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JUNE 1920

# THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE

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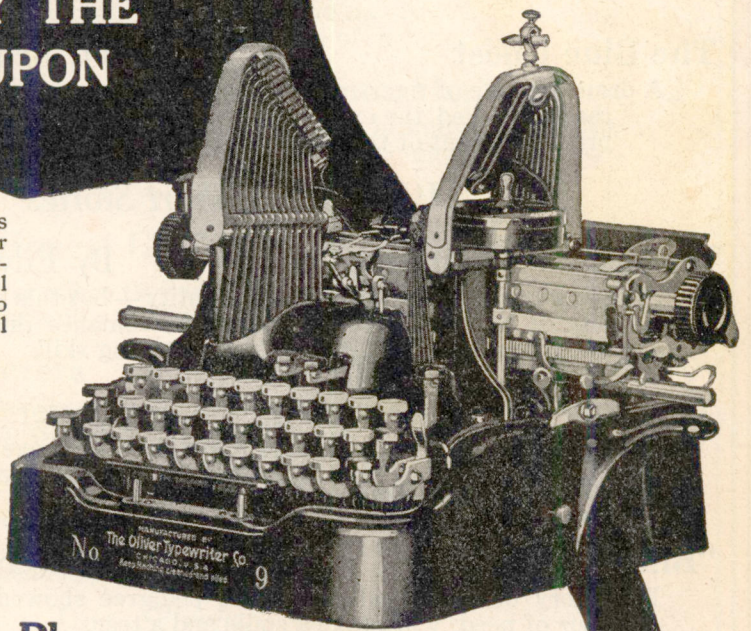


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# THE BLUE BOOK

KARL EDWIN HARRIMAN, Editor

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## *A Complete Novelette*

**The Blue Ghost** By H. Bedford-Jones 162

A dramatic tale of tiger- and man-hunting, and of a fiendish traffic that imperiled the entire Chinese race. The author's name is proof sufficient of the story's quality.

## *Worthwhile Short Stories*

**The Kick of Kismet** By Edwin Balmer 26

Nathan's was a choice case of lost identity — but this is only an inkling of the thrills, the mystery, the romance that permeate a fine example of Mr. Balmer's story-telling skill.

**The Boll-Weevil Orator** By Chester T. Crowell 40

Senator Logwood's methods were sometimes not above reproach, but his purposes were always patriotic. You may treat yourself to a good time with this story.

**"Blink"** By Warren H. Miller 51

This story of a mongrel dog whose pedigree showed itself in the hour of need, will evoke a smile and a tear.

**For Postmortem Perusal** By Edison Marshall 56

Horace was a convention delegate of the L. P. B. No, that isn't the League for the Perforating of Bad-men — but once in motion, the docile Horace certainly justified such a title for his organization.

**Deep Water Men** By Culpeper Zandtt 64

Pauline Buckner and Jim Medford combine wits to defeat the scheming German agents in this story.

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# MAGAZINE

JUNE 1920

DONALD KENNICOTT, Associate Editor


HEADINGS: Drawn by QUIN HALL


**"Antonio"** By Henry Leverage 78

Chester Fay turned moralist? Yes, but the fact isn't half so enjoyable as the story of his immoral method of doing good.

**Free Lances in Diplomacy** By Clarence Herbert New 129

How one concern resuscitated an unprofitable business. Mr. New gives us an interesting and suggestive story of modern production.

**Exploits of an Honest Grafter** By William O. Grenolds 142

Honest John Barker takes the bull by the horns and flings it to his opponent in the guise of "The Best Act of All."

**Profiteer Plunderers** By W. Douglas Newton 149

Cyprian and his partners tilt the scales against a super-profiteer, and give one of his victims a fresh footing.

**The Hot Trail** By Frank Richardson Pierce 154

The author's ingredients are two brothers in O. D., a motorcycle, an airplane and a crowd of Mexican bandits, and he has concocted a mixture which supplies every variety of "peppy" reading.

*Two Stirring Serials*

**Behind the Closed Door** By George Barton 1

Adventure, mystery, action, romance — all will be found in this initial installment of a masterful novel. There is a spirited movement about it that will captivate you.

**Cross Currents** By John Law Dallam and Frank H. Collins 86

This installment concludes the novel of Wall Street and Wyoming — big business and big country.



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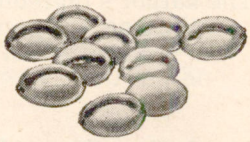

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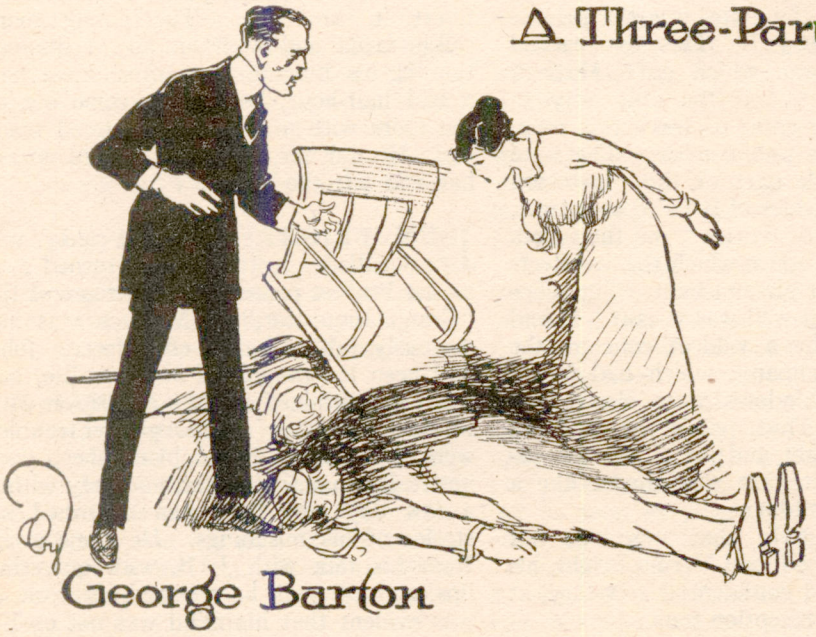
June
1920

THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE

Vol. XXXI.
No. 2

# Behind the Closed Door

## A Three-Part Novel



By George Barton

### CHAPTER I

#### The Closed Door

IT was the day before Thanksgiving.

That fixed the time vividly in the minds of all concerned. Most of the houses in the financial district were closed in order to give their employees an additional holiday; but J. B. Matlack, who was always a law unto himself, persisted in doing business as usual.

Another fact was imprinted indelibly upon the minds of all: "J. B.," as he was familiarly called around the office, was on the rampage. His usual air of courtesy was absent, and he tore in and out of his room like a raging lion. The banking firm of J. B. Matlack & Company—consisting of J. B. and his partners William Walters and Clyde Walters—had hitherto borne a fine reputation for integrity and square dealing. J. B. himself was regarded as the soul of honor. Suddenly the house began dealing in doubtful oil-stocks. There were ugly rumors, and a climax was reached when a client sued the firm on the charge of having been victimized.

Richard Gibbons, attorney for the woman, not only brought suit to recover the money but gave out an interview in which he said the members of the firm were swindlers. J. B. was furious, and in turn published a statement saying that Gibbons was a briefless barrister and a demagogue in search of cheap capital. Matlack and Gibbons resembled each other in one important respect; they would fight at the drop of a hat. Gibbons sent a hot letter to the banker, and also announced that at the first opportunity he would make him "answer personally" for his insult. A foolish threat for a young man to make to his elder—but Impetuosity was the middle name of Richard Gibbons.

In order to follow the strange events of the day it is necessary to have a clear

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idea of the way in which the offices of Matlack & Company were divided, and the persons who were there at the time.

The firm occupied a large suite on the fifth floor of the Masterson Building. There was one central reception-room, and on either side of this, near the entrance, were the private offices of William Walters and Clyde Walters, the nephew of William, who acted as chief clerk and bookkeeper for the firm. At the rear, in the extreme end of the suite, was the private office of the great J. B. This was reached through a passage which gave Matlack absolute privacy, and the only way in which one could enter or leave this room was through the public office. The suite was in the back part of the Masterson Building. Two sides of it faced the street, one side the public corridor, and the fourth side a wide open space which the architects had provided for air and light. The office opposite the light-well was vacant. It had been occupied by a wildcat concern, the Gushing Oil Company, which had failed, and now the windows were closed and dust-covered. Thus, while he had an abundance of light and air, J. B. was enclosed in a room that was almost like a pocket of the building.

He arrived early that morning, but early as it was, he found Norma Bright, his stenographer and confidential secretary, at her desk in the reception-room.

"Thank goodness there's one person in this place I can depend upon. You never fail me, Miss Bright."

Norma flushed and said nothing. She liked J. B., and she was accustomed to his moods.

"Where's Miss Gracy?" he asked, looking at the vacant chair in front of the telephone switchboard.

"I'm afraid she thought this was to be a holiday. But if you wish, I'll look after the telephone."

"Very good. And by the way, I expect to hold a number of interviews today. Will you send the visitors in as I want them? I'll give you the signal in each case by pushing the buzzer on my desk. Understand? No one to come in until you get the buzzer?"

"Yes," was the good-humored reply, "I understand."

NORMA BRIGHT looked up at the annunciator on the wall. It seemed that she was to take on the duties of the office-boy too. There were three brass arrows inside the frame, one to correspond with the buzzer in the room of each of the partners. But with both of the Walters absent, all that was necessary was to listen for the calls from J. B.'s room.

He had not understated the case when he said he would have a busy morning. One of the first persons to be closeted with him was Clyde Walters, who had only recently been given a small interest in the firm. The young man, sallow-faced and with an air of dissipation in his bulging eyes, must have had a bad half-hour, because he came out of the room with a decidedly flustered manner. He did not linger, but picked up his hat and left the offices.

JOHN BRIGHT, the bond-clerk, was next called. Norma's heart turned cold as her brother passed into the room of the "Grand Inquisitor," as Matlack was humorously dubbed by the office force. John had been the despair of Norma's life, but when she obtained for him a position with Matlack Company, she thought her troubles were at an end. But a black sheep does not really change its color, and only within a few days she had been disturbed by stories of his misdoings. He came away from his talk with J. B. with quivering lips, and although he resumed his work, it was evident that his mind was not on his books.

Norma did not have much time to think of her own troubles, for the visitors came in increasing numbers. Finally there were three persons waiting to see J. B. One was Richard Gibbons; another was Professor Worthington, a spiritualist who had been a frequent caller on Matlack; and the third was a hard-faced woman in black who absolutely refused to give her name. Gibbons and the woman were nervously impatient. They fidgeted about, got up and sat down and seemed scarcely able to contain themselves. Professor Worthington, wearing a fur-lined overcoat, and with his long snow-white hair falling below his collar, was as placid as a summer's day. Presently Gibbons walked over to Norma Bright and spoke pleasantly.

"Mr. Gibbons," she said, fixing a pair of transparently honest eyes upon the young man, "I'm sorry you've abused Mr. Matlack in the papers. You have done him a great injustice. He would never willfully wrong anyone."

The young lawyer squared his shoulders, and there was a note of admiration in his glance as he said:

"I have great faith in your judgment, Miss Bright; but I'm from Missouri, and Matlack has got to show me. I'm full of fight, and I don't propose to stand any nonsense."

*Buzz-buzz-buzz* came the sound from the annunciator.

At the same moment a visitor, a stranger, came out of J. B.'s room, and Norma turned to those in waiting.

"Who's next?" she asked.

Gibbons, Worthington and the woman in black all lined up at the same moment.

"One at a time, please," laughed the girl.

The hard-faced female pushed her way forward as though she would gain her audience by main force.

"My business wont wait any longer," she protested. "You tell him I'm here, and he wont dare refuse to see me."

"But madam," said the girl quietly, "Professor Worthington was here long before you." And with a deftness born of long practice, she edged the spiritualist into the private office of J. B. Matlack.

The woman sulkily resumed her seat, and for some minutes there was a constrained silence in the room. Professor Worthington did not stay very long, and when he emerged from the inner room, his face was wreathed in smiles. He was the only man who left J. B. that day with a cheerful countenance. His example must have been contagious, for it brought a smile to the face of Gibbons. The young lawyer turned to the female in black with a graceful gesture:

"Madam, I give way to you— I think my business will wait that long."

She arose stiffly and started toward the passageway leading to Matlack's private office. Norma Bright restrained her.

"Just a moment, please, until Mr. Matlack gives the signal."

SHE did not have to wait long. In a few moments the buzzer broke the silence of the room. The anonymous woman hurried into the private office with head erect and face harder than ever. She remained for many minutes, and meanwhile Norma and Gibbons chatted in a friendly manner. It was evident that they were mutually attracted, and the girl urged upon him the value of adopting a conciliatory attitude toward J. B. Matlack.

"He is honest clear through," she said, "but he is stubborn and hot-tempered."

Gibbons laughed easily.

"When it comes to that, I've got a little temper of my own. If Matlack is willing to play fair, I'll meet him halfway, but if he doesn't—well, he'll have to take the consequences."

Norma looked serious.

"That sort of talk doesn't become you, Mr. Gibbons—especially when it is directed toward a man with a reputation such as Mr. Matlack's."

AS Norma was speaking, the woman in black came out of the inner office. Her face was flushed, and there was a look of triumph in her glittering eyes. As she marched from the room, the telephone-bell rang. Norma hurried over and placed the hood on her head. Mr. Matlack was speaking:

"Connect me with the office of District Attorney Moran—Main 8797, I think it is—at once. After that, do not send anyone else in here until I push the buzzer."

"Very well," she said. "Mr. Gibbons has been waiting to see you."

"Let him wait," exclaimed J. B.

The connection was made quickly, and Norma heard Matlack talking to the District Attorney.

"Yes, I'd be favored if you'd come over right away. I've got something important to tell you. I'll give you enough to send him to jail for life. I can't leave here, or I'd come to see you. Yes, I've got positive evidence. All right—I'll wait for you."

As Norma took the hood off her head, Gibbons approached her.

"Shall I go in?" he asked.

"Just as soon as Mr. Matlack gives the signal," she smiled.

At this moment Clyde Walters reëntered the office, looking about him inquiringly.

"I've mislaid some papers," he mumbled half to himself.

They paid no attention to him and resumed their conversation. In the midst of it came the signal, three times in succession.

*Buzz-buzz-buzz!*

She rose with mock courtesy, and pointed the way. Gibbons was positively beaming on her, and with a slight inclination of the head he passed through the corridor and into the private office of J. B.

Matlack. Norma heard the heavy door close and began to think Gibbons a charming young man. She was glad she had tried to soften his anger against her employer. She was sure a few minutes' conversation between them would settle their difficulties. Above all, she felt a sense of satisfaction in sending him in to J. B. with a smile on his face, and in a reasonable frame of mind.

In the midst of these reflections Norma was startled by hearing a cry of horror from behind the closed door. This was followed by the sound of crashing china, and then a heavy jarring noise as of a body striking the floor. A strange physical weakness overcame Norma Bright. She rose with difficulty and steadied herself against the side of the telephone desk. A premonition of impending disaster made her heart sink. Clyde Walters, who was still in the outer room, rushed forward, and with him John Bright. The three of them hurried into the inner office. The sight that confronted them made them halt for a moment on the threshold in a paralysis of horror.

J. B. Matlack lay on the polished floor with the blood gushing from a wound in his breast, while Richard Gibbons stood over him with a look of horror in his black eyes. The swivel chair that J. B. was in the habit of using was backed up against a bookcase; the fragments of a large bust of Shakespeare, which formerly ornamented the room, were strewn about everywhere. Everybody was filled with such horror that nothing was said for a minute. Curiously enough, it was the girl who first gained the power of voicing the question in her mind.

"What does this mean?" she gasped, looking at Gibbons pleadingly.

HE stared at her with unseeing eyes. He seemed to be dumb. Finally, he said in a hollow voice utterly unlike his own:

"I—I don't know!"

In the meantime Clyde Walters and John Bright were on their knees, raising the head of the stricken man. He gazed at them with glazed eyes. He tried to speak but failed. But his lips were moving. All four leaned down to hear what he was saying. It was the faintest possible whisper, but they heard each word distinctly:

"He—he—he did it!"

A half smile flashed across the whitened face; he rolled his big head in a gruesome way, and fell back dead.

## CHAPTER II

### A Scriptural Quotation

WHILE the situation was most tense, District Attorney Moran came into the room, accompanied by a short, thick-set man with a bristling red mustache and an aggressive manner. Moran had an air of distinction. The other—aside from his chip-on-the-shoulder attitude—would have been lost in a crowd.

"What's the trouble?" asked Moran, looking sternly at the group. For the moment they were dumb. It was Clyde Walters who finally spoke, and he described what had taken place not only with accuracy but almost with volubility. When he had finished, Mr. Moran looked at the others.

"Is this story correct?"

They nodded their assent, all but Richard Gibbons, who looked as if he had turned to stone. The District Attorney gave him a searching look.

"Why don't you say something?"

Gibbons raised his right hand wearily and wiped the cold sweat from his forehead. Norma Bright gave a startled cry, and no wonder. The man's hand was crimsoned with blood, and the stain of it was smeared upon his clothing. If ever a man had the mark of Cain upon his brow, it was Richard Gibbons at that moment. Everybody seemed to realize it at the same moment, and there was an awed silence. The beady eyes of Jim Hylan—the Central Station detective, who accompanied Moran—glittered with ill-subdued satisfaction. To him the greatest victory in life was to catch a man "red-handed." It was when the silence had become positively painful that the District Attorney spoke:

"Send for the Coroner; meanwhile come into the other room."

They filed out of the private office, leaving the body of J. B. lying flat on the floor of the room which had been the scene of so many of his earthly triumphs. District Attorney Moran looked about him for a convenient place, and finally selected the office of William Walters.

"Go in there," he said to Gibbons, "and let the others wait outside."

They sat down in chairs facing one another, the accuser and the accused, the one strong and self-reliant, the other crushed and almost speechless. There was a long pause, and then Moran spoke in his incisive, official manner:

"Your name and business?"

The young man aroused himself with an effort and replied mechanically.

"Richard Gibbons, attorney-at-law."

A gleam of recognition flashed across the countenance of the District Attorney. With it was mingled a touch of pity.

"Oh, yes, I remember now. Well, Gibbons, what have you got to say for yourself?"

THE lawyer tried to smile and made a ghastly failure of it. He moistened his lips with the tip of his tongue.

"Everything's against me; I see that. But I swear before God that I am innocent."

Moran was unmoved by this statement; probably he expected it. He glanced at the other man in his keen way.

"I'm willing to hear any statement you care to make, but as a lawyer you know that anything you say may be used against you. Don't speak if you think you will injure yourself."

"I will speak," cried Gibbons with unexpected energy. "I must speak or I'll die. I had no more to do with the killing of that man than you have. I'm a vicitim of circumstances. I—"

"But," interrupted the District Attorney, "Matlack only telephoned me twenty minutes ago saying he was about to make important revelations to me. And now his mouth is closed forever."

