothing too good for him and the wenches hang around him like bees around honey. But when the thieves has trimmed him out of his last sou, they cut him adrift and he can go hang for all of them. He's as much of a hero when his money's gone as a stray cur dog in the streets and that's as straight as gospel."

"That's chaplain's talk, but all I got to say is you'll never settle down to be no tavernkeeper. It aren't in you and there aren't no use to try. You've got a hanging face, Portugues, if I ever seen one. You've lived a pirate and you'll swing a pirate some day or I miss my guess."

"Not me. I've sighted execution dock on my lee bow more than once and it was only by good seamanship I held my luff and weathered by close-hauled and scuppers under. But I've done it every pop so far and, by the powers, while there's time and fair weather, I'll lay a course for a quiet haven. I've got enough treasure now and an old hand like me, as has had his fill of sea roving, might do a sight worse than come to anchor with Peg in a little tavern in St. Kitts."

"Sail, ho!" sang out the lookout on the masthead.

"Where away?" shouted Portugues.

"Two points on the weather bow, sir."

Portugues squinted long and earnestly through his spy-glass.

"She's a Spaniard," he said.

While he kept his glass trained on the stranger, two other vessels stuck their topsails above the horizon and gradually climbed into view. He made the three ships out to be a galleon convoyed by two corvettes of war.

"Ease her off before the wind," he shouted to the helmsman.

"Ease her off, sir."

"Haul in the weather braces. Get those yards square."

The three ships came on before a brisk quartering wind. Spain's royal banner of blood and gold streamed from their peaks. Their guns gleamed in the sun.

"Three to one is heavy odds," said Por-

tugues, "and us short-handed. We've got twenty seamen aboard and twenty guns. Each one of them Spaniards has got forty guns and sixty men at least. We'll run for it. If we had our old *piragua* under us, we'd soon show them Spaniards a clean pair of heels. But this old tub, with every stitch of canvas she's got piled on her, crawls like a turtle on a beach."

Slowly the three ships gained.

"Overhaul your carronades, my lads. Ram your shots home and stand by with your linstocks. Send up the jolly roger to the mizzen peak. We'll show them who we are. A Spaniard fears a buccaneer as he does the devil. We may frighten them into turning tail."

The black flag with its skull and crossbones went up on its halyards, shook out its folds and streamed on the wind. But the three pursuers crept up.

Boom! Their bow guns opened. Solid shot began to rain around the pirate, knocking up great spouts of water. The buccaneers answered from carronades trained over the stern. For leagues, the running fight kept up. All the while the Spaniards were drawing nearer. They worked to close quarters, broadside on, but for a moment held their fire, loath to sink a galleon loaded with king's treasure.

"Haul down your flag or we'll blow you out of water," shouted a Spanish captain in the momentary lull of battle.

Portugues responded with the roar of all his guns. The enemy poured in a raking broadside. The galleon heeled over under the blow. Gaps were torn in her bulwarks. The stern castle was wrecked. A broken yard came crashing down, carrying the shredded sail with it. The deck was littered with a raffle of splintered timbers and smashed gear. Spanish marksmen concealed in the rigging picked off the buccaneer gunners. Portugues sprang to a carronade himself and worked it single-handed.

"Stand by your guns, my buckoes," he shouted. "Better die like men than hang at a yard-arm like dogs."

But with only a handful to man the guns, the fire of the buccaneers slackened. The Spaniards lowered their boats and headed for the galleon.

"Stand by to repel boarders!" yelled the pirate leader.

Portugues and the remnant of his crew drew their cutlasses and met the Spaniards as they swarmed over the rail. Standing at bay, Portugues swung his blade with desperate fury. His enemies, rushing upon him, fell dead at his feet, one piled on the other. But a blow from a pike on the back of his head brought him to the deck at last, stunned and helpless.

III.

CAMPECHE suspended business. The merchants of the old Spanish town declared a holiday. Flags were set flying. Church bells pealed. Bartholomew Portugues, the notorious pirate, who had harried those coasts for years, had been captured with seven others, all that were left alive of his cutthroat crew. Hardly had the battered galleon, retaken from the buccaneers, come limping into port for repairs than the news spread through the town like wildfire.

The Spanish garrison marched out of the presidio to fife and drum with colors flying and drew up on the quay. Men, women and children flocked to the waterside. With awed interest, they watched the eight buccaneers brought ashore with their hands bound behind them. The glances of the crowd were dark with hatred. Women crossed themselves. Frightened children snuggled close in their mothers' skirts.

"That great dark brute is Portugues. How terrible he looks. *Madre de Dios, nos proteja!*"

"They say the pirates eat human beings."

"Portugues, I have it on the best authority, likes roast baby above all other meats."

"He is said to have sold his soul to the foul fiend."

"I thought all pirates had horns and hoofs yet these look strangely enough like men."