"I know nothing about that, and I'll swear he could tell nothing dishonorable about me. If anything, the shoe was on the other foot. I came to him to insist upon restitution to a client who had bought fake stocks through his firm—"

"Ah," interposed Moran, "you threatened him?"

"Call it anything you like. I was after justice."

"We'll try and give you justice," was the significant comment; "but just what happened after you went into Matlack's office?"

Gibbons closed his eyes for a moment to bring back the incidents of the morning. He gave an almost imperceptible shiver, and then he spoke slowly:

"When I was ushered into the room, I paused for a moment to close the heavy door which separated his private office from the reception-room. Then I turned to greet Matlack, but to my surprise I found him sitting in his chair, with his arms on the desk and his head bowed in his hands. I didn't know what to make of it. My first thought was that he had been suddenly taken ill. I walked over to the desk, put my hand on his shoulder and gave him a shake. There was no answer, but the chair in which he was sitting darted back on its rollers, struck the bookcase, toppled over the bust and went crashing to the floor. I made an effort to catch Matlack, and I did get him under the arms, but his body was like a ton weight, and it fell heavily to the floor. It was only then that I noticed that the blood was oozing from a wound in his breast. I stooped down to speak to him, and he fixed a pair of glassy eyes on me. It was horrible! I was stunned. All I could do was to stand there and stare at the body. Then the others burst into the room, and finally you came. That's all."

District Attorney Moran was thoughtful for many moments. When he spoke, his tone was frankly skeptical.

"So," he said, "that's your story?"

"It's not my story," was the savage retort; "it's the truth."

"I SUPPOSE you know," said the District Attorney, "it would have been utterly impossible for anyone to get into the room except through the public office?"

"I suppose not," was the wearied reply.

"And I don't imagine you'd contend that some one was hiding in the wardrobe or the closet? Because, if they had been, how could they have escaped?"

"I haven't thought anything," was the impatient cry. "All that I know is that I'm innocent."

"Quite so; but it will be necessary to convince a jury of that fact."

Gibbons nodded absently.

"And he was alive a moment before you entered the room. The sound from the buzzer proves that."

But the young lawyer was in no mood for further conversation.

"I suppose I'll have to be arrested. That's the custom. And I know there's no use talking about bail. I'm ready to go whenever you say the word."

As Moran and Gibbons came out of

the room, they heard the high-pitched voice of Jim Hylan. He was addressing the little group huddled in the corner:

"Don't anybody touch a thing in that room. I've given it the once-over, but I've got to make another examination."

Seeing the District Attorney and the suspect, he walked over to him.

"I've found a threatening letter among the effects of old J. B. from our young friend here, and it was only written yesterday."

Moran turned to Gibbons.

"Did you write such a letter?"

The young man's face was a grayish color as he bowed his head and answered:

"I did."

"That's bad," commented the District Attorney.

"And," joined in Jim Hylan, "I've known men to go to the electric chair on less than that."

Gibbons paid no attention to this sally. Indeed, his thoughts were thousands of miles away from the detective. But Hylan having projected his personality into the picture, didn't propose to efface himself in a hurry. He turned to the prisoner—for Gibbons was actually a prisoner by this time—and said brusquely:

"What did you do with the gun?"

The young lawyer stared at him.

"I—I don't know what you are talking about."

Hylan cocked his bullet-head on one side in a challenging manner:

"Oh, yes, you do. Old Man Matlack died from a pistol-shot. What did you do with the gun after you killed him?"

Gibbons rose to his feet in a towering rage. He advanced toward Hylan with clenched fists.

"You rat," he screamed, "I've got a notion to wring your neck!"

The detective would have retorted, but the District Attorney lifted a warning finger to his lips; it said plainly: "Shut up." Hylan tugged at his bristling red mustache and finally edged over to the side of Moran.

"I'VE searched high and low," he said in a whisper, "and I can't find the gun. He might have thrown it down the light-well. Before we leave, I'll search the areaway. You don't suppose he's got it in his pocket, do you?"

Moran informed Gibbons that it would be necessary for him to submit to a search. The prisoner went through the ordeal as though he was unconscious of what was going on. Hylan confessed defeat.

"He aint got a weapon of any kind," he said.

A NUMBER of persons had come into the room from the neighboring offices, and at that moment there was a stir on the edge of the crowd. A cheerful voice was heard exclaiming:

"What's it all about?"

It was Curley of the *Chronicle*. As he made his way to the front, he saw the District Attorney. He smiled in his contagious way.

"I smell a good story, Mr. Moran. When you are around there must be trouble brewing."

He turned, and for the first time saw Richard Gibbons. The attitude of the young lawyer was sufficient. His air of dejection was apparent.

"Dick!" ejaculated the journalist.

"Yes," confessed Gibbons bitterly, "I'm the prisoner. You didn't think I'd ever give you a good story, did you? Don't you remember when I was admitted to the bar, I promised to give you a sensation some day? Well, here it is."

The poor attempt at raillery was not a success. But it was enough to make Curley understand the seriousness of the situation. He walked over and gave Gibbons a cordial handshake.

"Dick," he exclaimed, "I don't know what it's all about, but I'm with you until the last horn blows!"

"You must have a nose for murder," interjected Jim Hylan, sidling up to the newspaperman, "to smell it so soon."

"Murder!" cried Curley, aghast. "Why, I came here to interview Matlack about the oil-business."

"Matlack will never give any more interviews in this world," remarked the District Attorney.

So, little by little, amid the excitement, Curley pieced together a narrative of what had taken place. Norma Bright sat in front of the telephone board, a disconsolate figure trying hard to check her sobs. Curley patted her on the shoulder and made some vague remark about things going to come out all right in the end. Then, in defiance of the Hylan order, he strolled into the death room.

Meanwhile some one remembered that although some time had elapsed, no word

had been sent to the family of J. B. Matlack. Norma Bright was consulted. She shook her head sadly.

"Mr. Matlack had no family. His wife died some years ago, and he has lived the life of a hermit since then. He stayed in the old house, though, with only a housekeeper and a manservant. But," she added, "Mr. Walters should be notified."

"Mr. Walters?" echoed the District Attorney.

"Yes, Mr. William Walters, the partner of Mr. Matlack. He didn't come to the office today. I understand he is at his home at Walnut Hill."

"That's about eight miles from here?"

"Yes," she said, "something like that."

"He must have a telephone connection," declared the District Attorney. "Miss Bright, wont you see if he can be reached on the wire? If you get him, tell him to come down here at once."

With trembling hands Norma Bright lifted the receiver and called for the number in the Walnut Hill section. She obtained the connection almost immediately, and the others in the room could hear her talking to the partner of J. B. Matlack.

"Is that you, Mr. Walters? . . . . Yes, this is Miss Bright. You are wanted at the office at once. Something has—has happened. . . . . Yes, to Mr. Matlack. He is dead! . . . . Yes, he—he has been killed."

Norma pulled the hood from off her head, hung up the receiver and gave way to a fit of unrestrained weeping.

THE others stood round waiting for the arrival of William Walters. Meanwhile Curley, in the next room, had picked a card from the floor. On it was written in a scrawling hand the words: *"God loveth a cheerful giver."* He gazed at it long and earnestly. It might mean nothing, or it might mean everything. He walked into the outer office, and going over to Norma Bright, handed her the card.

"Did you ever see that before?" he asked.

"No," was the puzzled reply. "I never did."

"Is the handwriting familiar?"

She looked at the bit of pasteboard carefully, and knitted her pretty brows.

"Why, yes," she said finally; "that's the handwriting of Mr. Matlack."

Curley took the card from the girl, and a moment later was claiming the attention of the District Attorney.

"Mr. Moran," he whispered, "here is something I found in the private office—and it's in the handwriting of J. B. Matlack."

The official looked at the exhibit carelessly.

"Well, what of it?"

"It may have some significance. Don't you want it?"

Moran smiled and placed a friendly hand on the shoulder of the newspaper man.

"You mean well, my boy, but it's no use. You can't make a mystery out of a case that is as clear as the noonday sun. But if you wish, you may give the card to Hylan."

But Curley didn't do anything of the kind. He placed it carefully in his card-case. The time might come when it would be of service to Richard Gibbons.

## CHAPTER III

### Walters Takes Command

A LITTLE more than thirty minutes elapsed from the time the telephone-message was sent until William Walters appeared in the offices of the Masterson Building. The first impression one received of Walters was that his thin lips were bloodless, and that he had blinking eyes. But he talked so well, and his manners were so Chesterfieldian, that the unpleasing characteristics of the man were smothered in his amiability. He was tall, slender, with a long, smooth-shaven face and a chin that looked as if it had started out to be resolute and suddenly changed its mind.

Walters' face was usually ivory white, but as he entered the office that morning it had assumed a grayish, almost death-like pallor. He looked from the District Attorney to Clyde Walters inquiringly, and in response to his unspoken query, they told the whole story lucidly and quickly.

"This is deplorable," he said, wringing his hands in a hopeless manner, "most deplorable."

"Would you like to see the body?" asked the tactless Hylan.

A shiver ran through the tall frame of the partner.

"No, no," he cried, "I couldn't stand it just now."

Moran transfixed the detective with a glare. Then he turned solicitously to William Walters.

"Everything has been attended to, but we thought you should be notified."

"Quite right, quite right! It's a painful business, but we shall have to see it through. We shall have to see it through. No one knows how I regret Matlack's death. Fine man! I didn't think he had an enemy in the world—no, not an enemy in the world."

"Well," said Moran, "you see you were mistaken."

Walters gave a ghastly smile.

"Quite right again, quite right! We never can be sure of anything in this world."

The coroner gave permission for the removal of the body, and his physician announced that the usual autopsy would be held over the remains. This, he said, in view of all the circumstances, was really unnecessary, but the regulations required it, and he was a stickler for the regulations.

Walters nodded his head in approbation.

"I don't suppose," he said in the musical voice that made one forget his blinking eyes, "I don't suppose you will need me?"

"Certainly not," was the polite reply, "because you were not here when the thing happened—that is, we wont need you unless you can throw any light upon the cause of the murder."

Walters shook his head mournfully.

"No, not at all. Although I—I understand that Matlack received a threatening letter yesterday."

"Oh, yes," was the confident reply, "we know all about that. In fact, our young friend here admits that he sent such a letter."

AT these words Gibbons steadied himself against the desk near where he was standing, but said nothing. Walters looked at him for the first time. The thin lips became almost benevolent.

"You don't look like a desperate character," he said kindly, "and I hope you may be able to clear yourself."

"Well, somebody murdered Matlack," blurted Hylan.

"Quite so, young man, quite so; but let us avoid hasty judgments."

The red-mustached one did not know whether to feel flattered at being addressed as a youth, or to become angry at the intimation of not knowing his business, and by the time he had thought it all over, it was too late to make a fitting retort.

A minute later Hylan started from the room with the prisoner, and as they reached the outer door, Gibbons felt some one plucking at his sleeve of his coat. He turned and saw the white face of Norma Bright.

"I—I just wanted to say," she whispered brokenly, "that I don't believe you did it."

The unbidden tears came to his eyes.

"Thank God for your faith!" he replied hoarsely, and was whisked away to the waiting patrol-wagon.

THE story of the days that followed was told in great detail in the daily newspapers. It was a celebrated case, and the strange phases of it were only rivaled by the determination of the police-department to make Richard Gibbons a warning to all evil-doers. Curley did all he could to help his friend, but as he said bitterly, the cards were stacked against him.

One of the surprises of the trial was the appearance of W. H. Brewster in the case. He was the leading criminal lawyer at that bar, and everybody declared Gibbons was lucky to get such an advocate. He thought so too, but his brain was in such a whirl during those days that he did not quite realize how Brewster had been induced to take his defense. The first thing he remembered was the great lawyer coming to him with the statement that he was interested and would do all in his power to vindicate him. But when Gibbons repeated to the lawyer the exact story he had given to the District Attorney, and said that was all he had to tell, even the great Brewster was nonplussed. He stroked his broad chin reflectively.

"If you had killed him and entered a plea of self-defense, your chances would be better with a jury than by making a vague and unsubstantiated denial."

"But I didn't kill him," retorted Gibbons, "so there's no use talking like that."

Just before the case came to trial, Curley called on the lawyer.

"I've got something here that I've hesitated to show you before," he said, and produced the card with the Scriptural quotation which he had found on the floor of the private office of J. B. Matlack.

W. H. Brewster looked at it for some moments.

"It's interesting," he said, "but it doesn't prove anything."

"You—you couldn't use it in the defense?" asked Curley.

"Not unless I wanted the judge and the jury to laugh at me. The case is bad enough without introducing a comic element."

The trial only lasted two days—a short time for a murder-trial. Everybody conceded that W. H. Brewster made the effort of his life in his closing speech to the jury. He made an astonishing request to these twelve men, good and true. He asked them to ignore the evidence and to acquit Gibbons on the ground that it was against reason and common sense for him to have murdered Matlack.

The jurymen hung on his words; they strained their ears not to lose a single syllable of that magnificent forensic effort; they restrained themselves only by a great effort from openly applauding him—and then they went out and promptly convicted his client of murder in the first degree.

It reminded Curley of those famous surgical cases where the operation is always a complete success—and the patient dies.

The judge made a long-winded charge to the jury in which he called attention to the need of protecting society from violence. Everybody seemed to apologize to Gibbons. Everybody seemed to have a wee doubt about his guilt. But the remorseless machinery of the law went on to the bitter end. The judge contributed the first stroke when he sentenced Gibbons to death, a sentence which the Governor, who was secretly opposed to capital punishment, was afterward persuaded to commute to life imprisonment.

Gibbons sat dazed through it all. It was only when the great iron-studded door of the prison clanged behind him that he awoke. His first thought was: "Why didn't I establish my innocence?" After that, something in the back of his head kept saying:

"With thirty days in the world, you could redeem your name and find the real murderer of J. B. Matlack."

## CHAPTER IV

### The Governor Frowns

GOVERNOR WAYNE sat in the red plush, high-backed chair of state gorgeously embellished with the coat-of-arms of the commonwealth and frowned upon Curley, of the *Chronicle*, with a severity which he rarely assumed except in his most official moments.

Curley was like the Irishman's flea. When you thought you had him, he wasn't there. He was the most obiquitous, the most unconventional and the most uncompromising man to be met in a month of Sundays. He had the reddest hair, the bluest eyes, the largest freckles, the broadest smile and the most pugnacious disposition of any man in the newspaper game. He was speaking crisply now:

"THERE'S a man in the State penitentiary — Richard Gibbons — who has been falsely accused and wrongfully convicted of murder. He is satisfied—and so am I—that if you will release him on parole for thirty days so he can prove his innocence. I'm asking you to do this because I'm certain that it's going to be in the interest of justice. And to prove that we mean business, Mr. Catlin, here, is willing to put up a bond of one hundred thousand dollars that the young man will return to the warden of the penitentiary at the end of the thirty days, either with his innocence established, or prepared to serve out the sentence which has been given him. Am I right, boss?"

Henry Catlin, multimillionaire, newspaper proprietor and philanthropist, nodded.

"And Governor," pursued Curley, with a reversion to the formalities, "Gibbons was convicted entirely on circumstantial evidence. You know that?"

"Yes," agreed the Governor, "and as a lawyer and a former judge, I know that circumstantial evidence is the most convincing kind of evidence."

"But see here," cried the young man, pulling a typewritten document from his pocket. "I have a list of fifty cases where men have been convicted upon circumstantial evidence and afterward found to be entirely innocent. I can tell you of a dozen cases where they have been executed for murder, and their supposed victims have afterward appeared in the flesh, alive and well. And—"

"One moment!" interrupted the Governor. "That might have been possible in the old days, but it's not possible now. You ought to know that now the first essential in a murder trial is to prove that a murder has been committed."

"I'll concede that there has been a murder in this case," replied Curley, "but

I insist that Dick Gibbons never murdered Old Man Matlack. He's not the murdering kind."

The Governor sighed with the air of one who listens to an opinionated child.

"My friends," he said, speaking slowly and weighing the effect of each word, "you seem to rest your whole argument on the fact that some men have been wrongly convicted on circumstantial evidence, and for that reason your friend Richard Gibbons must be innocent."

"I didn't put it that way," cried Curley impulsively, "I said—"

"Now, now," commanded the Governor, checking him with a wave of the hand, "just let me finish. I admit that some men may have been wrongfully convicted, but for every such case I'll wager that there have been thousands fairly convicted by circumstantial evidence. It is indispensable to the very existence of society that juries should act on that kind of evidence. The courts have decided again and again that any fact which supplies a motive for an act, or which constitutes preparation for it, may be used in establishing the guilt of a defendant. You can't get inside a man's soul to prove his motives, but you can infer what they are from certain sets of facts. If he writes a letter or makes a threat—"

"As in the Gibbons case," suggested Catlin.

"Yes," said the Governor quickly, "as in the Gibbons case—why, it is reasonable to infer that he has carried out his threat. I'm not advancing any new theory when I tell you that circumstantial evidence is highly regarded, because while individuals may lie and commit perjury, actual circumstances rarely deceive."

"It depends on how the circumstances are linked together," retorted Curley. "They say the devil can quote Scripture to suit his own purposes, and I say that clever detectives and cleverer prosecutors can link facts in a way to get convictions."

"Well, gentlemen," interposed Henry Catlin, "we don't seem to be getting very far in this matter."

"You're right," responded the Governor briskly. "And if you can give me any new evidence to prove that Gibbons has been wrongfully convicted, I'll consider pardoning him."

"If we had such evidence," replied Curley, "we could go into court and upset the conviction. What we ask is that you give Gibbons his liberty for thirty days so that he can go and get the evidence himself."

"How do you know he can get it?"

"Well," said the reporter with his first show of hesitation, "I—I just feel that he can get it."

"You must have something to work on?" suggested the Governor.

"We have—two points."

"What are they?"

"If I were to tell you, I'm afraid you'd laugh at me."

"Not at all. This business is too serious for merriment."

"Well," said the young man slowly, "I found a card in the private office of J. B. Matlack on which was scribbled, in his handwriting, the words: 'God loveth a cheerful giver.'"

"What is the other?"

"The other is that the weapon was never found. It should have been, to prove murder."

"Why didn't you bring out these points at the trial?"

"Because the jury would have sneered at them—as you are doing."

WAYNE'S face flushed. "You take too much for granted, young man. But if you think that either of these clues, or both of them, are worth anything, why don't you turn them over to the police-department?"

Curley gave a gesture of despair.

"It would be useless. The police take the line of least resistance. They've already convicted him. A bird in the hand's worth two in the bush. It's against human nature to think they would try to prove themselves wrong. I tell you, Governor, Gibbons is innocent. He's a victim of your theory of circumstantial evidence. We've had a series of unpunished murders, and when the police had a chance of convicting this man, they seized it like a hungry dog grabbing a bone. He was railroaded—legally railroaded—as a sop to public sentiment."

"I believe you think that."