The prisoners were hurried to court and given immediate trial. The verdict was swift. They should die next day on the gallows. Then they were marched to the carcel to be locked up—all except Portu-

gues. He was too precious a prize to be trusted to the insecure locks and bars of the little jail. What violent stratagem might not such a desperate fellow attempt to gain his liberty? He was taken back to the galleon lying a good half mile from shore. From the ship he could escape only by a miracle. Safe on board, and bound hand and foot, he was thrown in the deck-house and left under guard to chew the cud of his own evil thoughts during the few hours of life remaining to him.

Preparations for the execution were rushed forward. To-morrow would be a *fiesta*. Every house in town would stand empty while the people turned out to see the pirates die. When evening fell, eight gallows along the seashore at the edge of town stood in a row silhouetted against the sunset sky—single posts of bare pine with gaunt, outreaching arms, and dangling from each arm, a new hempen rope knotted with the noose of the hangman.

With his hands tied behind his back and his ankles bound together by stout cords, Portugues sat in the deck-house with his back hunched against the wall. A Spanish soldier, armed with pistols and a matchlock musket stood guard at the open door in the moonlight. Midnight came. A clock in the town tolled the hour; the sound of the bell came softly across the harbor. No wink of sleep had come to the prisoner. For hours he had twisted and strained in an effort to work his hands free of their bonds. In vain. Struggle as he might with all his giant strength, he could not budge the rope that bit into his wrists. All hope abandoned, he sank back against the wall.

A tiny whisper of noise at the window caught his ear. He had a swift glimpse of a hand in the semi-darkness reaching through the iron bars. It appeared and disappeared with the quickness of a flash but close to the feet of Portugues, a dagger fell upon its point and stood upright and quivering in the floor.

Portugues blinked in astonishment. He doubted his own senses. But his mind cleared instantly; this was no dream. Sudden suspicion of some inexplicable treachery seized him. What devil's wile lurked in this enigma? Who could have dropped the

knife? Why? Was it a trick of his foes to lure him to an attempt at escape that they might murder him? Absurd; they would kill him in the morning anyway. Had one of his enemies offered him this means to end his life and cheat the gallows of a shameful death? He had never known a Spaniard to show pity to a buccaneer. The higher these sea wolves were hanged, the more ignominious and cruel their death, the better pleased the Spaniards.

Had he a friend aboard? The amazing incident might seem to indicate that some unknown friend was trying enigmatically to help him. But a friend in a race he had fought and pillaged all his life; a race he hated with deadly hatred and that hated him in return with a hatred as deadly and implacable? The bare idea seemed insanity. He knew of no friend among the Spaniards. He knew of no Spaniard who had any cause for friendship for him. He could not read the riddle; he ceased to try. But devil's trick or godsend, dropped by friend or foe, there was the dagger sticking in the floor, vibrant, glistening—an opportunity and an invitation.

Silently Portugues maneuvered until his back was to the knife. His bound hands clutched it, drove it more firmly in the floor. Against the sharp steel he pressed the knotted rope. The strands gave way one by one, snapped suddenly asunder. With his hands free, he cut the cord that held his ankles.

The sentinel had paid no heed. He stood leaning easily on his musket, his back to the door, the moonlight full upon him. With the silent tread of a panther, Portugues stole upon him and buried the knife hilt-deep between his shoulder blades.

Cautiously he peeped out. All was still on board. The half-dozen guardians of the ship were asleep in their bunks. The mysterious friend who had dropped the dagger gave no sign of his presence.

Portugues, for all his years of seafaring, could not swim. To attempt to lower a boat would arouse the watch. He would have given all the treasure in the galleon's hold for a plank. Some large earthenware wine jars standing in the shadows of the bulwarks caught his eye. Here was his

gambler's chance. Stepping across the dead sentinel, he lifted one of the vessels. A muffled shock of joy thrilled him—it was empty. Pressing the corks home tightly, he tied two of the jars together with a rope cut from the rigging and lowered them over the side into the water. Making his rope fast to a backstay, he slid down it; the warm sea rose about his body.

Buoyed between the airtight jugs, he shoved off. The tide was running in, he was borne along on its strong current; and he aided and directed his progress by sweeping strokes of his powerful arms. At every stroke, he glanced back to see if his escape had been detected. Nothing stirred on the ship. The galleon fell away rapidly behind him; grew shadowy and blurred in the distance.

His eyes began to pick out details of the shore—the stores and warehouses along the water-front; the dark huddle of dwellings; the tall palm-trees that fringed the coast; the smooth white beach that ran into the east like a broad, glistening highway. A faint murmurous rumble grew upon his ears. It was the league-long lullaby of softly crashing surf. His feet touched bottom. Dragging himself dripping from the sea, he stood on dry ground beyond the farthest spread of foam, free at last, with the continent before him.

IV.

THE eight gibbets stood grim in the moonlight confronting him. One near the center of the row was taller than the others—perhaps three feet. The crowning honor of his life, in the Spaniards' plan, was to be hanged three feet higher than common men. A sneering, bitter smile twisted his lips. He shook his fist at the sleeping town.

He started off along the beach at a tireless dog-trot. He knew this coast of old. Far to the southeast across the base of Yucatan was Golfo Triste, where sea rovers like himself sometimes put in to careen their ships. He might find, by chance, some buccaneer brigantine anchored there. If not, beyond to the southward lay the Mosquito coast with its friendly Indians.

He took his bearings in seamanly fashion

from the stars. When the first glimmer of dawn whitened the east, he turned from the moist, packed sand at the edge of the sea, which he had followed for miles and struck into the jungle. A heavy, ominous sound came to him out of the distance. It was the deep-mouthed baying of bloodhounds, trained in slave hunting. From an eminence, he saw far off in the clear, still twilight of the early morning, a dozen horsemen madly galloping behind the pack as it swept in full cry along a curving beach.

The trees in the jungle, through which he had been threading, grew crowded together. Their boughs interlaced and climbing vines, often as thick as a ship's cable, swinging in loops and festoons, made airy bridges between them. Portugues climbed into a tree and hanging by his gorilla arms swung himself hand over hand along boughs and trailers from tree to tree. Slowly, like a giant ape, he made his arboreal progress across an ample width of forest, leaving no trail or scent. He came to a broad, parklike space, left perhaps by some tornado dipping from the skies, and hemmed in by solid walls of jungle. Across this he fled and plunged again into the dense tangle of vegetation. On he labored through brakes and undergrowth. The baying of the dogs grew fainter and fainter. When night fell, he had left the chase far behind.

For days he pushed on through the trackless wilderness. Wild fruits and berries were out of season and he lived on roots, the shoots of young plants, and snails, with an occasional banquet on mussels which he gathered from the watercourses. More than one wide river barred his path. He cut down small trees laboriously with his dagger and, with twigs and withes, bound them together into a raft on which he ferried himself across. Wild animals howled about his sleeping coverts. Tropical thunderstorms drenched him.

Worn and faint to exhaustion from hardship and privation, he painfully climbed a ridge that rose across his course. As he leaned weakly against a tree, he saw a deep gap, shaped like a giant wine-glass, between far distant summits and filled, it seemed, almost to the brim with deep purple wine that twinkled in the sun with a myriad of tiny

sparkles of fire. His weary eyes grew suddenly bright, his heart leaped wildly and he cried aloud for joy. "The sea, the sea!"

A buccaneer brig and a *piragua* rode at anchor in Golfo Triste. Members of the crews, busy on the beach, stared in surprise as a man emerged from the jungle and drew near along the shore. He labored in his walk, his feet dragged, he reeled and staggered like one far gone in drink. His starved face was like a death's head, every bone showing sharply beneath the taut, sun-parched skin, his lank hair matted in witch-tangles, his eyes burning feverishly in hollow sockets—a skeleton only half concealed by clothes that thorns and brambles had torn to rags.

"Portugues!"

Revived with wine, given food and rest in abundance among these comrades of former voyages, the ghost of the wilderness quickly became a man again, as strong in body and as dauntless in spirit as of old. He told the story of his misfortunes, the doom of his seven companions, of the galleon still loaded with treasure at Campeche, repaired by now, doubtless, and ready to start again on the voyage to Spain. His new-found friends had had no luck and taken no prizes. A double motive lured them to a new adventure—treasure and revenge. In the *piragua*, with Portugues in command, twenty men set sail from Golfo Triste.

V.

IN the darkness of early night, the swift little craft stole into Campeche harbor. The galleon still lay in her old berth. With lights doused, the *piragua* slipped alongside.

"*Quien vive?*" challenged a shipkeeper.

"A cargo of contraband merchandise to be shipped to Habana," replied Portugues in fluent Spanish. "We'll bring it aboard."

The buccaneers climbed over the galleon's rail without arousing suspicion. In a jiffy, they had overpowered the seven Spaniards aboard. The galleon's cables were slipped; sails were shaken out and sheeted home. The ship slid gently forward, gathered headway as the canvas began to draw. Silently in the darkness, she crossed the bar and felt the lift of blue

water under her keel as she headed out to sea. Portugues, master of his galleon once more, watched the lights of Campeche sink astern beneath the ocean.

Morning came with the galleon driving before a royal breeze and no pursuing sail in sight on all the purple round of sea. Portugues paced the quarter-deck sun in thought. His dead comrades called for vengeance. But new forces of which he was only vaguely conscious were at work in him—forces that might perhaps change the current of his destiny. His unaccountable escape from the whorl of circumstances that had sucked him down to death and cast him up again; the mystery of kindness that had saved his life; the strange fortune that had robbed him of riches and made him rich again—these startling experiences held lessons that only a blind fool might fail to read.