"I know it—in my heart. Why should a man like Dick Gibbons commit murder? Here's a young lawyer with an assured income spending time and money fighting the battles of the poor. He's made speeches against swollen fortunes. To some people that stamps him as a radical, a dangerous character. But in reality he is one of the most law-abiding men in the

State. Only, he's filled with an intense desire to help people."

Curley pointed a long, lean finger at the coat-of-arms of the State on the high back of the chair in which the Governor was seated.

"We boast of virtue, liberty and independence," he declared, "but we belie all of these things when we imprison an innocent man!"

John Wayne gave a sigh as if to say that this young man was impossible. Henry Catlin seized the opportunity.

"Come, Governor, give the boy a chance. I'm willing to risk my money on his innocence."

"Sure," was the tired reply, "you're willing to spend the money for a sensation for your newspaper."

"Why not?" was the retort. "If we can prove his innocence, we're entitled to the sensation. Don't you think so?"

"Yes, but suppose you fail?"

"I don't think we'll fail; but if we do, I'm content to lose the money. I'm satisfied to gamble on Curley's judgment."

"I'm sorry," retorted the Governor. "but I'm not here to conduct a legal lottery. I'm here to see that the laws are enforced. There's nothing in the statutes that would let me grant your request. If you can give me any new evidence to show that the jury erred, I'll not only release him for thirty days—I'll grant him a free pardon."

"Is that final?"

"Absolutely! If I said anything else, I wouldn't be fit to hold my job."

Without another word Catlin and Curley left the room. Fifteen minutes later they were in a train speeding away from the seat of the State government. Looking from the car window, they beheld the sun glistening upon the bronzed dome of the Capitol. Curley stared at it gloomily, as he wondered how he could tell Gibbons of his failure. But in spite of his pessimism, the case was to take a turn of which even in his wildest moments he had never conceived to be possible.

## CHAPTER V

### Gibbons Takes a Ride

WHILE Curley and Catlin were pleading with the Governor for the parole which was not to be granted, Richard Gibbons was vainly trying to adjust himself to the position of a favored convict in the penitentiary. He had been in the institution for less than a fortnight, but already he was feeling the effects of his forced confinement. When the great iron gates swung open and he passed behind the massive gray walls, he felt that he was leaving hope behind. But he was young, and before the evening of the second day he was mentally crying out against the injustice of it and resolving that he would not submit. He went through the usual preliminaries, was given a bath and a physical examination, clothed in the jacket and trousers of drill which had taken the place of the striped suit in that institution, was assigned to a cell and finally relinquished the name of Richard Gibbons and became Convict Number 8670.

IT had the air of dreadful unreality, but he was so worn mentally and physically that when he lay down on the narrow cot in the stuffy cell on the night of the first day, he slept as soundly as though he were on his own bed in his own comfortable apartment. But he awakened to the truth, and shuddered as the little panel in the door of his cell was opened, and a can of coffee and several thick slices of unbuttered bread were shoved through the inclosure for his first prison breakfast. Later in the day he obtained his initial look at his new and unwelcome home. Two tiers of cells lined the corridor, which was one of a dozen similar corridors that radiated from a hub like the spokes of a wheel. In the rear of his cell was a "garden" a few feet in depth, grimly surrounded by high stone walls from the top of which came the only ray of sunlight that was permitted to those who were undergoing solitary confinement. Fortunately the humane warden did not interpret this solitary confinement literally, and in consequence most of the prisoners were permitted certain hours of recreation in the spaces between the cell corridors and the outer walls of the prison.

Gibbons was assigned to clerical work on the prison books and regarded as an asset by the authorities. In fact, he was soon looked upon in the light of a trusty. Once a day he went out into the prison yard and swept up the pavement and gathered the rubbish, which was carried away in an iron-covered wagon that called every morning. He was engaged in this

work when he received the message from Curley saying that the Governor had refused to grant him the parole upon which the enthusiastic young newspaperman had so ardently counted. Gibbons was not disappointed, because he knew enough about law to realize its improbability. But he was depressed, nevertheless, and a wave of revolt swept through his being.

In that moment he resolved to escape from prison at any cost.

THE only question was how to accomplish this seemingly impossible thing. He understood the difficulties of such an adventure. In spite of the liberties given him, he was well guarded. It is true that he was in the open yard, but there were many things which stood between him and liberty. In the first place, there were two great iron gates that would have to be passed before he could reach freedom. Each of these gates was heavily guarded, and they were only opened to those who had the right to enter and depart. Again, there were four high towers, one on each corner of the prison, and in each one of these was an armed guard whose business was to keep constant watch on the prisoners. The heavy outer walls of the penitentiary were thirty feet high, and even if a man succeeded in scaling the heights, he was likely to plunge to death in the drop to the street on the other side of the wall.

Gibbons returned to his cell that night with a heavy heart. The only thing that kept him from utter despair was the thought that men had escaped from that living death before—and what man had done, man could do. He knew of a sailor who had rigged up a contrivance and scaled the great wall; but agile as Gibbons himself was, that means of escape was out of the question. Even if he could attempt such a feat, discovery might mean death. Again he remembered the forger who had signed his own order for release by counterfeiting the signature of the Governor, but that was an achievement not likely to be successfully played a second time upon the watchful warden. The crude method of striking down his keeper and making a dash for liberty was at once dismissed as least likely to succeed. He lay awake all that night thinking—and when the first tiny streak of dawn penetrated the dark cell, he had found the way.

What was virtually impossible by force he had resolved to accomplish by strategy.

He ate the prison fare that morning with something like relish in the belief that it would be the last meal he would take in his living tomb. Soon after that he found himself in the yard, sweeping up the dead leaves and rubbish into piles to be thrown into the metal-covered cart when it should appear. His companion that morning was a man who had already served ten years and had a life sentence ahead of him. He looked at the fellow with compassion. He had the faded eyes of a harmless animal. He was a hopeless, helpless creature with nothing to live for, nothing to look forward to and nothing to expect except the same monotonous, treadmill existence day after day and year after year. Would he himself ever look like that? Would he ever have the feeling that he did not care whether he lived or died? Already the ordeal through which he had passed made him feel ten years older. Sooner death than life imprisonment!

As this thought went through his mind, some one tapped him on the shoulder. His heart gave a startled plunge as he turned and faced the warden. Had this man read his thoughts? He was immediately reassured as he faced the executive of the prison. The man was smiling at him in the most friendly manner.

"Well," said the warden, "are they treating you all right? I hope so, because we count on your being one of our best prisoners. We'll try to make it as pleasant here as the law allows."

The blood rushed to the face of the young lawyer. His twitching lips parted, and he exclaimed impulsively:

"The law! God knows the law has done enough for me. There's no justice in keeping me in this place. But—but you'll have to excuse me. I'm not finding any fault with you."

THE warden patted him on the shoulder and passed on. He was used to such claims, and they made no impression upon him. If he were to believe the prisoners, half of them were falsely accused. Gibbons was alarmed at his outbreak. Would the warden suspect anything? He regained his composure, and then had a sense of regret at the fact that he was compelled to abuse the confidence of this decent prison keeper. But he was entitled to his liberty, no matter who might suffer. And at that moment a guard came up to an-

nounce that the rubbish-wagon was not coming that morning. The heart of the prisoner was like lead.

"Number 8670," said the attendant, "you go back to your cell, but come back late this afternoon and help to load the wagon."

FOR the rest of the day he was in a fever of expectancy. When he received the usual allowance of food at the noon hour, he had to force himself to eat. If he left anything, they might send the prison doctor to examine him, and that would interfere with his plans. Would they fail? That was the question he asked himself, not once but a dozen times. . . . . The hour finally came when he was told to go into the yard again. The team had not yet come, and Gibbons and the man with the faded, harmless eyes were set about doing odd tasks that filled the time. It was almost dark when the wagon arrived, the iron cover clattering as the vehicle rumbled over the cobbled roadway leading to where the two men were waiting. The keeper and the driver of the team engaged in a good-natured quarrel over the delay in hauling away the rubbish. Gibbons watched them both out of half-closed eyes, and wondered how he would make out in a physical encounter with the pair. In the meantime the prisoner with the harmless eyes was sent back to his cell.

"Here, you," called the keeper to Gibbons, "get to work and shovel this stuff in the wagon if you're not afraid it'll break your precious back. There's no need for two of you. This isn't a Navy Yard job."

He laughed at his own wit, and Gibbons joined in the merriment, much to the man's satisfaction. He was in such a hysterical state at that moment that he would have laughed at anything. While he worked feverishly, the driver and the guard continued taunting one another. Presently Gibbons finished his task. The men were some distance away, still laughing and talking. The supreme moment had arrived. Prisoner 8670 looked about him apprehensively. No one was in sight except the driver and the guard. The wagon was so located that the far side could not be seen from the high towers. Noiselessly Gibbons placed his foot on the hub of the wagon and climbed up the side. He paused for a second. No one was looking, and with the stealthiness of a panther he slipped down amid the rubbish. Then he half arose and quietly closed the iron lid of the wagon. He lay there breathing heavily. The next moment he could hear the driver clucking to his horses and then the derisive chuckle of the guard:

"Number 8670 has gone back to his cell —he's as proud as the devil. Thinks this work is not good enough for a gentleman. Queer world we live in."

There was an answering laugh from the driver, and then the wagon rattled on toward the entrance of the prison. In those few moments Gibbons managed to squirm to the bottom of the vehicle and to cover himself with dead leaves and rubbish. He heard the big interior doors of the prison open and close, and then the wagon halted, and he knew he was in the inclosure between the inner and the outer doors. He was as much a prisoner as ever. All depended now upon passing that outside gate. He knew what was to follow. The keeper detailed at the gate mounted the side of the wagon and lifted the iron lid. Gibbons could feel his heart beating. The man poked a long rod into the rubbish in a perfunctory way. It barely grazed the side of his foot.

"All right," grunted the guard, and then the outer door was opened and the team passed into the street—and to liberty.

## CHAPTER VI

### Gibbons Sees Stars

LYING in the bottom of that wagon, Gibbons thought with a clearness he had scarcely known before. He knew that while he was outside of the prison, he was by no means free from capture. A single false move might result in his rearrest, and then his last state would be worse than his first. He remained very still, but his mind was working rapidly and clearly. He could picture the wagon rolling through the gateway, and on his mind was reprinted a mental image of the old gray walls, almost hidden from view by the young climbing ivy. He sighed as he thought of the trick he had been forced to play on the kindly warden, and he laughed at the certain discomfiture of the talkative and cocksure guard who had permitted him to escape almost from beneath his eyes.

From the rumbling of the wagon he knew that it was going fast, and he estimated that they were now at least a mile from the prison. It was most urgent that

he should get out of his hiding-place and make a dash for real liberty. The alarm might be given at the prison at any moment, and then the pursuit would begin. They knew the destination of the rubbish-cart and would be certain to follow it quickly. The thought made him bite his lips in perplexity. He had made his plans for getting out of the prison with great precision, but had given no thoughts to his future movements. What should he do now? Creep out of his hole and take his chances upon a physical encounter with the driver? That would not be desirable. A crowd would be attracted, and his suit of blue drill would betray him.

At that point the wagon struck a rut in the street, and Gibbons bounced so high that he almost touched the iron lid. He could hear the driver swearing, and a few minutes later felt the team draw up near the curb and halt. From the motion which followed, he concluded that the driver had alighted and was making a call in the neighborhood. Now, the fugitive realized, his opportunity had arrived. He must act quickly. He straightened himself out slowly and lifted the iron cover of the wagon with great care. It was dark, but the sky was studded with stars, and for a moment he imagined he had emerged into fairyland.

He was in a residential section, and fortunately there were but few persons in sight. The driver of the wagon was not to be seen, and Gibbons climbed out and cautiously made his way to the sidewalk. He was stiff from being in a cramped position so long, but he knew that if necessary, he could make a swift run for liberty. The thing that bothered him was his uniform. It was not as conspicuous as the old-time prison stripes, but it would be recognized by the initiated. While this thought was in his mind, he heard shouts in the distance. He walked out to the middle of the street, and far away he could discern several excited men in their shirt-sleeves. Had he been followed so quickly? Everything pointed to a pursuit. If he was found there he would be caught. The thought was intolerable. He stood for a few seconds with tight lips and rigid face. He would die before he permitted himself to be taken back to prison!

AT that psychological moment an automobile came dashing down the street. It was going at a murderous rate of speed, but the driver, seeing him standing in his pathway, slowed up for a moment, and in that moment Gibbons made a running leap, landed on the running-board, and then hurled himself into the tonneau of the automobile. The driver turned to him with a string of oaths.

"What the devil do you mean by that?" he concluded with blazing eyes.

BUT he was too busy with the flying machine to do anything, and the automobile kept on its way at what must have been a mile a minute. In the brief interval between his jump and his landing in the bottom of the car, the acute hearing of Gibbons caught one significant sentence from the rapidly receding crowd. It was *"Stop thief!"* The meaning of it was apparent. The fellow had stolen the machine and was being pursued by indignant citizens. Even in his excitement, Gibbons could not resist an ironical laugh. Fate had played one of its most fantastic tricks. Here he was, a jailbird, escaping in a stolen car. At first the thought tickled his fancy, but after a few moments of sober thought he wondered if he had not jumped from the frying-pan into the fire.

In one of the side-streets he might have crept out of danger, but now he was bound to be pursued. Would he be caught? At first he thought such an ending of his adventure quite likely, but one look at the almost maniacal face of the driver satisfied him that that speed-demon would die before he would submit to arrest. Already the pursuers were many blocks behind, and presently Gibbons realized that they were in the outskirts of the city. Although the electric arcs on either side of the road were at least five hundred feet apart, they appeared like so many winking lights to the half-dazed man in the automobile. The belief that they were out of the danger-zone prompted him to address a word of warning to the reckless driver.

"If you're not careful," he ventured to say, "you'll send both of us into Kingdom Come."

"How'd you like to keep your trap shut!" came the sneering retort. "I didn't invite you in this car, and if you don't keep quiet, I'll dump you in the road."

Gibbons subsided. He had no desire to quarrel with this man. Besides, he was being carried far away from the prison. He felt a certain sense of security that he had not experienced since that fateful mo-

ment when he was arrested on the charge of having murdered J. B. Matlack. A drowsy warmth began to steal over him, and he lay back on the cushion with a feeling of luxurious ease. The car was running smoothly, and the purring sound of the engine had a tendency to lull him to sleep. He looked lazily at the sky, and the sight of the frosty stars only added to his contentment. After all, life was pleasant and this was a glorious world. They were in a park now, and were running along the edge of the river. The dark waters reflected the shining automobile as it speeded along with the rapidity of an express-train. He had half a notion to urge the driver to slacken his gait, but he reconsidered and closed his eyes and was happy.

Suddenly, without the faintest warning, he felt a terrific crash. In a subconscious sort of way he imagined that he was floating in mid-air. Then he saw numbers of glittering stars—and then darkness.

GIBBONS never knew how long he lay there, but when he awoke, he gazed upon chaos. He was on the wet ground, and a short distance away was the remains of the wrecked car. He arose with difficulty, but was glad to find that he could stand on his feet. Evidently there were no broken bones. That was something to be thankful for.

He felt his way around the wreckage, but could not find any trace of the speed-demon who had caused this havoc. A great tree in the foreground told the story. The maniacal driver had crashed into it at full speed with the usual results. What had become of him was another story. Possibly he had been hurled into the muddy waters. Indeed, all of the signs indicated that such was the case.

Gibbons' first thought was of rendering assistance to the man who had given him the chance to outwit his pursuers. But what could he do? The sluggish stream pursued its monotonous way, as it had for countless years, regardless of the tragedies that might lurk beneath its peaceful-looking surface.

A little rivulet of blood streaming down his right cheek aroused him to the need of looking after himself. He did not know how much time had elapsed between the moment of the accident and his regaining of consciousness, but he felt sure that the pursuit would be continued, and that if he did not get away, he would be in danger. His clothing was torn and muddy. To appear in the city in that guise would surely subject him to suspicion.

He stood meditating for a few moments, and in that time was born the big idea. He looked in the body of the wrecked car and he found a linen duster and an automobile cap. It was but the work of a moment to divest himself of the prison jacket of blue and to put on the duster in its place. The headpiece fit him well enough. After that he took his prison cap and the jacket of blue drill and threw them into the mud on the bank of the river. That was circumstantial evidence which should be highly satisfactory to the authorities who were so ready to accept that kind of evidence when he was on trial for his life.

He was familiar with the park. He had traversed its curving roads many a time and could find his way in the dark without difficulty. It was essential that he should get away from the scene of the accident in the shortest possible time; and taking a short-cut, he plunged into the woods in a direction that would lead him back to the city. At times he half ran in order to get out as soon as possible. The feeling of ease and contentment he had felt in the automobile was gone, and in its place was a sense of apprehension. He imagined men behind the trees, and it was with a gasp of relief that he finally beheld the lights of the city.

WITH the instinct of a homing-pigeon, Gibbons turned in the direction of the small hotel where Robert Curley had his apartments. Gibbons did not even have street-car fare, and if he had, would have hesitated about using such a conveyance. His bruised and disheveled appearance was against him. His one hope was his friend, the star reporter of the *Chronicle*. Could he slip into the house without being observed? And would Curley be at home These were questions that would have to be answered by the goddess of chance.

Before he had gone half the distance a drizzling rain began to fall. This was disagreeable enough, but it was also an advantage, because the few pedestrians on the street at that hour hurried by without giving the fugitive a glance. The longest journey has its end, and Gibbons finally reached his destination. He knew that

Curley had rooms on the fifth floor of the building; standing on the opposite side of the street, he counted the floors, and to his gratification discovered that Curley's room was lighted. He entered the house and began to climb the stairs laboriously. It was too risky to use the elevator. His limbs ached and he felt dizzy, but the thought that he was nearing his goal kept him from a total collapse.

Presently he reached the fifth floor and made his way unsteadily toward Curley's room. He paused a moment before knocking. Suppose some one were with Curley? That might send all of his carefully laid plans toppling over like a house of cards. But he had to take this chance as he had already taken other chances. He lifted a trembling hand and tapped on the door. There was a shuffling sound from within, and then the door was thrown open. Bob Curley stood there framed in a square of light. He looked as if he had been asleep, and he glanced at his visitor uncertainly.

"Mr. Curley," mumbled the newcomer.

"Yes; walk in!" While he spoke, the journalist moved aside to admit the other, and closed the door. The fugitive was in the center of the room by this time, and he gave a nervous, trembling laugh.

"Don't you know me, Bob?" he asked.

Curley gave one quick, penetrating look.

"Dick Gibbons!" he gasped; and then in the same breath, "In God's name, how did you get here?"

"Walked most of the way," he said with a silly smile.

BUT then the brightly lighted room began to go round, and the figures on the wall-paper seemed to be mocking him. He staggered and would have fallen if Curley had not caught him.

"I'm a blockhead," muttered the newspaperman, "asking you questions in your condition."

Quickly he got the exhausted man to a comfortable armchair, and brought a contraband bottle of sherry from some mysterious recess and from a sideboard came sandwiches. In a little while Gibbons' physical weakness passed, and the color began to come to the face of the fugitive. He told his story in sharp, quick sentences, and when he had concluded, said:

"I suppose I had a hard cheek to come to your quarters."

"Cheek! Why, you blooming idiot, it was the only place to come. I'll have to fix up my box couch and make you comfortable for the night."

"For the night is correct," echoed Gibbons, "because I'll have to look up other quarters in the morning."

"Do you intend to stay in this burg?"

"Sure—the safest place for a man to hide himself is in a city of two or three million people. Besides, I've got to stay in this town to establish my innocence."

"You're still bent on that, eh?"

"More than ever. I'm not going to remain a hunted criminal for the rest of my days."

"Good!" cried Curley with a contagious laugh. "And you can count on me to work with you to the finish. But what's the matter with making this your headquarters?"

Gibbons shook his head.

"It wouldn't do at all. If the police ever get after me, it would be the first place they'd look."

"HAVE your own way—you usually do. Now I'm going to compel you to quit talking and take a good sleep. Meantime, is there anything else I can do for you?"

Gibbons hesitated for a moment. Then he spoke unsteadily.

"I don't know what the newspapers are going to say about me to-morrow, but I'd be willing to bet that I'll wake up to find myself famous—or infamous. I don't care anything about that. There are mighty few people in the world interested in my fate. But—but—there's one little lady I'd like to have reassured. Bob, could you, by any means, let Norma Bright know that I'm alive and well, and that everything's going to turn out all right in the end?"

"So that's the way the wind blows!" laughed Curley. "I might have known it. You can bet your boots I'll see her tonight, and tell her not to believe anything she reads in the newspapers."

"I wouldn't make it quite so sweeping."

"Well, I will. I haven't been at the office today, and so I missed the news of your sensational escape. Gee, but wouldn't the boys be sore if they knew what a big scoop I've got locked up in my rooms! Gibbons, you old codger, don't you see you're going to make me throw down my own paper? But you can bet if you succeed in doing what you've set out to do, the *Chronicle* will have the biggest scoop in its history."

There was moisture in Gibbons' eyes.

"Bob," he said huskily, "it's worth living if only to have a friend like you!"

## CHAPTER VII

### Dead to the World

ON the morning after his sensational escape from prison, Richard Gibbons sat in an armchair in the Curley apartments and enjoyed the extreme luxury of reading his own obituary in the papers.

His plans had succeeded better than he hoped for, because he was now officially dead to the world. The warden of the penitentiary and the District Attorney would not admit this—they never admitted anything; but when all of the newspapers unite in an agreement that a man is drowned, why, he must be drowned. It is true that the river had been dragged in a vain search for the bodies of Gibbons and the speed-fiend, but the experts easily demonstrated that they could have floated out to sea on the early morning tide. The fact that there was just the faintest element of doubt made the case interesting without destroying the settled public belief that Richard Gibbons was as dead as the proverbial door-nail.

Most of the newspapers published diagrams of the scene of the accident, and Gibbons enjoyed the emotion of examining the exact spot on the river-bank whence he had plunged into the icy waters. Curiously enough, it was the *Chronicle* which published this exclusive bit of information, and Curley groaned as he remembered that his love for Gibbons and the common dictates of humanity might compel him to condemn his own paper to grope its way in darkness for weeks to come, in spite of the fact that "Exhibit A" was sharing his apartment with him.

One fact the reporters were not slow to seize was the mystery which had enshrouded the two great events of Gibbons' life. He had been convicted of murder on circumstantial evidence. Was he really guilty? Now he had disappeared as mysteriously as though he had been swallowed up by the earth. Everything pointed to his death in the river. But was he really dead? In spite of the interrogation-marks which followed the two queries, one laid down the newspaper with the conviction that he was guilty of the murder of Matlack and that he was dead.

The *Chronicle* went so far as to print a sympathetic editorial deploring the premature death of a young man with such a promising future. The intimation was given that he was a victim of circumstances over which he had no control, and the Governor was gently chided for not having given him a chance to prove his innocence. His work in the movement for the better housing of the poor was highly lauded, and the prediction made that if he had been spared he might have vindicated himself and made his mark in the world.

Gibbons laid the paper aside with a gesture of discouragement. It was the old story of flowers and praise after death. It was a fine thing to speak well of the dead—how much finer it would be to speak well of the living!

Yet after all he had cause to be grateful. Dead, but still alive; defeated, and yet able to try again! He drew Curley's dressing-gown more securely about him and looked in the mirror.

He did not know himself. That startled and yet reassured him. It meant comparative safety. In the long hours of the night, while they sat and smoked and chatted, Curley had expounded to him the philosophy of fooling the other fellow. Magicians and sleight-of-hand men had it at their finger-tips. Be yourself and yet seem different. Curley was opposed to disguise in the ordinary meaning of the term. He would let nature do its part. Thus, when Gibbons shaved that morning,—and it was the first time a razor had touched his face in four days,—the reporter made him block out a mustache and an imperial. Already the results were surprising—how could they be otherwise to a man who had been smooth-shaven all the days of his life?

THE fugitive looked in the glass again and was shocked at the change that had come about since the day when he stood above the bleeding body of Matlack. The ordeal through which he had passed had added ten years to his appearance. His once coal-black hair was streaked with gray, and there were suspicious lines in his forehead that resembled wrinkles. All of this fitted in with his purpose, but for one heart-breaking moment he did not know whether to be glad or sorry. While he stood there, he heard Curley coming up the stairway, whistling a refrain from the latest musical show. The door opened, and the journalist came in carrying a big

bundle. He tossed it onto the bed.

"Well," he cried, "and how is my ghostly friend by this time?"

"Fine and dandy," replied Gibbons; "but did you do—"

"Sure," interrupted Curley; "the young woman knows all about it. At the risk of scaring her to death, I let her know that the chap who was supposed to be at the bottom of the river was brazenly walking about in my best dressing-gown. She'll be discretion itself, and if you're very, very good, you may have the chance to talk to her in a day or so."

Gibbons' black eyes glistened with delight.

"Bob, I'm so grateful that I don't know what to say. I—"

"Don't try," interrupted the journalist, "but open this package and see if that suit of clothes will fit your manly form."

QUICKLY the paper was torn off and the clothing spread on the bed. It was a light brown pattern. Gibbons' face was a puzzle.

"It's all right, but I never wore anything like that. I've always had black or blue cloth."

"Then it's a success," laughed Curley; "it's different—that's what we're after."

Five minutes later Gibbons was attired in his new suit. It was a fair fit, and when he put on a pair of russet shoes and a brown hat, he declared, as he looked in the mirror, that he didn't know himself. He protested against wearing a bow tie on the ground that he was accustomed to a four-in-hand, but Curley soon demonstrated that that was the precise reason why he should do as he was told.

"You'll pass in a crowd," concluded the newspaperman, "but you must stay in the background as much as possible."

"I understand, and I wont expose myself unnecessarily."

"The truth of the matter," said Curley, "is that a lot of people in this world resemble one another. The fact that you're officially dead is going to help you very much. Otherwise this mild disguise might not work."

Gibbons nodded.

"Now," he said, "I must find a new home. I would not only be in danger, but I'd expose you to danger."

"I guess you're right," conceded the journalist, "so we'll take a taxicab and go house-hunting."

Gibbons had already prepared a list of possible apartments, and so the task was greatly simplified. The most promising suite was in an old house fronting on Washington Square. They drove there and found two rooms and a bath on the second floor that filled the bill to perfection. A motherly old lady, who lived on the first floor, pointed out the advantages of the place. During their talk she was called to the front door, and the two men took advantage of her temporary absence to discuss finances. Gibbons rightly concluded that it would be dangerous to draw checks, especially as he was able to work an arrangement with Curley by which all his needs would be cared for during the next four weeks. On the return of the landlady the fugitive announced his decision.

"The rooms are just what I want, and if it's satisfactory to you, I'll take possession at once."

He handed her the first month's rent in advance, and the sight of the money brought a reassuring smile to her chubby face.

"Thank you, sir," she said, "and now, if you please, what is the name?"

Gibbons cast a panic-stricken glance in the direction of his friend. In their arrangements for the new life he had been provided with everything except a new name. But he quickly recovered his self-possession. He thought furiously. At the moment he happened to look at a row of books on a shelf in the corner of the room. They were the works of Charles Dickens. The title of one of them caught the eager eye of the young man. With a slight modification it would answer his purpose. He turned to the landlady with an engaging smile.

"Oh, didn't I tell you my name? Well, I sha'n't be offended if you call me Edward Drood."

The landlady laughed her appreciation. Such a witty young man; and not bad-looking, either. As she left the room, Curley turned to his friend.

"I guess you'll do, old man. But it just goes to prove that you've got to expect the unexpected at every turn."

Gibbons nodded.

"You're right, but now that everything's settled, I've got to get down to work."

"I know that very well, but tonight you're going to take dinner with me at Dooner's. You'll meet an old friend there who's going to help us."

"Who's the friend? You know there's such a thing as making it embarrassing for dead men."

"Never mind that—meet me there at seven sharp."

"All right, man of mystery," laughed Gibbons, "I'll be on hand at the appointed time."

AFTER Curley's departure the "dead man" sat at the window and feasted his eyes on the little park which fronted his apartments. It was delightful—a bit of country in the heart of a crowded city. He sat there for a long time thinking until the deepening shadows reminded him that it was time to keep his engagement with Curley.

A few minutes later, as he was passing through the park on his way to Dooner's, he noted a familiar figure seated on a bench. It was Jim Hylan. There was no mistaking the short figure and the bristling mustache. For an instant Gibbons was tempted to turn back. But the man was looking at him, and if he hesitated, all might be lost. He continued without changing his gait. As he neared the detective, his confidence increased. Something tempted him to make a further test. When he was opposite Hylan, he pulled out his case and selecting a cigarette, half paused as he lighted it. The man on the bench gave him the most casual of glances and then looked in another direction.

Gibbons felt a thrill of satisfaction. Jim Hylan had not recognized him.

## CHAPTER VIII

### Scraps of Paper

WHEN Gibbons reached Dooner's, he found Curley waiting for him at the door. The journalist led him through a labyrinth of linen-covered tables back to a secluded corner behind a mass of ferns. In the dim light Gibbons perceived some one seated at a table arranged for three.

"Why, Miss Bright," he exclaimed, fairly beaming upon the girl, "this is delightfully unexpected!"

In a moment they were shaking hands across the table with a heartiness that threatened to imperil the vase of roses which occupied the center of the board. Curley grinned down at them with the good nature of a beardless Santa Claus, and when the greetings threatened to become too prolonged, growled:

"Sit down, and give the waiter a chance to prove that this place deserves its reputation for first-class cooking."

"What's the big idea?" demanded Gibbons with mock severity.

"Primarily," replied Curley, looking about him cautiously before speaking, "it's a freedom-party in your honor. Also it's the first meeting of the board of strategy which is to devise ways and means for clearing the honor of a very promising young man."

It was a pleasant party, although necessarily somewhat subdued, and Gibbons marked it down in his mental calendar as one of the red-letter days of his life. It was not until the table had been cleared, the check paid and they were left undisturbed that the serious business of the occasion was introduced. Curley turned to Gibbons:

"To start with, we haven't been idle during your—your enforced absence. The Matlack offices have been closed since his death, but I've managed to get into them and make another careful examination of his private room. I've discovered a few things, but instead of throwing light on the mystery, they only help to deepen it. For instance, I'm certain that two shots were fired, one that went wide of the mark and the other that killed Matlack. And the perplexing part of the business is that both of them seem to have been fired straight from the public office into the private room of Mr. Matlack."

"Indicating," remarked Gibbons, "that I must have fired them as I entered the room!"

Curley bowed his head solemnly.

"That's the size of it," he said; "and if the prosecution had known of this, it would only have served to clinch your guilt."

"YOU'RE a cheerful friend," smiled Gibbons. "But how do you dope it out?"

"In the first place," said the journalist, "there is a bullet imbedded in the woodwork of the bookcase back of his desk, indicating that some one fired at the banker and missed him. Again, the shot that killed him struck him square in the chest. Now, if the shots had come from any other direction but the public office, how could they have struck where they did? That's the problem, and it's a problem I haven't been able to answer. We've got to face the

evidence. To do otherwise would only be to fool ourselves. My hope rests in the belief that there are several explanations of the same set of facts. We must admit the facts, and then try to find salvation in some unexpected explanation of the aforesaid facts."

"It seems to me," said Norma quietly, "that the first thing should be to find some motive for the murder. The crime might have been committed by any one of a half-dozen persons who were in and about the building that day. We'll begin by the process of elimination. First we'll dismiss Mr. Gibbons from our calculations."

The fugitive bowed gravely.

"Thank you, Miss Bright. That being the case, what about Professor Worthington? Could he have any motive in doing away with J. B.?"

"I had his name on the tip of my tongue. I know that he has been getting money from Mr. Matlack for several months—in fact, ever since the death of Mrs. Matlack. Why? Could it be sheer benevolence? Hardly, because from my knowledge of my employer, he rarely did anything without a purpose. I've thought about this phase of the case ever since you—left us. With this in mind I determined to do a little investigating on my own account. So yesterday I paid a little call on Martha Clark, the trusted housekeeper of Mr. Matlack. She knows and likes me, and as a result of a great deal of cross-questioning on my part, she confessed that J. B. had been dabbling in spiritualism."

"That's where Worthington comes in," ventured the newspaperman.

"Precisely. You know Mr. Matlack was devoted to his wife, and her death was a dreadful blow to him. Well, Worthington managed to get a hold on the old man with the suggestion that he could get into communication with the spirit of the departed. The result of this was that he held two or three séances, and if he didn't convince him, he interested him. There had been a séance at the house on the night before the murder. It was not satisfactory by any means. In fact, the Professor bungled things so much that the old gentleman was annoyed. Now the question arises: had Matlack discovered that he was being imposed upon? And if so, what was he likely to do about it? He was not the sort of man to submit lightly to an imposture, especially upon such a delicate question as that of his dead wife. Did the visit of the Professor on the morning of the murder have anything to do with Mr. Matlack's skepticism?"

"But are you satisfied that Worthington is an impostor?"

"Not at all. I don't believe in spiritualism, but at the same time I'm not prepared to say that it is all a fraud, because, frankly, I don't know."

"It seems to me," mused Gibbons, "that our business is not to discover whether communication with the dead is impossible, but whether Worthington is a fraud."

IT was finally decided that Curley should make a test of the Professor's honesty that night, and that Norma should call upon Martha Clark, Matlack's housekeeper, in the hope of learning something about the banker that would throw light upon the mystery. Gibbons was directed to go to his room, get a night's rest and be ready for business in the morning. The three of them separated, going their various ways, with the fugitive declaring that he felt like a slacker in going home to rest while his friends were at work.

Norma Bright went to the home of Mrs. Clark at once. That poor creature had been almost distracted since the death of her kindly employer, and Norma knew that the woman would ask no greater consolation than to talk of the dead banker with one who had known him well. And indeed, Mrs. Clark received her with open arms. Norma felt a pang of regret that her visit was really for the purpose of surprising some evidence out of the housekeeper, but she quickly overcame her qualms of conscience with the thought that her little deceit was being practiced in the cause of justice. She began sympathetically:

"You haven't taken a new position yet, have you?"

"No, dearie. I've been that upset by what's happened that I hardly know which way to turn."

"But surely Mr. Matlack made some provision for you after all your years of faithful service?"

The elderly one put the corner of her apron to her eye and wiped away a tear.

"Indeed, and he didn't do nothin' of the kind. But you mustn't think I'm complainin'. He was one of the best souls livin', but this—this awful thing came so sudden-like that I guess he didn't have time to think of any of us."

"Was he at home the night before the murder?"

"Yes," replied Mrs. Clark, suppressing a sob, "he was, and that's what makes it so hard. To think he was well and hearty that night, and then stiff and stark the next day."

"Did he seem any different than usual?" asked Norman.

The housekeeper had regained her composure, and the question seemed to raise the floodgate of memory.

"Oh, dearie," she exclaimed, "how did you come to think of that? He was very different. He was that agitated that he couldn't keep still. He was in and out of the library all the time, pullin' out papers and writin' and talkin' to himself. And late that night Mr. Harman—that's the lawyer, you know—came and stayed with him in the library for a long time. An' then just before midnight me and Jane, the cook, was called in. The lawyer asked us if we could write. Wasn't that a piece of hard cheek for you? An' I said I guessed I could write as good as the next one, an' then he pointed to a paper on the table and said: 'You two sign here,' and we did."

"What was it you signed?" asked Norma gently.

"Don't ask me, dearie. I don't know. But it frightened me an' Jane. She was half scared to death. An' after we went to bed, I could hear Mr. Matlack walkin' the floor. Oh, I might have knowed somethin' was wrong. I might have knowed it."

MRS. CLARK was so overcome at this stage of her talk that nothing would do but to make a cup of tea for the kind young woman. The beverage refreshed both of them, and Norma tried again.

"Mrs. Clark," she said, "some of my friends are very anxious to get at the bottom of this mystery. Can you help us in any way?"

The housekeeper sat staring at the girl for a long time after she asked this question. There was a look of something like fear in her faded eyes and worn face. Finally she spoke in a low voice:

"There was somethin'," she replied, "but I don't know if I ought to speak about it."

"I'm sure you should, Mrs. Clark. You know I was always a good friend of Mr. Matlack, and my friends are his friends."

The elderly woman looked about her cautiously as though she feared eavesdroppers, and then lowering her voice, she replied:

"I clean the library every mornin', an' when I reached the room the next day, it was in a terrible condition—terrible. There were bits of paper everywhere, an' it looked as if Mr. Matlack had been burnin' things. Some of the paper was thick and crinkly—"

"That was parchment," interrupted Norma. "But go on and tell me the rest of it."

"I just didn't know what to do. I says to myself, I says, 'Sure, and Mr. Matlack didn't want to destroy this fine paper.' So I didn't throw it out with the rest of the rubbish, but I saved it to show it to him when he came home."

AT this point Mrs. Clark was seized with a fit of weeping. She drew up the corner of her apron and wiped her eyes with it. Then she continued in a hushed voice:

"But the poor man never came home, an' so I never had a chance to show it to him, I didn't."

"But you did not destroy it, did you?" queried Norma.

Mrs. Clark shook her head mournfully.

"No, but the poor man will never see it, that he wont."

"Where is it?" asked the girl eagerly. "If you have it, let me see it."

The elderly one arose slowly, and going to a bureau, pulled open a drawer and returned in a few moments with a weather-stained envelope out of which fluttered many scraps of parchment. Norma seized these and laid them carefully on the table. With infinite patience she began to piece them together in the manner of one who is trying to adjust a jigsaw puzzle. It was hard work, and she was compelled to arrange them again and again, but finally she gave a cry of triumph. She read the words: "Last Will and Testament of J. B. Matlack," and directly under this: "I, John Bartley Matlack, being of sound mind and body, do declare this to be my last will and testament. I direct that all of my just debts be paid as soon after my demise as possible, and after that I bequeath—"

That was all. The writing was in a large, flowing hand, as old-fashioned as Matlack himself; but just at the interesting point it ceased. She turned to the housekeeper with a note of impatience.