Moreover he was curiously surprised to find that always now Peg of the Blue Anchor tavern was somehow present in his thoughts; a dim, shadowy influence at the back of his brain to which he responded subtly as a ship to its helm. Peg was a rough-toss lass, but Portugues had known no other kind. Something still remained to her of womanliness and a woman's mystic allurements. A poor idol perhaps but still an idol upon whose shrine a godless, uncouth soul might burn its savage incense. If she was no saint, neither was he. She had at least the animal beauty of full-blooded youth and physical vigor and symmetry and she realized his dream of a mate worthy of a rough sea rover—a woman fit to be the mother of his lion's whelps.

He summoned the seven Spanish prisoners before him. One of them, he thought, might possibly be the unknown friend who had dropped him the knife in Campeche. But if this proved true, he must be careful to shield his identity from the others. For reasons known only to himself, his mysterious ally had saved Portugues's life at the risk of his own. If it became known that he had aided the buccaneer to escape, his life might yet pay the penalty of his deed. Portugues decided to try subterfuge. He drew from his sash the dagger with which he had cut his way to freedom. It was a

long-bladed weapon with a heavy silver haft covered with embossed flowers and scroll work.

"I found this dagger on the deck last night," he said. "Does it by chance belong to any of you?"

The Spaniards inspected it curiously.

"I know that dagger," spoke up one.

"Yes?" replied Portugues with a calmness that masked his keen eagerness.

"That dagger belongs to Juan Rodrigues."

"Juan Rodrigues?"

"He's a fellow that sailed with me from Porto Bello with the plate fleet. He and I were in the prize crew put aboard this galleon when the Spaniards recaptured it from you *señor capitán*. We helped work her back to Campeche."

"Where is he now?"

"Ashore in Campeche. He was to have come aboard when the galleon was ready to sail for Spain."

"Do you know this Juan Rodrigues well?"

"Very well, *señor*."

"Where might he hail from?"

"From Granada."

So it was to Juan Rodrigues that Portugues owed his life. Still the name, despite a certain familiar ring, was only a name to him. He recalled no Juan Rodrigues. He kept repeating the name to himself. Where had he heard it? He harked back swiftly over his raids and adventures. From Granada? Ah!

He had sailed years before with Mansfelt when that buccaneer chief had sacked that little city in Nicaragua. During the pillage, he recalled, a drunken buccaneer had leveled his musket at a Spanish woman who stood in the courtyard of her home clasping her young son to her breast. The gun had missed fire and in a fury the ruffian had drawn it back to club the woman to death. Portugues had cut the fellow down with his cutlas. Whatever his crimes, he made no war on women and children. With tears of gratitude, the mother had wrung his hand. She had asked his name and sworn she and her son never would forget his generous deed. Some day they might be able to repay his kindness—who knew? She was,

she told him, the Señora Margarita Rodrigues. He remembered dimly that she called her son Juan.

The incident had passed from his memory—one act of mercy among a thousand crimes. Then at a crisis of his life, this forgotten deed of kindness had risen ghost-like out of the dead past to save him. He was amazed. His little unremembered act, it seemed to him, had remained all these years like something alive and sentient. He wondered vaguely if all good deeds went on and on as a silent, invisible, living force in the lives of men.

His momentary reverie swayed him toward mercy now. But what had these seven Spanish prisoners to do with Juan Rodrigues and his deed of heroic gratitude? They knew nothing of his secret aid to Portugues. They did not even suspect it. If they gained an inkling of it now and were set free, they doubtless would kill Juan Rodrigues at the first opportunity or betray him to the Spanish authorities who would reward him with short shrift and slim mercy. Portugues was sure of this. He knew too that these fellows of a hated race would like nothing better than to drive a dagger home in his own heart at this very moment if they dared. Why should he not take vengeance in full on these men for the seven companions the Spaniards had hanged?

"You white-livered Wankers," he burst out in sudden fury, "I'll hang you to the yard-arm like dogs and feed your carcasses to the sharks. You saw my old shipmates, and my old mate among them, swung up on gibbets at Campeche. You yelled and cheered with joy to see them die, and I'll take my davy to that. And they'll hang there in irons and cook in the sun till the flesh falls off their bones and their bones drop to the earth for Spanish dogs to gnaw. That's the mercy you Spaniards show to buccaneers and that's the mercy you'll get from me. Turn about is fair play and dead men don't bite. Seven for seven will square the score.

"Ho, cox'n," he called, "take these fellows and string them up to the yardarm."

Portugues turned to pace up and down the quarter-deck with quick, nervous strides,

his brows bent, his eyes snapping with savage hatred. Members of the crew seized the Spaniards and bound them hand and foot; there was a sudden bustle as sailors sprang up the ratlines to reeve ropes to the yardarms for the hanging. Trembling with fear, the Spaniards bade each other good-by with ashen lips. Nooses were knotted and slipped over their heads.

"Hold!" shouted Portugues. "Release those men."

"What's wrong, captain?" called out the mate.

"Nothing's wrong. I've changed my mind—that's all. I'll give 'em their worthless lives. Put them in a boat and start them back to Campeche."

A boat was lowered. Food and water was placed in it. The liberated Spaniards hurriedly clambered overside. Leaning over the bulwarks, Portugues tossed the dagger down among them. It fell clattering into the boat.

"There," he sang out, "give that knife back to Juan Rodrigues. Tell him—tell him—thankee and wish him good luck. Or never mind—don't tell him nothing. He lost that knife and—just take it back to him with my—with the compliments of Bartholomew Portugues."

The Spaniards shoved off and bent to the oars. Soon they had dwindled to a mere speck on the sea.

"*Bravo, amigos,*" cried one of them, "it was a close shave we had. We owe our lives to Portugues. Rumor has belied that man. He is no murderous cutthroat. He has a kind, generous heart in his breast. May the blessings of God rest on him."

"What's the matter with old Scar Face?" the wondering buccaneers aboard the galleon asked each other. "He'd done better to turn the Wankers off at the yardarm or make them walk the plank. He's a queer fish, he is. What'd he turn 'em loose for? Nobody never heard tell of his showing a soft spot before. He must be going balmy."

The treasure was divided at the mainmast. The pieces-of-eight, the pearls, the silks, and merchandise were counted out into equal piles. Of these gorgeous heaps, Portugues, as captain, was awarded six, the mate two, the others, one each. The bar

silver remained to be shared after its sale at the current rates of the merchants who dealt in pirate plunder. With such riches stowed in their bags and sea-chests, all hands planned gay times ashore.

They raised the coasts of Jamaica. Old familiar landfalls appeared and fell astern. Port Royal, drowsing under its palm-trees on its long spit of land, opened on their view—at last. The galleon rode into the harbor in gallant style, with the crew lining the rail and Portugues, standing proudly on the quarter-deck, sweeping the shore with his spy-glass.

Word of the arrival of the buccaneers spread quickly. The most profligate town in the West Indies, home lair of pirates, famous for its unrestrained license and mad excesses, prepared for new orgies. As the ship glided smoothly to her anchorage, the taverns along the water-front poured into the street a tumultuous, cheering crowd of tipplers, riff-raff, loafers, bronzed, rough sailors with gold rings in their ears; broken gentlemen of fortune, half-seas over; noisy, chattering women, bare armed, in garish dresses, their lips and cheeks crimson with paint—sirens of the darkness with whose gaudy charms the unaccustomed sunlight played ghastly tricks.

Landlords in their white aprons, their hands clasped across their comfortable paunches, stood in their doorways, their unctuous smiles prophetic of the jingling wealth soon to pour into their tills. Seedy old sea dogs, down at heel, who long ago had squandered their last doubloon, clapped each other on the back at the prospect of wetting their whistles with plenty of rum.

Through the noisy throng pushed a stalwart wench with a skin like cream, her yellow hair gleaming in heavy coils, her blue eyes sparking with excitement. She screamed words of welcome, lost in the confused din; she gurgled forth laughter; she waved her arms frantically; gathering up her skirts, she danced a rigadoun with the wild abandon of a joyous bacchante. This might be Blond Peg of the Blue Anchor tavern—a golden, vivid figure, physically splendid, standing out against the background of the rum shops.

So Portugues came home.

Heart to Heart Talks



By the Editor



WHO did it? It's for the answer to that question that we read mystery stories. We have an idea that stories of this sort are mostly read by people of more than ordinary intelligence—they like to match wits with the author and try to discover who the guilty man is before the fellow who pulls the strings tells them. If you like this sort of mental gymnastics you will get a lot of fun out of reading the five-part serial that starts in next week's issue:

RASPBERRY JAM

BY CAROLYN WELLS

Author of "The Curved Blades," "Faulkner's Folly," etc.

A new mystery story by this talented weaver of complicated webs is, of course, an event of first-class importance to readers of current fiction. She is a past-master of the art of keeping her audience guessing—and keenly interested. This, her latest story, is right up to her usual standard. Perhaps you will be able to guess who killed Sanford Embury before the story tells you—but we doubt it! Of one thing we are sure—if you start the story you will never be content until you learn the solution of the mystery of his death. And that gives us an idea for the punishment of a certain ambitious gentleman now resident in Holland—let's send him the first four instalments of this story—and never send the fifth and last. He wouldn't be able to stand the strain for over two weeks. By the way, if you're not a regular subscriber, hadn't you better make arrangements with your news-dealer, so as to make certain that *you* don't miss any of this big feature serial?

EVEN the most matter of fact among us is occasionally brought up short by the intrusion of the unexpected into our lives. The drab monotony of the commonplace is swept aside by life's dramatic gesture and we are ready to deny there is nothing new under the sun. Then the old order again suppresses our imagination and seemingly plays loose with our expectations and we sink once more into the ditch of the commonplace, only to be pitched head foremost into the *milieu* of the mysterious and the baffling. The close connection of the one with the other is strikingly brought out in a powerful novelette in next week's magazine:

STRANGER THAN FICTION

BY REATA VAN HOUTEN

Author of "The Seven Sleepers," "Honor Among Thieves," "Who's Who?" etc.