"Where is the rest of it, Mrs. Clark?"

"That's all of it, dearie. That's all that I found. The rest of it was burned in the grate in the library. Is that any good—what have you there?"

"I'm afraid it hasn't any value. But it proves one thing to me: it proves that J. B. was destroying his will that night."

The housekeeper shook her head dolefully.

"I know'd it was something like that. An' I guess that's why Mr. Matlack didn't leave me anything. If he had only come back home, things would have been different; I'm sure of that."

"I'm sure of it too," said Norma gently. "But Mrs. Clark, it seems clear to me that Mr. Matlack destroyed his old will because he had made out a new one. He must have had some reason for doing that, and if we could see the new one, it might explain the reason. He was a very thoughtful man, and I'm sure that he would not forget you."

The wrinkled face of the elderly woman lighted up at these words.

"I'm glad to hear you say that. I don't care so much about the money, but I wouldn't want to feel that he had forgotten me. I never was much for book-learnin', but Mr. Matlack always said that I was a good housekeeper. I never let anyone impose on him, an' I was always able to keep the accounts in my head. He used to say over and over again: 'That's a good head you have on your shoulders, Mrs. Clark, a very good head.' But I'll never hear him say it again, poor man."

Norma rose to go. She patted the withered hand of the woman and spoke soothingly:

"Don't worry, Mrs. Clark; everything will come out all right in the end. Just look at the bright side of things, and if I hear of any good news, I'll come and tell you at once."

THE next morning the girl related her experience to Curley and Gibbons. They listened with absorbed interest.

"Miss Bright," said Curley, "were you acquainted with the family of Mr. Matlack? Did he have any relatives? If so, who would be likely to be the heirs to his estate?"

Norma smiled sadly.

"He was alone in the world, as much so as it was possible for a man to be. I always understood that he had one brother, but I never knew much about him. Mr. Matlack never spoke of him, or at least rarely. As near as I could gather, this brother went to England or France and has always lived there. I do not think there was ever any serious difference between them, but Mr. Matlack always felt offended that his brother should live out of his country. He was such a practical man that he felt that everybody should work as long as they were able to work. The notion of living on one's money never appealed to him."

"That is very interesting; but I wonder what object he could have in destroying his old will. Did he ever say anything to you about what he was going to do with his money?"

The girl flushed slightly.

"I can hardly say that he confided in me to that extent. Now and then he dropped a hint about those he intended to remember in his will."

"As for instance?" queried the journalist.

"Well, there was Mrs. Clark for one. He said she had served him faithfully, and that she would not be forgotten when he was gone."

"Who else? Did he never say anything about you?"

"Yes," said the girl hesitatingly, "he did speak of it once or twice. But do not make any mistake about that. I gathered that I was to get a small bequest with others who had worked for him. But that had nothing to do with his fortune. That would be a different matter."

Curley nodded comprehendingly.

"I see what you mean. But who do you suppose were to be his heirs?"

"That is a hard question to answer. It seems to me that his brother would be a natural heir—especially as he is the last of the family. Then I imagine that he might have made a generous bequest to William Walters, and possibly one to Clyde Walters."

"How about Professor Worthington?"

"I never thought of him; but that would not be at all improbable. You know the spiritualist had gained a strong hold on him. He believed in him, no matter what we may think of it. And when J. B. believed in a person, there was no limit to the extent that he would go."

"But if he had discovered that Worthington had imposed upon him, it would make a difference, wouldn't it?"

"A very great difference," assented the girl.

"Well," mused Curley, "it looks as if he had discovered that some one had deceived him and that he had destroyed his old will and made a new one on that account. It could be Worthington, or it might as easily be Walters or his nephew."

"By the way," interposed Richard Gibbons, "how is it that neither of you have thought of the woman in black? There is something very strange about that person. And she certainly acted as if she had a hold on Matlack. If I am not mistaken, she told you that he would not dare refuse to see her. Isn't that a fact?"

"Yes," conceded Norma with reluctance, "she did say something like that."

"Well," continued Gibbons, following up this lead, "men with better reputations than J. B. Matlack have had family secrets. Do you suppose that she could have been a relative? Or do you imagine that she had some secret that he was anxious not to have disclosed?"

Norma gave a gesture of dissent.

"I wish you wouldn't make such suggestions. I am firmly convinced that Mr. Matlack was a man of integrity."

Gibbons smiled at her fondly.

"You're loyal to the core, and I respect you for it. But it is perfectly reasonable to believe that there was some compelling motive to make a man like him change his will so suddenly. Maybe money is at the bottom of this tragedy. If we go on that assumption, it might hasten the solution of this problem."

"Couldn't we find out what is in the new will? That might explain the destroying of the old one."

"It hasn't been probated yet," said Curley. "Why, I can't tell. But meanwhile, as we go along, it will be well to remember that the love of money is the root of all evil."

## CHAPTER IX

### The Brass Arrow

THAT same morning Curley called at the *Chronicle* office to ask for an indefinite leave of absence. It was granted, especially as he had not had a vacation for several years. As he was leaving the building he met Mr. Catlin, the owner of the newspaper. The proprietor greeted him cordially, and naturally the first topic he touched upon was the case of Richard Gibbons.

"Still grouchy over the Governor's refusal to grant that parole?"

"Yes—and no."

Catlin gave him an affectionate slap on the back.

"I understand. You don't like to fail in anything you undertake. It's a mighty good trait. But I guess we should be satisfied in this case. I had a wee bit of doubt in my mind concerning his innocence. But he's answered it himself, and I'm glad now that we failed."

Curley's brow wrinkled.

"Do you mean that you believe him guilty?"

"Put it that way if you like. You know the old saying: 'Suicide is confession.' Slightly altering the proverb, I should say that flight was confession."

"I'm sorry to hear you say that," cried Curley with feeling, "because I'm absolutely satisfied that Gibbons was innocent."

The newspaperman looked at his star reporter admiringly.

"That's right, Curley. Stick by your friends, and speak well of the dead."

CURLEY flushed. He was placed in the position of deceiving the employer who trusted him. For a moment he was tempted to confide in Mr. Catlin. Then he thought better of it and hastened out of the building.

In the street he remembered that Gibbons had asked him to call upon W. H. Brewster. He had two reasons for this. One was to ascertain what fee Brewster expected for his defense of Gibbons and how he expected to get it, and the other was to learn if the lawyer could help him in his fight to vindicate Gibbons. He found the eminent advocate with his feet tilted on his desk, luxuriously puffing at a cigar. He could not have called a better time. Mr. Brewster was on good terms with himself and the world. He knew Curley and greeted him kindly. He even presented him with the mate to the cigar he was smoking.

After the journalist had lighted the weed, the lawyer exclaimed jovially:

"Now, what's on your mind? Out with it."

"It's about Gibbons," said Curley hesitatingly. "You know since that—that unfortunate affair of the prison, I've been trying to straighten out his affairs. I—"

"Oh, yes," interrupted Brewster. "I was sorry to read about Gibbons. A good

fellow in many ways, but this flight from jail will have the effect of confirming his guilt."

Curley looked at him in surprise.

"Do you really feel that way about it?"

"Why, yes; how could I feel any other way? What are we to think when a man runs away?"

"But with all the odds against him," protested the newspaper man, "how was he to do anything else? He couldn't convince anyone of his innocence. What could the poor man do?"

Brewster shrugged his shoulders.

"It was the worst thing he could have done. You see what happened to him. But even if he had lived, he would have been recaptured. It was inevitable."

Curley felt depressed. Why should everybody jump to the conclusion that Gibbons was guilty? Why should his own lawyer think so? For the moment it threatened to weaken his own faith. But he quickly brushed away that thought of disloyalty.

"By the way, Mr. Brewster, about your fee? I do not know that I have the right to go into such matters, but I know that the friends of Mr. Gibbons will want to have you reimbursed for your work. I—"

The lawyer interrupted with a wave of his hand.

"Don't let that bother you. I had my fee before I took the case."

"But Gibbons didn't give it to you."

The lawyer hesitated a moment before replying. Then he leaned over and spoke in a low voice:

"You were a friend of the poor devil, Curley, and I'm going to tell you something in strict confidence. It's this: There's as much mystery about my being in this case as there was in the case itself. The day after Gibbons was arrested, I found a note on my desk with a typewritten letter asking me to defend him, and inclosing five one-hundred-dollar bills. It was signed, 'A friend of justice,' and asked me to take up his case without telling him anything about his unknown benefactor. It put me in a devilish predicament. I really couldn't refuse under the circumstances. I went to Gibbons and asked him if he were willing to have me undertake his defense. He said he would be delighted, and there you are. I did my level best. If the fee had been a hundred times as great, I couldn't have worked harder."

"I'm sure of that," assented Curley.

"I'm glad you feel that way. I've wondered if I left anything undone, and for the life of me I can't see that I did. The evidence was all against him. I tried to think it wasn't, but all the time there was the subconscious feeling that no one else could have committed the murder."

"Have you any idea who retained you?"

"Not the faintest. I'd give a lot to know, but what's the use of guessing? At all events, the friends of Gibbons can rest easy as far as my fee is concerned."

"It was blamed queer," commented Curley.

"Queer isn't any name for it; but then, life is made up of queer things, and if we stopped to try and explain them, we wouldn't have time for anything else. Now, I don't want you to go and publish what I've told you. I've given it to you as a friend of Gibbons'."

"I'll take it in that way," agreed the newspaperman. "But in the meantime, has anything come to you since the trial that would tend to make you believe that Gibbons was innocent?"

"Not a thing, my boy; and if I were in your place, I wouldn't rake up the ashes of that unhappy business. Let the dead past bury itself. That's my motto."

Curley smiled bitterly.

"That seems to be the way of the world. May'be you're right, though."

HALF an hour later Curley was with Gibbons and Norma Bright, telling them of his strange interview with the lawyer. Their eyes widened as he related the story of the anonymous letter and the five hundred-dollar bills. Suddenly Gibbons turned to the girl:

"Miss Bright, did you have anything to do with that business?"

She flushed to the roots of her hair.

"I wish I could say that I had; but I can assure you it's the first I ever heard of it."

There was further discussion concerning the queer happening, but it led nowhere, and finally Curley exclaimed:

"There's no use wasting any more time on that. We'd better get down to business. What can you suggest, Gibbons?"

"I've been thinking of the woman in black. There is just a faint clue that I intend to run out."

"Go to it!" cried the journalist. "And I'm going to make a visit to the Masterson

Building. I may find some inspiration there if I can manage to get into the offices of the old firm."

Norma Bright looked at him eagerly.

"I've still a key to the office. You know the lease has not expired yet. If—if you'd like me to, I'll go along."

"By all means! You're familiar with the place, and there is no telling what we may turn up."

SO they parted, Gibbons taking one direction and Curley and his aide the other. A shudder went through the slight frame of the girl as they opened the door of the dead man's old offices, but she managed to control her emotions as they began a systematic search of the various rooms in the suite.

The newspaper man walked about the room and looked out of the windows of the office. Two of these faced the street, and the third, as already explained, looked out upon an air-well, on the other side of which was the office of the Gusher Oil Company, which had gone out of business before the day of the tragedy. In the light of the evidence before him, the shots could not have come from any of the windows. If Matlack had been shot in the back or in the side, this might well have been possible, but how could it have been when the fatal bullet had struck him in the chest and near the heart? Curley tried to place himself in the position of the victim, and to imagine the shot as having come from every possible direction, but in the end he was as far from the truth as before.

WHILE Curley was working in the inside office, Norma Bright was carefully examining every part of the outer room. She looked under the desks and behind the chairs, and she got down on her hands and knees and scrutinized every part of the floor. She smiled to herself during this part of the performance. It reminded her so much of the methods of the old-time detectives, but she kept at it nevertheless in the hope that some unexpected bit of evidence might be brought to light. At the end of half an hour she felt wearied and discouraged, because the search had been fruitless. She sat down dejectedly in the chair she had occupied in front of the typewriter in the old days.

In front of her on the wall, and directly over the telephone booth, was the little framed annunciator which carried signals. She stared accusingly at the dumb thing, and as she did so, a strange thought began to work in her mind. Suddenly she gave a loud shriek—a hysterical shriek. Curley came running in from the other room.

"Why, Norma," he cried, "what in the world has happened?"

She stared at him in a half-dazed manner, and she pointed her finger in the direction of the annunciator.

"The buzzer, the buzzer!" she repeated in a wild voice. "Don't you see it now?"

"Yes," he answered soothingly, "of course, I see it. But there is no occasion for alarm. I had no right to bring you here. It has gotten on your nerves."

"Never mind my nerves. I've discovered something. I think I've found the key to the mystery. It's in the buzzer."

He was puzzled.

"I'm afraid I don't understand what you are talking about. Please tell me what you mean?"

SHE arose feebly, and made her way to the annunciator. She found herself clinging desperately to his arm. Once again she pointed her finger at the inanimate thing.

"Don't you remember," she cried, "that Richard Gibbons went into the private office as the result of the call on that buzzer?"

"Yes," he said, "I remember that. What about it?"

"Just this," she shouted in triumphant tones: "that call didn't come from the room of Mr. Matlack!"

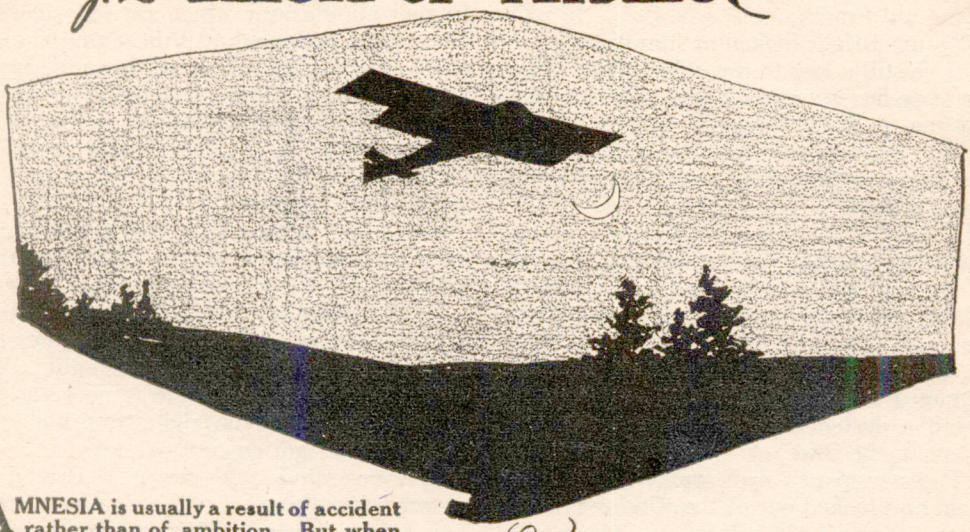
"Why, Norma," he said half reprovingly, "he was the only one of the firm in the office at the time. It couldn't have come from anywhere else."

"But it did," she persisted. "Just look at that little brass arrow."

He looked, and sure enough, the instrument pointed to a little sign which read *"Clyde Walters."* There were three arrows in the annunciator, each indicating a name. The one with the name of J. B. Matlack hung limp, while the one that had moved in response to the push of the electric button pointed to the name of the nephew of William Walters.

**The web of circumstantial evidence was strong, but there was a broken strand. See the second installment of "Behind the Closed Door," appearing in the July issue of The Blue Book Magazine.**

# The Kick of Kismet



**AMNESIA is usually a result of accident rather than of ambition. But when it leads the victim to romance and adventure, as it did Nathan—form in line to the right, please!**

By Edwin Balmer

HE was walking alone on the right side of a city street which, as he saw by the name on the corner, was Boylston Street; the city, he observed, was Boston. The day was warm and sunny; from the appearance of the trees on the Common, it was a day in Spring—in May, he hazarded for a guess. The time, as he saw by the sun, was about mid-afternoon; his watch gave it more exactly as twenty minutes to four. Why he was in Boston and how he got here; what he had been doing and what he had been about to do; who the young men were who spoke to him and to whom he nodded automatically in response—of the answers to these problems he had not the slightest idea; and this astonishing ignorance included a complete unacquaintance with his own identity. How long this ignorance had existed he could not exactly estimate; but he guessed it had been about ten minutes since it first began to perplex, and then to interest and amuse him. It had overtaken him rather suddenly, he thought, but apparently without any extraordinary external occurrence to usher in the oblivion in which he found himself. Probably when he had been a block or so back there by the Public Garden, he had known a lot about himself—where he lived and what his name was, and where he was bound and why. Now he simply didn't know any of these things about himself.

"This is good!" he said to himself, proceeding down Essex Street to get away from the thoroughfares which seemed most frequented by men who knew him. "This is damn-decidedly good; altogether too good to spoil. I've amnesia—ambulatory, perfectly able-bodied, husky he-amnesia. I ought to have been beaned by a brick or have had a few bad men bounce their billies on my head or have been bowled by a trolley to have been handed this. But apparently I wasn't."

HE removed his hat, which was a new straw with a rather violently patterned band, and felt over his head without discovering a contusion. He scrutinized his clothes, which were new and of excellent quality; the cloth was spotless.

"So it must have come on me in the way amnesia usually comes. Amnesia—" He repeated the medical word for his peculiar sort of forgetfulness. It greatly diverted him that he could diagnose and discuss what was the matter with him and that the name of his trouble could remain afloat among the flotsam of general knowledge when all facts of his own personality had sunk, leaving absolutely no trace. "But that's what the real thing is: something external or internal happens and bingo! you're somebody else. You may

still possess all your general information; you may know your history and geography and reading and writing and arithmetic and botany and paleontology—if you've had that—and about current events and Bolshevism and the League of Nations and the approaching long drought—but you don't know anything about yourself; for you're somebody else. You, as you were, simply are not present. Another personality starts out in you. Otherwise everything is quite all right. Oh, this is too good to miss; I wouldn't avoid it for worlds! I can meet myself, size up myself and find out just what I think of myself impartially and as if I were a perfect stranger. Now don't mess it, Clarence; that's all I beg of you!" he implored himself. "Of course I hope your name isn't Clarence; but let's call yourself that to be on the safe side. Hello, how do we look?"

He stepped before a window, black-painted on the inside, and critically examined himself.

He looked fairly good; but not too good. Already he had observed that he was about five feet ten or eleven in height; weight, he bet, was about a hundred seventy; age, probably twenty-three. He had a fair skin rather thoroughly tanned, and he felt hard, as if he usually went in for sports. He went on a couple of blocks to a second-class hotel where nobody seemed to know him, and entered the washroom to have a better view of himself in a looking-glass. His hair proved to be brown and had been recently cut; his eyes were blue; his features were—well, decently even. He might improve his nose, but it would do; his chin was not that of a quitter.

"POSSIBILITIES!" he assured himself. "We've possibilities in us. But don't be precipitate, old top!"