When an author fills the full frame of his picture which an unusual title demands, we submit the story to that most exacting body of censors, the average reader, with no misgivings. The pres-

ent novelette opens the door of the commonplace to let in the magic and the mystery of life which are always, "stranger than fiction" and which lie close to the surface, though we are usually too preoccupied with our dull routine to perceive them, until they seize us by the throat. There is no dearth of dull fiction. Don't pass up this good tip.

We've read of many strange adventures at sea—some of them the imaginings of the fictionist's brain, others, tales of real events "off soundings." When once the land has dropped below the horizon almost anything can happen. But never have we read of so strange a deep-water adventure as that described in the wonderful novelties in next week's issue of ALL-STORY:

THE SHIP OF SILENT MEN

BY PHILIP M. FISHER, Jr.

Author of "The Volcanologist," etc.

Mr. Fisher knows the sea and knows modern seamanship and the men who sail modern ships.

In this novelette he tells a strange story, and tells it so well that you believe every word of it. The picture of the silent ship manned by a crew who moved about in accordance with their daily routine, yet unconscious and speechless, will linger long on your mind. There have been few adventure stories written that are so good as this one—you can't afford to miss reading it.



In the next issue of your ALL-STORY WEEKLY you will find the story of a great love—of a love that lasted through the ages, and of the sacrifice made by a man for the love of a woman—and of what happened afterward. The three people who live and love and act the parts allotted to them by destiny in the pages of this story—are real people, drawn by the hand of a master writer. When you open your next week's magazine be sure to look for "THE LOST GARDEN," by Max Brand, author of "John Ovington Returns," "Devil Ritter," etc. (A "different" story.)

In the past we have published many stories of high artistic merit—and we hope to publish many more in the future, but we are quite certain that it will be some time before this story is equaled for sheer artistic beauty. It displays another facet of Max Brand's many-sided fictional ability.



OLD readers of this magazine will recall with positive pleasure the name of Frank R. Adams, whose work has not appeared for some time. Mr. Adams, like all the gallant gentlemen of his order, was "over there." We are delighted to introduce him again with a story in next week's magazine, called, "GRANDFATHER'S EVENING IN HEAVEN." This is a crisp little tale, full of life and color and that indescribable thing we call "punch." There isn't a dull line in it or a hackneyed situation. The author sometimes cleaves close to the danger line but the danger you will see is always in the imagination of the reader. Well, maybe not altogether. Grandfather had an evening in heaven but the girl— Was it hades or heaven for her? We leave you to decide.



FAR off China is a fertile field for the artist in fiction. The inscrutable ways of the Chinese, the gorgeous colors of the Orient, the deep passions that burn under the almost expressionless faces of the yellow men—all are elements that well lend themselves to the art of the story writer. But properly to deal with these elements the writer must be a master of his craft and have more than a surface knowledge of Chinese ways and character. Such a writer is Herman Howard Matteson, and his craftsmanship at its best is displayed in his story "THE FOURTH OBEDIENCE" in next week's issue.



"FIRE," by Clyde B. Hough, is the third of the cave-man series which we are running under the

general title, "THE PEOPLE OF THE GLACIER." If you have already read the first two stories telling of Lab and Wah, and the other earliest forefathers—and mothers—of our race ("The Great Cold" in the November 1, 1919, number and "The Passing of the Great Cold" in this issue), we feel sure we need only call your attention to this one for you to turn to it first. As the late Mr. Pope remarked, "the proper study of mankind is man," and he might have added that it is the most interesting, too. The story next week deals, as the title indicates, with the discovery of man's most dangerous enemy and most useful ally—fire.



SEQUEL TO "THE GIRL IN THE GOLDEN ATOM"

TO THE EDITOR:

Here's another who agrees with J. Walter Briggs, of Stanfordville, New York, and also with E. James Casaw, of Massena, New York, in that we should really hear more of "The Girl in the Golden Atom," for it certainly was one grand story.

This is my third year to be a reader of the ALL-STORY WEEKLY. In the recent tie-up caused by the strike there were about four or five weeks that I could not get my favorite. But on Thanksgiving Day (a real one for me) I bought it and was more than glad to have it once more.

Please don't leave *Larry* in that awful place much longer, for sure now an' he isn't real Irish if he don't come out of that scrap soon. Let us hear more about "Black Bart" and "Dan" for they were great.

Hoping that this will find a place in your "Heart to Heart Talks" as this is my initial effort and may not be found worthy of a place, I am,

As Irish as *Larry* ever thought of being.

BONNIE JACKSON.

Huntington, West Virginia.