Slipping his left hand into the right breast-pocket of his coat, he encountered what seemed to be a cardcase, within which, probably, were cards bearing his name; and he did not want to see his name. He feared it might return him to that identity, now lost, from which he had so divertingly escaped. There was something so enchantingly free and detached about his present state that he certainly was not going to leave it until he had more thoroughly tried it out. So before he took it out he fingered the object carefully and made sure that it was not a cardcase but only a pocket checkbook.

"CAMBRIDGE NATIONAL BANK," was stamped on the leather cover. Within were a packet of blank checks and four stubs. The number on the first stub was 126; the balance in the bank brought forward from the previous checkbook was $4,256.78. Check number 126, dated May 23rd, had been made to "J. K. Low" for "his acct. rend'r'd," to the amount of $250. Check 127, dated May 24th, had been made to "Cash" and for the amount of $200. Check 128, also dated May 24th, had been to "Cory" for "tonight" and the cost of the night had been $1760. Check 129, dated May 26th, had been to "Cash" for $300. These amounts, duly and correctly subtracted, left him a balance in the bank of $1746.78.

"Twenty-five hundred and ten little ducats gone the good way in three days," he said to himself, totaling the deductions. "Apparently I have been no piker. But what was the matter with me on the twenty-fifth? Why nothing drawn on that day? Oh,"—as he glanced at a calendar on the wall,—"Sunday. That excuses you, Clarence—especially in the light of what seems to have struck you last Saturday evening!"

EVIDENTLY the month was May, right enough; and the day, as he now observed from the date-line of a newspaper which some one laid down on a near-by washstand, was Monday the twenty-sixth.

"So today I drew three hundred in Cambridge. Even *I* should have some change left by four P. M." He investigated other pockets, discovering two hundred dollars in fifties and twenties, eleven in twos and ones and a little silver over; also a pocket-knife, three keys and a silver cigarette-case, unmonogrammed; a few matches and a fountain-pen. The designation of the individual who got the $1760 on Saturday night was so evidently a scrawled nickname that he didn't try to trace it. The telephone-book gave J. K. Low as a tailor in Boston.

"I begin to get you, I think, Clarence," he addressed himself audibly again when he was alone before the washroom mirror. "You are—or were—a serious little Harvard student. Yes sir," he corroborated, examining the violent pattern of his hatband. "Only some undergrad society could have perpetrated that." The complete submergence of all incidents associated with his identity prevented him

from recognizing which club it was to which he "belonged;" but he knew he had belonged to one. "Yes sir, Clarence; you undoubtedly abode in Cambridge, ruining your eyes and health at the University library studying to be a great man. I should pick you, from appearances, for about a junior—and not the success as a student that you should have been, old dear! In fact, you are on probation, I should fear, with probably about two frightful flunks in calculus and philosophy to square with the Dean before the end of the year. Undoubtedly there is a bank or a trust-company or some financial institution of unimpeachable credit in New York or Philadelphia or possibly in Chicago where father presides and whence issue the checks which you deposit to make your drafts good. Its bond-sales department yawns for you, Clarence. Yes; I see it. You were about to be fired from college and commence selling bonds before Kismet so kindly kicked you. Now, how and to what end?"

He went out while considering this problem and strolled with leisurely step into Roxbury, observing to his satisfaction that no one now spoke to him.

"Oh, I think I have it," a reaction registered in him when he passed a man in uniform and walking with a cane. "The war, of course. Us were in it." This was no recollection—only a realization that a young man of his physical fitness and with a palpable bankroll behind him could have had no claim for exemption. A slight sensation, not of pain but like a tingling touch, caused him to take off his hat and feel through his thick hair to his skull where, on the left side and slanting upwards, he followed the furrow of a scar. "Somebody pinged us; we had a wonderful operation saving our life and restoring us to usefulness till something shook loose inside us a while ago—perhaps indirectly the consequence of Saturday night."

HE recognized clearly that he could go to the nearest subway station, take a car to Cambridge, present himself at the bank and find out who he was; or with even less trouble he might go back to Boylston Street near the Touraine and get the first fellow who spoke to him to tell him his name. But a return to his previous identity was what he wished most to avoid; he could not recall his usual way of feeling, but he was more than satisfied with the sort of sensations he was experiencing now; happenings, beyond any likely parallel in his ordinary life, were certain to occur if he obeyed his current impulses. So, carefully avoiding Tremont and Boylston streets and the avenues to Backbay, he steered on through Roxbury, known to nobody and knowing no one until, at a street-corner, a girl spoke to him.

He had not the slightest idea who she was or how he had known her; but he hoped, on sight, that it was pretty well, for she was a most interesting-looking and unusual girl. About twenty-two, he thought; she had red hair of a wonderfully beautiful and lustrous hue; her skin was marvelously clear, and although, when you thought about it, you saw that she really had good color in her smooth cheeks, the redness of her hair made her seem pale. She had blue eyes, lively, observant, decidedly imprudent-looking but not unpleasant eyes. She had an attractive, impertinent nose, reckless chin and saucy, full little lips so red that you looked to see if they were salved—whereupon you discovered that they were not. She walked quickly and gracefully.

"HELLO, Little Boy Blue!" he understood her to say as she passed him after having nodded to him when he was about ten feet away.

He spun about and caught step with her. "Hello, Marguerite," he returned heartily. He had no idea that this was her name, but it was a good one for her and he had to say something. This encounter might lead him back to his former identity which he had wished to escape, but he was perfectly willing to go back with *this* girl. Indeed, she made him suspect that possibly he had been knocking his former existence on insufficient knowledge. Apparently he had not led a hopelessly dull life.

"Why do you call me that now?" the girl asked in a delightful, taunting tone.

"Why did you call me Little Boy Blue?"

"B-l-e-w," she obligingly spelled the final word for him. "Little Boy Blew. Now does it mean more? You blew, I estimated, some two thousand at our last meeting, did you not?"

"Oh, Saturday night!" he realized aloud. "You were in the party Saturday night!"

"In the party!" She halted, indignant and not a little perplexed. "I'm sure I beg your pardon for speaking if I'm such a surprise to you," she said haughtily. "But

Saturday evening—well, I knew you were somewhat varnished, of course; but I did not suspect you were so thoroughly coated that nothing came through at all."

"COME along and don't be foolish," he ordered her boldly, taking her arm. She alone on the street-corner would be excuse enough for a crowd to collect, and if she was seen standing and arguing with a man, there soon would be a mob. Plainly she was peeved, but it was equally evident that recently he had been capable of getting up some interest in himself.

"Who's your friend Marguerite?" she asked him a little jealously.

"Do you know Faust?" he asked.

"I know a real-estate man named—"

"No; this one was a doctor."

"Don't know him, then; what'd he do?"

"Sold his soul for a red-haired girl named Marguerite. At least her hair was red the last time I saw the show. Well, Marguerite, that's what I thought of you."

She went on with him, more mollified. "What name are you registering under today?"

"What did I say it was Saturday night?" he returned. He expected no rush of returning memory when he should hear it, for he was fairly certain that, unless he had been phenomenally "varnished," he had not given his own name.

"You said it was Nathan Hale and you were just up from Yale to give up a life for your country."

"That sounds almost like verse. I appear to have been a bit dithyrambic."

"What?"

"Dithyrambic."

"What—oh, well, I guess you were. Where are we wending, Nathan?"

"Where wouldst wend?"

SHE halted and looked at him a moment without speaking as though forming a plan. "Funny about my finding you today," she said at last. "I was just thinking of you as a possibility—a bare possibility for—" She stopped.

"For what, Marguerite?"

"Of course, you'd be just the man—the very absolute one, if you'd do it."

"What?" he demanded again.

"You'd do it, really?"

"Tell me—or must I promise sight unseen?"

"No; I can tell you, but not here; in—Pawtucket."

"Good Lord; why just in Pawtucket?"

"I'll show you. Then you'll go?"

"When?"

"Well, we'd better get there this evening; but we're not in such a rush that we can't ride down pleasantly. Is your car about?" she asked coolly.

"Mine?" he repeated. He hadn't thought of his having a car; but undoubtedly he had one. He wondered where in Boston he'd left it standing. "Why, no; I guess not," he said to Marguerite.

"Then wait here and I'll be back with mine," she directed him, and she started off. He wanted to follow her; but as it was plain that she did not desire it, he remained at the corner, and in a few minutes she drove up alone in a smart little blue roadster. He got in beside her and she spun them out of Roxbury and down the broad, smooth trail of the Atlantic Highway, toward Narragansett Bay.

HE studied Marguerite with steadily increasing interest. Evidently she lived near the place where he had encountered her; not a prepossessing neighborhood, but not at all an evil one. No one could think of Marguerite as evil—only as "up to something." She did not at all suggest a working-girl in the ordinary sense of the suggestion, and she even less suggested a young lady of leisure. The stage or a motion-picture studio possibly might have enlisted her activities; but when he essayed remarks to test his guess, he drew blanks.

One of the troubles was that he was supposed to know all about her from Saturday night; and it was evident that she knew a great deal about him, though she continued to call him only by the "Nathan Hale" which he had given when so "varnished."

He liked so much to see her easy, graceful movements as she drove, and he so greatly appreciated the chance to study her face when she gazed steadily ahead, that he reluctantly took the wheel from her after a while. They dined at Attleboro,—the pleasantest dinner he'd ever given a girl, he bet,—and when they went on, she took the wheel again and whirled them, not into Pawtucket, but to some wide meadowland off to the east, and they halted beside a little wooden house alongside some low, long sheds.

An alert, wiry little man came from the house as the car stopped, and scrutinized them in the dim twilight.

"Hello, Hoggie," Marguerite hailed him.

"Hello, Freddie," Hoggie returned.

"MY name," Marguerite now imparted to Nathan, "is Fredericka. You can keep on calling me Marguerite if you like it better."

"I do," said Nathan.

"His name," she said, motioning to the little man, "is Hogarth. He expects us; I phoned him from Boston when getting the car, you see."

"I'm certainly glad to see you, sir," Hoggie said respectfully,—indeed, almost deferentially,—as he extended his hand. "Of course, sir, I know who you are; but, for the purposes of this transaction you prefer to be called Mr. Nathan Hale, I believe."

"Yes; that'll do," Nathan said, shaking hands with Hoggie. He was about thirty, Nathan guessed, and of the size and weight of a coxswain; he was slightly wall-eyed, and snappy in his speech and gesticulations. Hoggie also suggested the liability of being "up to something," and realizing that the revelation of the whole scheme was now due, Nathan followed Marguerite and Hoggie with distinct impatience as they led him into the house and to a little sitting-room, where Hoggie drew the blinds and lit the lamp.

"You told him nothing at all in Boston, you said?" Hoggie inquired of Marguerite.

"Nothing."

"And nothing on the way?"

"No."

"Do you feel the least bit priggy?"

"You're asking me?" Nathan said. It was hard to tell from Hoggie's eyes just whom he was talking to. Nathan had no idea what "priggy" meant to those two, but he was certain *he* didn't feel it. He didn't feel anything, indeed, except a most exhilarating and agreeable recklessness. He recognized as a sort of mental fact that there was usually in the possession of each person a rather reliable assortment of interdicts known as inhibitions which prevent the normal person from doing things too mad or reckless; but the most pronounced symptom of his present state—in addition to his forgetfulness of his identity—was that all his inhibitions seemed to be absolutely off the job. He would and could do anything, he felt. "I'm not the least priggy, I assure you," he said to Hoggie.

But Hoggie wasn't asking him. "Absolutely no," Marguerite replied positively.

"Then sit down, all," Hoggie invited.

Nathan waited, politely, for Marguerite to perch herself upon the table in the center of the room; then he seated himself in the big leather chair to which Hoggie waved him. It was directly under the rays of the lamp and Nathan was aware that Hoggie's purpose was to watch him closely; but he had no objection to that. Hoggie offered Marguerite a cigarette, which she refused. Nathan took one and Hoggie lit another for himself with the same match.

"Aviation, as of course you know best of all, sir," Hoggie said with a continuance of his deep deference, "is absolutely in its infancy—in its baby-incubator, indeed."

"Yes," Nathan said, somewhat puzzled as to whether this was merely polite, general conversation on Hogarth's part, or the beginning of business.

"And the so-far-embraced opportunities of aviation are embryonic!"

"Quite so," said Nathan.

"Yet travel in the air is beginning . . . . . serious, profitable travel and enterprises are possible which only a few yet dream of, but which you and I, with Freddie here, can put through!"

"How do you mean?" Nathan asked, more puzzled but also more interested.

"It is always best to be concrete," Hoggie said. "Today the world, as it wags on, is still forced to do business on a two-dimension basis; but brisk fellows can tackle the world in three. I do not refer merely to the well-advertised establishment of air routes, air mails and passenger and freight travel. Other speculations ought to occur to you, Mr. Hale—undoubtedly have. Consider one single feature of the general prevailing weakness — existing scheme of walls and inclosures; their builders never contemplated enterprise moving in more than two dimensions; and now, manifestly, we have the third to move in."

"FOR what sort of enterprise?" Nathan asked, feeling less puzzled. "Illegitimate?"

Hoggie nodded with satisfaction. "I am glad that it so easily occurred to you, sir," he said. "But the particular enterprise which I have in mind is not, in its essentials, wrong. To be precise: There is, in a certain state not many hundred miles from here, a gentleman of excellent social standing and worth many millions of dollars, who is in a very serious predicament. In fact, he is about to be hanged. The

time set for his execution is six o'clock Friday morning, the 6th of June. The case has not attracted the sympathetic attention it deserves; yet undoubtedly you are familiar with some of the facts."

"What's the fellow's name?" Nathan asked.

"He was tried, convicted, sentenced and is about to be hanged under the name of Olander—John Olander," Hoggie replied; "but his true name is Wescott Arnold St. Clair."

NATHAN nodded; but the name stirred no reaction in him. He realized that this might be because the St. Clair gentleman, about to be hung, had never been anything in his young life; or it might be that Westcott Arnold had been so close a personal friend—if not a relative—that knowledge of W. A. St. Clair was so connected with his own identity that it had been submerged. This second realization made it more interesting for him as Hoggie went on.

"The cause of his concealing his name would take some time to relate; perhaps it's enough to say that it is connected with the circumstances of his innocence."

"Oh; he's innocent?" Nathan asked.

"Absolutely."

"How do you know?"

"It is part of my business to know, sir," Hoggie assured, respectfully but impressively. "It is known, but for sufficient reason could not be shown in court."

"Evidently not," Nathan agreed. "Proceed with the big idea."

"Obviously," said Hoggie, "there is a moral charge for anyone to save him who can."

"Only a moral charge, Hogarth?"

"Oh, there will undoubtedly be a million or so in it, too."

"Untaxed, I take it."

"If we take it, sir," Hogarth said positively, "it will surely be untaxed. I have not been able to find the item—saving a man from hanging—in the government list of services specifically exempted under the revenue act; but I think we can safely put it down as a necessity rather than as a luxury."

"Quite so," Nathan accepted. "Now how do we save him?"

"THAT'S where the third dimension comes in. Here is a drawing"—Hoggie went into a pocket and produced a folded sketch—"of the jail-inclosures, the walls, buildings and roofs surrounding the yard and the gibbet as it was arranged for the last hanging in the city where John Olander is to be prepared to swing. We may assume much the same arrangement for the ceremonies at six upon the sixth. Here is the point from which Olander with priest and attendants will emerge; here is the walk and platform beside the gibbet.

"Now until J. O. emerges under the open sky for the walk to the gallows, there is absolutely no chance to save him. Bribery, influence—everything has been tried. Much as he has on his side, there is even more against him. No; he will swing unless some one saves him during that walk from the jail to the gallows."

"I begin," Nathan said, leaning forward intently, "to get you."

"I was sure you would; the process is extremely obvious. The first time it is tried, it will be done. After that, perhaps it will be more difficult. But now no one thinks of the third dimension at hangings; no one guards against—"

"An airplane!" Nathan cried.

"Exactly, sir!" Hoggie returned with delight. "I knew you would see it!"

"But," asked Nathan, "why do you tell it to me? Where do I come in on this?"

"WHY, in the pilot's seat, of course, sir. Aint you—surely you will let me say it—the snappiest trick-pilot that the A. E. F. ever mustered out? *You* are going to do it!"

Nathan sat back with something of a start. "Oh!" he said. "Oh, I see!" His gaze shifted from Hoggie to Marguerite, draped comfortably upon the table.

"Of *course* you'll do it!" she also assured him.

"Why, of course!" he agreed with them, as though that were the most obvious conclusion in the world. So he had been a flyer —the snappiest trick-pilot in the A. E. F., Hoggie said. Nathan could not recall anything about that. He knew about the A. E. F. as he had known about Harvard and Boston; but as for his ever having been a pilot—well, all he could say to himself was that he hoped he had been, for he most immensely wanted to try that stunt which Hoggie so generously had blocked out for him. He pulled the sketch of the jail-yard before him and eagerly followed Hoggie's explanation of what he was to do. He had done stunts twice as

hard as that, Hoggie was telling him, when he had been flying with the French. Why, this would be simple to him!

SO it was in the air-service, when flying a French combat Spad, that he had got that bullet-blow in the head which had started all this business! If half of what Hoggie was telling him of himself was true, it was pretty plain that a mere landing upon a jail roof and getting away with a man about to be hanged, would prove only a trifle. But suppose Hoggie and Marguerite had made a mistake? He wanted mightily to get hold of an airplane and find out before he committed himself too hard.

"Of course," he said modestly, "I ought to be able to do it. But I need to get into a machine for a little practice; I'm rusty, you know."

"Why," said Marguerite, "I thought you were out often this spring at the flying-field at Harvard; or were the papers just saying that to advertise the field?"

Oh, was he? He thought quickly, so as not to give himself away. "I meant in the special sort of ship I'd have to use for this."

"It would have to be rather a special," Hoggie agreed. "Of course, we've thought of that. We'll use my own design—unusually wide spread above, but fast; corking camber; Liberty type motor, but somewhat improved, I think. It's right in the sheds alongside. You'd like to give 'er a go early tomorrow morning?"

"Earlier the better," Nathan said.

"Done, sir; then hadn't we better get to bed?"

He looked up at Marguerite, who—obediently rather than willingly, Nathan thought—descended from the table and offered her hand in good night. "You'll stay right here with Hoggie," she half requested, half commanded. "I'll go to Gertrude's," she said to Hoggie, "and see you after the trials tomorrow morning."

Nathan wanted to ask who Gertrude was and where she lived; but he couldn't work in the question on his way out to the car with Marguerite. She got in alone, dismissing him as positively as she had in Boston when she went to get the car.

"Tomorrow morning!" she said again to him when she drove off. He turned back to the house, where Hoggie had pajamas and a new toothbrush and a room ready for him. Nathan wanted to go to sleep as quickly as possible; but oppositely, he was rather afraid of going to sleep. He had a dread that he would wake up as he had been before this interesting afternoon: a Harvard student on probation, possessed of his name, his family connections, all sorts of dull responsibilities toward others and the usual inhibitions.