NOTE: We are glad to be able to announce that Mr. Cummings has written a long serial, sequel to "The Girl in the Golden Atom," which will be published shortly after the first of the year. The exact date will be announced later.

"THE CURSE OF CAPISTRANO" WINS

TO THE EDITOR:

A few weeks ago while reading the ALL-STORY WEEKLY I was greatly impressed by the composition of the story "The Curse of Capistrano." It was enjoyable and contained all that which is necessary in fiction such as mystery, love, and imaginative settings.

I followed the story in the next number of the magazine and at the same time found other stories, which pleased me as much as the first one had.

"A Daughter of Borneo," "Wild Gander," "Janie Pays a Debt of Honor," are the most wonderful, interesting and mystifying serials that I ever read. "The Spell of the West Wind," etc., and the poems are to my liking and I should say that anybody who misses the stories in the ALL-STORY WEEKLY is missing something, which cannot be retold in the same form as cheap as you offer them.

I'll say that I am positively going to continue reading the ALL-STORY WEEKLY and hope that you will offer stories as good as in past issues and also better.

I remain an admirer.

JACQUES LOUIS MARTINIQUE.

529 West One Hundred and Twenty-fifth Street,
New York, New York.

LITTLE HEART-BEATS

Enclosed find fifteen cents, for which please send me the ALL-STORY WEEKLY for September 6, 1919. I have read the ALL-STORY WEEKLY since the story "Doc" appeared. What's the matter with Edgar Rice Burroughs, he hasn't been in for a long time? Of course we will have a sequel to "The Conquest of the Moon Pool." That's too good a story to leave up there. Keep Edgar Franklin on the job; he is there and over with the goods. "His Word of Honor" was A No. 1 comedy. "One Who Was Afraid," under the title of "The Sheriff's Son," certainly made a corking good picture. Hoping the ALL-STORY WEEKLY will arrive soon, and the printers' strike come to a settlement, I remain a MUNSEY fan, first, last and always.

FRANK A. SIMONS.

Sheridan, Wyoming.

I am a reader of the ALL-STORY WEEKLY, and I think it is the best magazine published. What is the matter with E. R. Burroughs? Is his hand paralyzed? I hope A. Merritt will write another story soon. I didn't like Max Brand's latest story, "The Sacking of El Dorado." I thought at first *Blinky* was going to be a hero, and instead he turned out to be a "gutter rat"; but don't think I am kicking, because it is impossible to please every reader with one certain kind of story. I have read the first part of "Eastward Ho," and I think it is very good. "The Ivory Pipe" was good, and also "Comrades of Peril" was fine. You will please excuse this letter, as I am only twelve years old, but I like to read the ALL-STORY WEEKLY as well as any one. So does my grandfather.

ALMUS PRUITT.

Pocasset, Oklahoma.

Will write you once more to let you know how disappointed I am at present, for I have not received my ALL-STORY WEEKLY this week. Of course it is not the publisher's fault; it is on

account of that strike in New York City. I do wish they would go back to work. I am so afraid I will miss a copy. Say, Mr. Editor, be sure and send plenty to the Thorndale news-stand, so there will be enough for all.

I am a constant reader and have been for three years, and I get my ALL-STORY WEEKLY from the news-stand every week. I haven't missed a copy since my first book. I am awfully anxious to find out what became of *Larry* and *Lakla*. "The Ivory Pipe" was fine. Bring us more stories like "The Lady of the Night Wind." I do not know the author's name. When I get through my ALL-STORY WEEKLY I loan it to friends. I am still waiting for a sequel to "The Untamed." Well, I am not a knocker; I like all the stories. Hoping to see this in print, long live the ALL-STORY WEEKLY, and editor.

T. J. STOWE.

Gen. Del., Thorndale, Texas.

You're giving us a great weekly magazine. I am looking with much pleasure to the forthcoming novel by Isabel Ostrander, "Ashes to Ashes." Her novel, "Twenty-Six Clues," was so very interesting. It kept up its interest to the very end, and its ending so little guessed by the reader. It was republished as a serial in one of our Chicago dailies, as also was "The Crimson Alibi," another fine detective story.

I wish you would give us more novels by these novelists, who each gave us a corking fine story, viz.: "The Mahogany Hoodoo," by Boice Du Boice; "The Emperor's Plague," by A. E. Sculte, and "Diane of Star Hollow," by David Potter; but they were all fine stories. All of Raymond S. Spears's stories are welcomed by me, long or short ones. His "Janie Pays a Debt of Honor" is one of his best. You have a fine array of short-story writers, such as Lamb, Matteson, Sanders, Rouse, Flower, and a long list of first-class authors.

Chicago, Illinois.