BUT he did not. He went to sleep all right and awoke to resume affairs exactly where he had left them the night before, knowing no more about himself and no less. Hoggie aroused him by shaking his leg at five o'clock, and displayed to him a pretty dawn, perfect for flying—clear, quiet and cool.

"I'm just an inventor—a crank on 'ships,' you know, sir," Hoggie told him as they went into the sheds near by and pushed out a new, beautiful biplane. "You're down here on account of your interest in my design and to test the ship out for me, sir, if anyone should drive up and recognize you."

"How about it in fact?" Nathan asked of Hoggie when they had this latest model clear of the hangar and headed the length of the field, facing the light breeze. "Has she ever been up?"

"No; but take it up," Hoggie offered generously, going about and fondly testing the bracing-wires and cables. "Notice some of the points of my design. See that unusually liberal elevating-surface; you can pull her right up. Look at the motor and the 'prop'—it pulls her right up off the ground. If you get down on that roof all right, you'll get up without needing any run; just give her the gun. See, sir?"

Nathan didn't see; but he nodded.

"Then she looks quite all right to you, sir?" Hoggie inquired with anxious pride.

"Oh, absolutely!"

SHE did look all right—at least she seemed to have good lines, and apparently no parts were missing; but Nathan could search himself for what he knew of airplanes. There was the pilot's pit, plain enough; and in front of it, another pit for a passenger. There were rudder-bars for the pilot's feet; a "joy-stick" and various dials and controls of more or less obvious importance. He might know about using these things from actual personal performance; or again he might know about them only as anyone did. The sole way to find out was to step in and try.

He recalled chauffing Marguerite's car on the way down from Boston. He had not stopped to think whether he had known how to drive a car; he had just accepted the certainty that he could drive. Marguerite had told him that he had possessed a car; now she had told him that he had flown airplanes. Why not take her word about himself again? Of course, taking her word about this "ship" involved more serious consequences; but those inhibition things were still most satisfyingly on strike.

"You don't fly yourself?" he asked Hogarth.

"A trifle, sir," the little man said, deprecatingly. "Of course I'm nothing that you'd call a flyer; but I'd like to go up with you."

NATHAN stepped into the pit; if Hoggie was sure enough of him to take a chance, he ought to have confidence in himself. He'd have liked to have waited until Marguerite appeared—if he was certain that he was a flyer; but as it was, probably it was better to go it first alone with Hoggie. So they climbed in, put on their straps and got away. Nathan fed her the gas, and with the engine going like a battery of field-guns, he felt her rise. Perhaps she was practically automatic on the getaway; maybe by pure accident he had stumbled into the right routine of motions; but then, again, maybe he *did* know how to fly!

A needle bobbing before him soon said something about their being a thousand feet up; but that didn't bother him. He swung about, banking nicely without sideslipping, and climbing in a smooth spiral, he made it a mile up. Looking calmly over the side, he saw behind and far below the daub which must be Pawtucket; ahead was a smear which must be Providence; he took a turn over it and above the silver strands of Narragansett Bay. He did two loops above Newport, a nosedive with a bit of a tailspin thrown in; he shut off and volplaned a bit, and then "gave her the gun," straightening out close over the beach and flying level, with the engine banging away in full fusillade. He climbed, and heading back from Pawtucket, decided that Marguerite and Hoggie at least hadn't made a fatal mistake. He knew *something* about flying. In fact Hoggie—pleased as Punch—was making most gratifying motions and wanting him to make a landing.

HOGGIE'S idea, of course, was to see him come down and stop in as little space as possible—as little, indeed, as was likely to be found upon that jail roof just beside the gallows. So Nathan steered for Hoggie's field and dropped swiftly; indeed, he tailspinned a bit, came out of it nicely. He headed for the patch before the hangar and came down with his wheels just brushing before they settled on the ground, and he pulled up so shortly that Hoggie was delirious with delight. Then Nathan saw that Marguerite had appeared, and to show her what he could do, up he went again; he looped, nosedived and tailspinned, and was about to land again when something happened. Nathan didn't have time to even guess what; one instant he simply knew he was going to crash—and the next, he must have done it, for some one turned off the sun and the engine and Hoggie and everything else. That was all there was to Nathan Hale until—

He appeared to have been just walking down the street when the change came over him. The city, as before, was Boston; but this time he was on Sudbury Street near King's Chapel when it happened. He had, as before, absolutely no idea where he had just come from or where he was going, except he did not think it at all likely he was bound for the Chapel; Young's Hotel or the Parker House were much stronger probabilities. He passed both of them, however, without feeling the slightest stir of an engagement. Yet he knew who he was: he was Nathan Hale, and he had two good friends, one Marguerite of red hair and blue roadster and the other a coxswain-looking chap called Hoggie, who lived down in Pawtucket and possessed a ship with extraordinarily good engine and generous elevators which he—Little Boy Blew, otherwise yclept Nathan Hale—had been flying in practice for a decidedly special entertainment to be pulled off at 6 A. M. on June sixth, benefit of one John Olander of much innocence and many millions, who was about to be hanged out in Ohio or Indiana or some place in that direction.

OR had Olander been hanged? For with rather a shock, Nathan suddenly realized that time had passed. How much time, he did not know; but some. He distinctly remembered last being up in Hoggie's ship with Hoggie,—who had assured him he was the snappiest flyer in the A. E. F.,—and he had believed it and had

been stunting about with Hoggie, trying something particularly good before Marguerite, when something *binged* and he had gone tumbling out of control onto that Pawtucket field. Now would some one kindly tell him how in—that is, he'd like to know how he'd stepped out of that smash onto Sudbury Street.

Now, obviously he hadn't just stepped from the smash onto Sudbury Street; time had passed. Not to make a fool of himself asking anybody, he bought an *Evening Transcript* and observed—unless a state of inebriation reigned in the *Transcript* office—that the day was Thursday, not Tuesday, as it should have been, and instead of the twenty-seventh of May it was the fifth of June.

Thank God the year and the century were all right! Good old 1919 was stuck on there behind the day and month line; that was something. But where had he been for the past nine days? His hands, exploring his pockets for clues, brought to light a hint or two. Most of the anthropological exhibits which he found were identical with the implements he had possessed ten days before; but he had a clean handkerchief, a rather different assortment of twenties and fifties and silver; but chiefly his checkbook had changed. The old balance of $1,746.78 had simply ceased to exist. But examination of the checkstubs showed that no drafts had been drawn to a hospital. No; if he'd been in one, somebody else had paid. It rather looked as if he'd been on his feet most of the time.

WHAT had jarred him back to being Nathan Hale, he could not guess, unless it might be some subconscious realization of his duty to rescue John Olander and of the shortness of the time before the morning of the sixth. Evidently, in his other personality he had realized that he had possessed a state or personality No. 2, for he seemed to have been studying it in his recent, or Harvard, state. He found this notation upon a paper in his pocket:

> Pierre Janet, Prof. of Psychology in the College de France, says, page 73: "You will remark, in fact, that in this singular history the oblivions and remembrances alternate in the same way very regularly. In the state called state No. 1, the subject does not remember the state No. 2 at all; in the state No. 2 she does not remember the state No. 1 at all. When she comes back to the state No. 1, she remembers only this state and nothing more. It is the same when she comes back to the state No. 2."

This cheerful bit of information from himself in his other state, as quoted from Professor Janet, helped to make quite plain what had happened to him. That bump on that bad landing had jarred him back to his state No. 1, in which he attended Harvard and drew perfectly cashable checks on the Cambridge National Bank; and he had not returned to his state No. 2—in which he was a great friend of Marguerite's and flew Hoggie's ship and knew about John Olander—until just now. And, quite as Professor Janet had said, he discovered that he knew all he had done and all he had learned while he was Nathan Hale, but nothing since the bump. The checkstubs clearly indicated that at some time on the twenty-seventh of May—the day of the smash—he had returned to Cambridge and drawn more money, and from that time to this he evidently had been living his routine life under the name by which his checks were honored at the bank.

He wondered what Hoggie thought of him; more anxiously, he wondered about Marguerite. He walked rapidly into Roxbury with the wild idea that he might make her appear again at the same street-corner where he had first found her; but she wasn't in sight, and before he wasted too much time in Roxbury, he got his senses together and hailed a taxi and took the first train to Pawtucket.

The *Transcript* carried a short dispatch from a mid-western city to the effect that John Olander was to hang at six the next morning. The thing was actual, then, and the time had not been changed. The account made no comment upon John Olander's crime, and none about the certainty of his guilt or innocence. The dispatch seemed to assume that everyone knew about John Olander and why he was to be hanged. Nathan wondered whether he himself had known in his other self and what he might have thought about it, but he didn't bother about it very much. Hoggie had said that Olander was innocent; and Marguerite said so too. It was far pleasanter to think of Marguerite and of pleasing her than of a hanging; anyway, it was far pleasanter to think of saving a man from hanging than of thinking about the hanging. So Nathan sat back planning—when he wasn't thinking about Marguerite!—just how he would do it. Of course, he might be so late that they wouldn't give him a chance; most probably they all had left Pawtucket by this time.

He hurried in a motorcar from the station to Hoggie's field, and saw lights in the workshop and in the hangar. Dismissing the car and running up, he found Hoggie in the hangar with a couple of mechanics, working like mad, and with them was Marguerite! With Marguerite was a mutt—an absolute mutt in flying togs, gauntlets, helmet, goggles on a tape about his neck and with all the rest of the picturesque paraphernalia which nobody really uses.

Nathan did not hear what they were saying; and he didn't wait to find out. He walked up to that decked-out pilot and took him by the back of the neck.

"Why, Little Boy Blew!" Marguerite gasped.

NATHAN replied only by shaking the inhabitant of the paraphernalia. His inhibitions, he felt, had never been more completely off the job. "Peel the practical part of those clothes!" he commanded the inhabitant roughly. "I want to put them on!"

"Why, Little Boy Blew!" Marguerite cried with admiring reproach. "We thought you'd blown for good!"

"Hoggie," said Nathan, as the little man came up, "I told you plainly I'd come back in time. You said you couldn't possibly be ready until tonight. Here I am!"

Of course, he had no idea what he had told Hoggie after the smash or whether he had been in condition to talk or Hoggie to listen. But it was plain what he should have said; for after that smash it must have looked like a doubtful thing if Hoggie ever could get the ship ready again in nine days; and as it was, they were making a very close thing of it—altogether too close for them to argue with the snappiest pilot from the A. E. F. or to quarrel with him for not coming sooner.

"We're almost ready, sir," Hoggie said respectfully—indeed, apologetically. "This time when you take her up, you can depend upon her all through." So Hoggie had found the smash due to failure of materials rather than to the pilot!

"That's good," Nathan said briefly.

"You understand now, of course, sir, that she'll have to go there on her wings." Hoggie's original idea had been to take the ship, knocked down, to some point a good deal closer to John Olander than was Pawtucket.

"Of course," Nathan said. "Who goes with me?" he asked, glancing at the forward seat.

"He meant to; but I guess I'll go now," said Marguerite.

TWENTY minutes later, with Marguerite in the seat before him, he got away. It was nine o'clock then and so they had eight hours—losing an hour from change of time—before the time of Olander's hanging in the morning. They had some seven hundred miles to fly, with half a moon hanging in the West for light; but Hoggie's ship seemed good for it. She wasn't packing all her fuel and oil for the distance; she was built more for maneuvering than for endurance. Nathan was to take oil and gas at a special spot in Pennsylvania, and then once more in Ohio before the final hop to the execution of Olander. Nathan set her up to a hundred miles an hour with Hoggie's improved Liberty motor hitting perfectly. The propeller in front of Marguerite beat on and on with reassuring, rhythmical roar; the little illumined dials told that everything was well; below, the city lights and the river-gleams and the dark spaces of farmland lay just as the night chart, on Nathan's mapboard, said they should be. Marguerite was with him, and the past possessor of the paraphernalia —and everyone else who might have occupied Marguerite's mind—was a mile and two thirds farther away every minute.

NATHAN felt pretty good. As he leaned forward in his seat, Marguerite leaned back, looked about and smiled. He was not going to carry her over the jail-yard for the final act; he was to leave her at the field from which he would hop on the last flight and to which he would return with Olander. There was not the slightest doubt in his mind that he would get Olander, and he did not associate the getting with danger to himself; yet somehow he felt that the seat in front of him soon would be no place for a girl. Hoggie had made mumbling noises to him, before the start, about his share of a million dollars if they saved Olander; but even Hoggie had realized that he wasn't doing this for money. It was for the stunt itself—and for Marguerite. She knew that, he thought; and if she didn't, he would make it perfectly plain to her after he had rescued Olander. But he would have preferred to have said a few words to her right now.

That business of going back to his other self so suddenly after the bump on May 27th rather disconcerted him. A slight smash, or even a bit of a bump upon landing, and he might become a complete stranger to Marguerite for ten days again! So the next time she turned about and smiled, he put out his hand; and when she extended hers, he caught it and bent forward far enough to kiss her fingers. Several times after that she put back her hand.

He knew nothing whatever about her feelings for the other men; but he knew nothing whatever about his own for other girls. That made it even, he thought; and she seemed satisfied. Even if you have your inhibitions working full time, and overtime too, there is something about flying at night, with only a half-moon for chaperon, which would make a nun a bit regardless; and Marguerite was no nun. Her slim, soft fingers and her smile in the moonlight hinted all sorts of things. But they couldn't say anything with the engine and propeller going. They couldn't stop to say anything even when they landed in the field in Pennsylvania. It was no place to delay with half their flight yet before them; so he decided to reach the next field in plenty of time for a word or two.

BUT soon after they got up again, the moon was gone. The stars gave enough light to make flying possible but mighty uncertain. You had to dip down and circle around rather often to make sure where you were—you can lose yourself so awfully fast when flying at a hundred miles an hour.

Then a wind came up, a head-wind mostly, though no wind ever keeps steadily in one direction, and by changing your level, you can find a current sweeping in almost any direction. Nathan did change level often; but the wind was most of the time against him.

Now, a thirty-mile wind, which is really no more than a strong breeze, takes just thirty miles an hour off your progress; you fly through the air just as fast, but for every hundred miles your propeller pulls forward, you drift thirty miles back.

Nathan reckoned this and opened his throttle wider; but he was late—altogether too late, when arriving at the final field, for more than a last good look at Marguerite in the gray morning light.

"You be here when I come back!" he commanded her.

"You come back!" she ordered him in reply. A mechanic told him that all was set, and he sprang to his seat and set off alone on the last hop.

THE dawn light was making the path-finding easier; but the wind, which had been rising all night, still was strengthening. It continued to hold him back; but even if they were to hang John Olander very promptly at six—which was at five by the hour of the clock which he carried with him from the East—he calculated he could arrive over the jail-yard in time. The wind troubled him chiefly in his calculations about landing. He had pinned before him, under the celluloid over his map-board, the chart of the jail-yard with the gallows and the walls all about it and the roof upon which he had planned to land. It offered narrow enough and short enough stopping-space at the very best, even if he could count upon coming down upon the roof in a calm or with a head-wind blowing exactly along the length of the roof. With a strong wind blowing in the opposite direction or blowing at right angles to the line of his run, landing upon that roof would become simply impossible.

One funny feature about flying through the air is that you cannot tell from your own feelings, or from any instruments which you carry with you, in what direction or how strongly the wind is blowing. Your sensations and your instruments alike give you only your relative rush through the air and do not tell directly how the air immersing you is traveling. Flying low, you can tell this best from the trees, from dust and from the direction in which the smoke is going.

IT was too early for much smoke even in the outskirts of the city where John Olander was to hang; but Nathan could witness that trees were blowing and dust was sweeping in clouds down the east and west streets. The wind on the ground was blowing almost due west; and now he could see the smoke from factory chimneys streaking straight and flat to the west. Hoggie had carefully noted the exact directions of the walls and the buildings about the gallows; and the roof—the only roof upon which even the snappiest stunt-pilot from the A. E. F. could possibly land—lay north and south.

Nathan flew swiftly over the center of the city, and a little away to the west he distinguished the group of buildings and the walls of the inclosure which Hoggie so carefully had drawn for him; he could see that the arrangement of the gibbet and the platforms were just as Hoggie had expected it to be. He could see a speck of a man moving about alone inside the yard. It was twelve minutes to five by Nathan's chronometer; twelve minutes to six by the Central Time clocks on the ground. The streets of the city still showed open and almost deserted except for creeping oblongs which were the roofs of early morning electric cars, and here and there small parallelograms, roofs of milk-carts, probably. But about the jail where was to be the hanging, swiftly growing dots indicated that the inevitable crowd of the curious and morbid was collecting. Some of them undoubtedly were looking up at the biplane in the sky; and having made sure that the jail-yard was empty but for the single man, Nathan swooped away.

HE had come close enough, he was certain, for the fusillade of the motor-exhaust and the clatter of his propeller to reach down through the prison roof to the man waiting for eleven minutes more to pass before his fellows would take him out under the sky of the dawning day and hang him. Word had gone to John Olander—so Hoggie had said—that at the last moment a pilot of an airplane would make an attempt to save him; the word had detailed what the pilot would try to do and what John Olander must attempt. So Nathan knew that the sound of his ship —whatever it had meant to others in the jail—had told John Olander that the promised attempt was to be made. Nathan had not thought of that till it was too late; for now when he had seen the roof and the sweep of the smoke and the dust below, he knew he could not make the landing.

He was not conscious of fear restraining him. No; those inhibitions which might have bothered him in his ordinary state, remained completely quiescent now. Not fear, but reason, prevented him. He looked about to where, coiled below the fuselage, were bound the rope loops which he was to fling from the roof upon alighting, to pull John Olander up for their getaway together. The wind had made their plan simply impossible. It was a thirty or thirty-five-mile wind close to the ground, he estimated. The time was eight minutes to six, and he turned back. He hated to strengthen hope in John Olander and, by the noise of the motors, make the man think that something was to be done to save him; but he had to come back to re-examine possibilities. He saw something flashing in the air at his level and a mile or so to the right: another biplane, bound also for the jail. Had John Olander other friends who were trying to save him? Nathan dashed back more swiftly, curiously and a little jealously, to see what the other pilot thought he would do. The ships drew together and Nathan made out the bulk of photographic apparatus beside the fuselage and pointed down; he saw passengers in the seats before the pilot.

"Newspaper-ship," he said to himself as they passed close. "They're seeing it from above and are going to get photographs of it."

Another ship, similarly equipped, spiraled into the sky; and both of them watched each other, maneuvering about and paying little attention to Nathan. They were rivals for the same stuff and endeavoring to outdo each other; they seemed to think Nathan only an uninteresting individual out upon his own for a good look at the hanging. When they swooped and circled over the gallows, Nathan followed them. He could see four or five men about the gibbet; and for an instant, he thought the hanging was on. But they were men making the last test of the rope and the fall. The newspaper-ships went closer to photograph the test; but Nathan climbed and hovered down the wind to the east and a thousand feet or so higher.

He had been thinking of all those motor noises reaching the ears of the man with four minutes now to live, unless some one from the sky saved him. He doubted whether John Olander would think of newspapers having airplanes about just to photograph his hanging. No; it must seem to John Olander that an esquadrille had arrived to rescue him three minutes from now.