H. M. B.

Please find enclosed three dollars for a six months' subscription to the ALL-STORY WEEKLY. For two years we bought all kinds of magazines from a bookstore in Winnipeg, but yours is the best, and everybody in the house can read it and enjoy it, too. I often pass them to my neighbors for winter reading. Be sure to send the first number soon as you get this letter; I have put it off too long to send my subscription. We are French, but we read the ALL-STORY WEEKLY before any French paper. I think it is a regular clean book. Waiting for the first number. If you publish this letter in the Editor's Talks, use only initials.

MRS. A. E. F.

Meacham, Saskatchewan, Canada.

Have been a reader of the ALL-STORY WEEKLY for years and I think it is getting better right along. I read everything in it but I like the Western stories the best. Now I am reading the new

serial entitled "Don't Ever Marry" and it starts out to be a good one. Please give us more detective stories. "Twenty-Six Clues" was great, but "Ashes to Ashes" can't be beat. This magazine should be published twice every week at least, because one don't last very long when I start to read it. I like to read the Heart to Heart Talks for it is very interesting to see how some readers always kick about something. Will you please print this as I have never seen a letter from this State. With best wishes,

J. F. BALUN.

Bottineau, North Dakota.

Please find enclosed one dollar for which send me the ALL-STORY WEEKLY for three months, starting with October 18, 1919. I like all of the stories in the ALL-STORY WEEKLY and I do not think that you could print better stories. "Broadway Bab" was sure good, also "The Untamed." But when are we going to have a sequel to "The Untamed"? "A Daughter of Borneo" was sure one good story and it had a good ending. "Temptation of Carlton Earle" by Stella M. Düring was a fine story. I trust that I shall receive my first copy soon. With best wishes.

MISS MARY BAKER.

Warwick, North Dakota.

Enclosed please find fifteen cents to cover cost of sending to the above address the issue of the ALL-STORY WEEKLY which contained the final instalment of the serial "The Curse of Capistrano," which I have had the misfortune to miss.

Though not a yearly subscriber, I get your magazine weekly at my newsdealer's and have been doing so for the past six years.

Your stories are for the main part well written, especially "The Untamed," "Broadway Bab," the above mentioned serial and others too numerous to name.

Why not give us some ancient Irish, Scotch, and Viking tales which in my opinion will please those who crave for excitement and adventure through reading you excellent magazine.

With best wishes, I am, very truly yours.

THOMAS L. WILLIAMS.

Empire Boulevard, Brooklyn, New York.

As I have not seen a letter from this part of the State in Heart to Heart Talks, I will write you as I read the ALL-STORY WEEKLY. I have decided to be a subscriber. I like all the stories. Especially those written by Henry Leverage, Isabel Ostrander, Randall Parrish and Max Brand. Wishing the ALL-STORY WEEKLY the best of success.

EDW. E. NOVOTNY.

McBook, Nebraska.

I have been a reader of your magazine for so many years that I have forgotten just how long it has been, but when I was a child at school my

father took the All-Story, and I was always the first one to read it. That was ten years ago.

In fact I am so in love with the ALL-STORY WEEKLY that I cannot afford to miss a number of it. And when the strike was on, I sure was lost. When the first one was back on the market again, it seemed as though I had found a long-lost friend.

I never read another magazine as I really think it is a waste of time when there is much better reading to be had in the ALL-STORY WEEKLY. "Three cheers and a badger!" for the one and only magazine, the ALL-STORY WEEKLY.

All the stories are good but my favorites are "Eastward Ho!" "Ashes to Ashes," "Four Quarts of Rubies," and, best of all the stories of Mexican life as I speak their language and understand them so well.

Other people may prefer all short stories but I myself like the serials. As I have written an overly long letter I will say, *buenos noches*.

Sincerely,

SRA. NATALIA HERNANDEZ.

Mason City, Iowa.

I have read the ALL-STORY WEEKLY and *Cavalier* each week for ten years. I have not had it now for three weeks, on account, I presume, of the printers' strike. It seems to me that some of your readers might develop into pretty fair strike breakers. I confess to a certain lonesomeness without the magazine, so, if I can be of assistance, let me know.

MAY ROYAL SHELTON WALDRON.

Hudson Avenue, Englewood, New Jersey.

This is my first entry into the Heart to Heart Talks, although I have been reading the ALL-STORY WEEKLY for a year or so. I have the honor to say, though, that I have not missed a copy during that time. I was very sorry that there was a misunderstanding in the company during the last month or so and hope it came out all right.

Of all the magazines I have read none have ever (in my mind) been able to compete with the ALL-STORY WEEKLY. Among the stories I have read in your magazine, I liked "The Untamed" and "The Conquest of the Moon Pool" the best. I think, though, that the authors of these two stories should write a sequel to their respective story telling how the main characters come out in the stories. If I told you about all the good stories I have read it would be so tiresome for you that you would quit your job as editor, so you could retire from reading them in your old age. Therefore I will bring this to a close and wish you and the company a Merry Christmas and a happy and prosperous New Year.

Yours sincerely,

WILLARD KNAPTON.

Chestnut Street, Bellingham, Washington.