TWO minutes! If the wind below let up; suppose, for only a few seconds at just the right instant, it should change direction or come a calm! That was a wild thing to hope; nothing at all to count

upon. One minute! The time! Nathan was still hovering a half mile away to the east, down-wind, and two thousand feet up.

The door of the jail-yard was opening and the officials were taking John Olander out under the sky and upon the high, raised walk built to the platform of the gallows. Nathan could not see that from where he hovered; he could see only the newspaper-ships diving down close with their cameras for the snapshot.

Nathan had shut off his motor, and was falling with his propeller turning over only by the rush of the drop through the air. The wind was not failing; it was blowing stronger than before, if anything, and directly across the line of that narrow roof where Hoggie had planned that Nathan must land. But Nathan was thinking nothing of the roof; and the wind —that, from having been an obstacle, had become the element he was risking all upon. Slowly he was slipping forward and down to the gallows.

Not slowly in reference to the wind; for that was blowing past him, and as swiftly as usually it rushed upon his wings in the smooth descent of a volplane. He was moving through the air fast enough; his slowness was only in reference to the ground.

Hoggie had planned that ship of his for a good, flat gliding-angle and to make it capable of landing at low speed. Fifty miles an hour would hold it in the air, Hoggie had said; and Nathan was pretty sure that he had held her in the air at forty-five. Now the wind was blowing thirty-five at the very least. That cut Nathan's speed over the ground down to ten miles an hour—less, indeed, when those great gusts blew! And now he saw how the performance of the newspaper-'planes had made his way easier. Those around Olander, looked up as Nathan dove down; but they could not distinguish differences between his ship and the others. They thought he was coming down for pictures, too. At any rate, they made no move; they just looked up—the jail-guards and the hangmen and the man with the straps in his hand for the binding of John Olander's limbs; the priest with the book and those gathered within the jail-yard and required by law to witness the hanging; and those crowding outside the walls and kept back by guards. The man who was about to be hanged stood motionless. He knew the purpose of this dive; but he betrayed it by no sign. Motionless, for his life, he stood while Nathan swept closer. It took all his nerve to do that; it took a good deal of coolness and steadiness and skill for Nathan to come on slowly, yet maintaining his elevation, and steer his ship neither to the right nor left of that gallows. A hundred yards off, he jerked the cord which bound the loops of rope beneath the fuselage; and as he came on, the rope reeled down and trailed along the ground.

Shouts, yells, screams with a shot or two had reached him just as he "gave her the gun" and before his engine-noises shut off all other sound. The yells were hysterical, triumphant; he had done something that the crowd wildly, madly acclaimed. He could see the little specks outside the jail-yard leaping and dancing about; he could see little puffs of smoke which were jail-guards firing pistols and revolvers at him. But he did not care. He could feel the strong, steady rise of his ship and the continuance of the tug which told him that, when he went over the gallows, his rope had not fouled but some one had caught and clung on and he had that some one swinging below.

Nathan set his controls as steadily as possible and went back to look down; yes, there was Olander. Nathan seized the rope and started to pull him up. He had lifted and secured only a yard or so, when he had to go back to his controls. The nearest newspaper-ship was no nearer; the other was far behind now. But Nathan had to pull Olander up; it was risky business, but it had to be done. He lifted Olander ten feet farther; and then stepped back to the controls; ten feet more; and back again to his levers, for the ship was diving frightfully and tumbling. Now he had Olander almost to the fuselage, and the newspaper-ship, which so far had kept up, was almost out of sight; but Hoggie's old ship was doing a queer dive on her own account, with no one in the pilot's seat; and altogether too close to earth, too. So Nathan gave Olander just one more lift and sprang back; then. . . . .

A YOUNG gentleman found himself walking along a pleasant country road in a flat farmland quite strange to him. He had, over his own clothes, certain garments of an aviator; and though he could remember distinctly that during the war he had been an aviator and more recently

had flown now and then at a field near Harvard, he had no recollection of putting on these garments for a flight. They were hot, anyway; so he took them off and pushed them under a bush beside the road. Then he proceeded toward a little city of wooden stores and houses, on both sides of a narrow stream. He hated to appear such an awful fool; but as he evidently had come there in an airplane, the question was excusable when he asked a citizen the name of the town.

The man said, "Plymouth," which certainly was foolish, for Plymouth, of course, was on the sea—the place where the Pilgrims landed and all that; and the Pennsylvania Railroad does not run through Plymouth, nor does the Vandalia line. Yet Plymouth was the name on the station. So without asking, he went about finding out the name of the state. It was Indiana.

This was rather serious. Once before the young man remembered coming to himself like this; the place then had been Pawtucket. That was not so far from Cambridge that it suggested anything too unusual during the interval lost from his recollection. But to be out in Plymouth, Indiana, not knowing how he got there!

He went back to the station quite soberly, and bought a ticket for New York. He recalled that, when he had previously come to himself out of a state of forgetfulness, he had gone to the Harvard library and looked up "amnesia" and "double personalties" and such; and he had found a decidedly interesting book by some great French "prof" who had lectured once at Harvard. Reaching into his pocket, he found the memo he had made at that time:

> Pierre Janet ". . . . when she comes back to the state No. 1, she remembers only this state and nothing more. It is the same when she comes back to the state No. 2."

He wondered what he, in state No. 2, had thought about that paper. It certainly seemed to cover his case, he thought.

Upon the train he bought a Chicago afternoon paper in which he read, among other sensations, the account of a spectacular rescue of one John Olander from hanging.

The newspaper described, in thrilling clearness, the skillful maneuvering and the final drop and dash of the rescuing airplane; then the account continued:

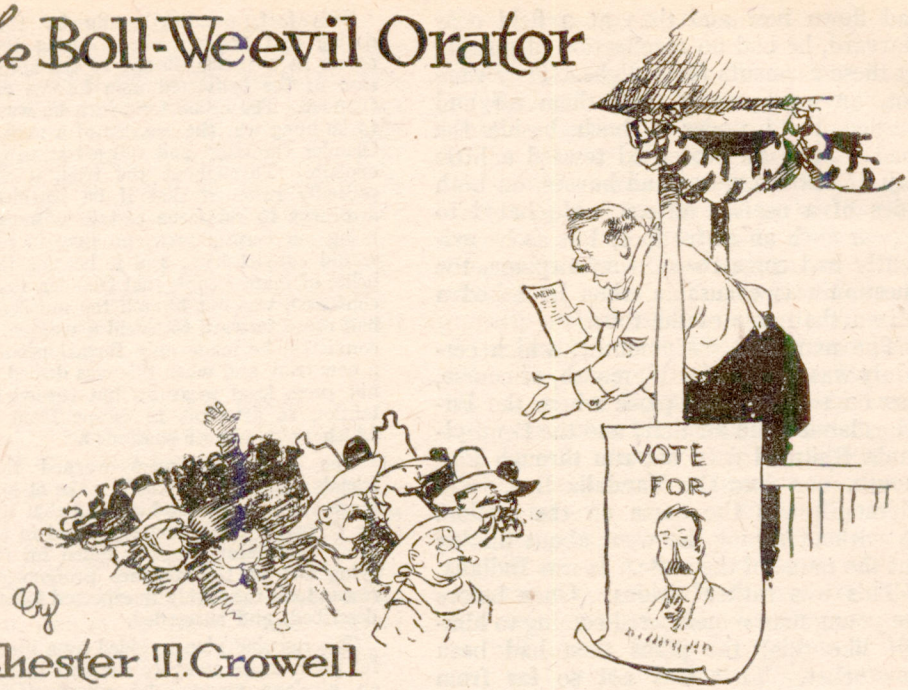
> This feat, paralleled only by the most daring and reckless pilots during the war, comes as a fitting climax to the spectacular case of the convicted man known as John Olander. The crime for which he was about to be hung was the murder of a man, which Olander confessed and refused steadfastly to explain. Throughout the trial, it was repeatedly rumored that if he permitted his attorneys to subpoena certain witnesses and bring out certain facts, no jury in the land would convict him; and it became the firm belief of many people that Olander, though he confessed, was not himself the murderer, but had come forward to shield a woman. When convicted, he made only formal petition for a new trial, and when this was denied, he did not press legal measures but turned his attention to attempts to escape from prison, which twice almost succeeded.
>
> The authorities were warned that his friends undoubtedly would make at least one more attempt to save him, and that it would be desperate in the extreme; and in spite of every precaution properly taken for the carrying out of the sentence pronounced, the rescue took the highly unexpected form above described, and succeeded.
>
> The rescuing plane, guided by a most skillful pilot, made away to the east pursued by an airplane manned by representatives of this paper, which was in the chase long after the other newspaper-airplane was forced to land; but the rescue 'plane finally proved to have the better wings. But half an hour after it was lost to sight, it was seen to fall in a field in Marshall County. Farmers who rushed to the spot reported that two men, apparently uninjured, fled from the airship, which was found with undercarriage smashed and one wing broken. The local authorities, after being notified of the identity of the passenger in the plane, immediately started a search; but it was then so late that Olander and his daring rescuer already were far away.

THE young man in the Pullman for New York City turned back the paper to reread the hair-raising report of the rescue as it appeared to the newspaper writer.

"If half that is true, that bird certainly had his nerve," he said to himself of the pilot. "I wonder—well, I just wonder if it's Marshall County, Indiana, that Plymouth is in." And when investigation developed that to be the fact, he leaned back in his seat not uncontentedly.

"Suppose we *were* the pilot, old chap?" he questioned to himself, half dreamily; for whatever he had been doing to get from Boston to Plymouth, Indiana, he evidently had not been sleeping. "Well, if we were, any time we go back to state No. 2, as described by old Janet, it's all right with me! Just all right with me!" And so he went to sleep.

# The Boll-Weevil Orator




By Chester T. Crowell

WITH his sleeves rolled up, exposing a pair of muscular, hairy arms grown fat, Mack Mason assisted the carpenter who was rebuilding the shed in the back yard. Beside him stood Samantha Pearline Johnson, who was perspiring freely, and from time to time assisting the two white men. Mack Mason had purchased a Shetland pony for his two-year-old adopted baby girl, and now there must be housing facilities for it. Samantha Pearline had explained that the baby would not be interested in a Shetland pony at her age, but Mack Mason was not to be turned from his purpose. The pony had been shipped by express and now stood in the yard in front of the little white cottage in Zephyr, State of Mesquite, occupied by Mack Mason and his friend Senator Robert Culpepper Logwood.

The carpenter lifted a heavy rotted board that had been half buried in the dirt floor of the shed. A snake wriggled away. Mack Mason slammed down the board he was carrying and killed the snake.

"You ought not to have done that," declared the carpenter. "Snakes eat rats and protect your feed."

"They do!" exclaimed Mack Mason. Then turning to Samantha Pearline, he asked: "Don't that give you an idea, Samantha?" She stared at him.

"No suh," she finally admitted, "that don't give me no idea."

"Well, it gives me one," Mason asserted proudly. "You ought to get a basket of snakes to protect the feed. Feed is high."

"Look heah, white man, I don't allow no snake to he'p me do nothin'!" snapped Samantha Pearline. Mack Mason looked at her shiny, round face reprovingly, then walked into the house and sat down beside Senator Logwood, who was reading a volume of recent court-decisions.

"Are you going to get your old muskets and bows and arrows and relic things?" he asked the former State senator. Senator Logwood nodded affirmatively.

"How's he going to pack them?" Mason asked. "In that long box?" Senator Logwood again nodded. Samantha Pearline entered the room, looking sourly in the direction of Mack Mason. Her lips were moving, but she made no sound. Mason picked up at random one of the letters lying on the table, a bill for milk, and began a pretense of reading aloud:

"I regret that I cannot send you the singing rat. It has a beautiful contralto voice but a bad disposition. I can send you a talking rat with an affectionate and sociable disposition—"

"Look heah, Mistah Mason," Samantha

Pearline interrupted, "that pore little baby don't need no talking rat and no singing rat."

"Certainly she does," Mason replied without the slightest indication of a smile. Senator Logwood was paying no attention to the conversation.

"Whah you gwina put dat rat?" Samantha demanded.

"It is a sociable rat, so we shall give it the run of the house," Mason said. "I have known of talking rats being trained to climb on the bed in the morning and say: 'Good morning—did you rest well last night?' They are better than alarm-clocks."

"Any time a rat climb on my baid and say good mawnin', you gwina need a flyin' rat to catch me," Samantha asserted.

"HAVE you a dime?" Mason asked, with a sober face. Samantha produced a dime, and Mason put it in his pocket.

"Ah don't owe you no dime," she objected after a reasonable wait for an explanation which Mason seemed to have no intention of giving.

"I made a first payment on a coffin," Mason explained. "It is a beautiful coffin, and only ten cents a week. There isn't anything crooked about it either, because they deliver the coffin at once. It will be here today."

"Ah don't want no coffin," Samantha declared.

"Don't you pay ten cents a week to a burial society? Don't you carry a card in the Seven Sisters of the Society of the Lighted Candles?" Mason demanded.

"That's diff'unt," Samantha said. "Ah don't want no coffin heah in de house whah Ah go to sleep. A basket of snakes and a talking rat is enough."

"Well, the coffin will be here this afternoon," said Mason firmly. "I thought I was doing you a favor."

There was a knock at the front door. The housekeeper opened it, and there stood a man with a large oblong wooden box standing on end. It might very well have contained a coffin. Samantha rushed to the front door.

"Take it back," she pleaded. "Heah you-all's dime." The man looked puzzled.

"Bring it right in here," Senator Logwood called when he glanced over the top of his book at the open door. Samantha waddled back and faced Senator Logwood.

"Ah quits," she announced.

"What's the trouble?" asked Senator Logwood, puzzled.

"Can't live in no house all cluttered up wid singin' rats and snakes and coffins," Samantha said with a sob in her voice.

Senator Logwood turned an accusing glance in the direction of Mason, who was assisting in carrying the large box through the doorway. When the box was in the room and the man who brought it had been paid, Senator Logwood said: "Mack Mason, the weather here is too warm for the baby. You must send her and the nurse and Samantha to the mountains. They should leave on the morning train. We will go to Palo Pinto and meet the committee for Adam Walton. We must get the campaign under way. These are perilous times. I must have a governor in the chair who values my advice. Many of my clients are very much worried, as you know. We must go out of the nursery business and leave it to the women-folks from now on."

"Thank you, suh." Samantha bowed and grinned happily and then asked: "Whah you gwina put dat coffin tonight?"

"That is not a coffin," said Senator Logwood with a kindly but grave tone.

"Knew it wahn't all de time," Samantha Pearline asserted, "but Mistah Mason keep on sayin' 'twas." Mason could repress his smile no longer, and so he walked out of the room.

"Lemme open dat box?" Samantha asked.

"Certainly," replied Senator Logwood. Samantha tore off one board, and then laughed as only a three-hundred-pound negro woman can.

"Dat's de craziest white man what is," she exclaimed. "Sho do keep me in hot watah."

"Yes, I've noticed that," Senator Logwood remarked.

TWO days later Mary, the adopted baby, with her two nurses, was en route to Colorado, while Senator Logwood and Mack Mason were in the Senator's private office in Palo Pinto in conference with Adam Walton, candidate for governor, and his campaign committee of five. The Shetland pony was at the Zephyr livery-stable.

"Your principal appeal to the voters is your record on the general revision of tax-laws of the State of Mesquite, while you were a member of the lower house of the

legislature," Senator Logwood began gravely. Adam Walton tried to be equally grave, but there was a twinkle in his eye. The members of his campaign committee did not know that everything he had done as a legislator was done on the advice of Senator Logwood—and he was pledged to secrecy. Mack Mason was party to the secret, but looking gravely or stupidly innocent was no task for him; it was a habit.

"Therefore," continued Senator Logwood, "you should have as a cardinal plank—economy."

EVERYONE nodded assent. "You should also favor laws to stimulate irrigation, forestry and home-owning." More approving nods. "You are strong for Americanism. Using the general term you can make it comprise all your platform and indicate that it is not in harmony with Judge Henderson's platform, whatever his platform proves to be. These general catchwords are very useful in a political campaign."

Everyone except Senator Logwood and Mack Mason smiled. "You are for good roads and schools, eloquently so," pursued the Senator. "But nothing too specific, because you are also for economy. You deplore the high cost of living and heap curses on the profiteers, but beware remedies, for they are all boomerangs in politics. We will see if we can do anything about it after you are elected, but I doubt it. It is summer now. The primaries are in July. After you are the Democratic nominee, you have until the following January before you take office. Perhaps the situation will be improved by that time. The people may become accustomed to it. At any rate avoid specific remedies beyond saying profiteers ought to be in jail. Everyone favors that. But don't try to name the profiteers, because everyone has an alibi. These are the essentials of a good platform."

"But it doesn't provide an issue," Adam Walton objected.

"That we can attend to when one is needed," Senator Logwood replied with a smile. This seemed satisfactory, and the five committee-members rose. Senator Logwood bowed them out in his knightly manner and then turned to Mason, instructing him to walk around to Adam Walton's hotel and bring Walton back alone for the real conference. Fifteen minutes later Mack Mason and Adam Walton were again seated in Senator Logwood's private office.

"As soon as Albert Wood has heard Judge Henderson's opening speech," said Senator Logwood, "he will join you. In the interim you will leave with us a suit of old clothes that fits well." Adam Walton opened his eyes wide, but Senator Logwood calmly proceeded. "There are some parts of the State which have trifling oddities of dress. You will always be properly attired in harmony with the ideas of the people among whom you find yourself. No living man knows the State as well as Albert Wood, and he will travel with you where his advice is needed. He will tell you what to wear and whether to smoke a cobpipe or a cigar, or to chew or to let tobacco alone. You will always refer to prohibition as a dead issue, and we will see to it that you are an anti in anti territory—that is to say, territory with anti sympathies. In dry territory we will make Judge Henderson a very sorry sort of prohibitionist. Albert Wood will tell you whether to ride in a day-coach or a Pullman and will have the right make of automobile available where you must rent one."

"There's more to this than I thought," Adam Walton commented with a smile. He was a well built man of thirty-seven years who had been elected to the legislature from one of the few cities in the State and knew very little of the rural districts which cast seventy per cent of the votes. He was an electrician to whom a seat in the lower house had been presented because it was customary to give labor one of the three seats that county had. And under the watchful guidance of Senator Logwood he had made an astonishing record, which had captivated the State.

"When you sold the cottage during the war, what did you do with the money?" Senator Logwood asked.

"BOUGHT Liberty Bonds," Walton replied. "Couldn't build another one because the Council of Defense wouldn't grant permits."

"Did you try to get one?"

"No sir."

"Good!" Senator Logwood commented. "Mason, note that. There's your war-record. He probably bought more bonds than Judge Henderson, and he was working for eight dollars a day. Sold his home to aid the army."

"Damn' good stuff," Mason agreed.

"It isn't fair, though," Walton objected seriously, "because you know I sold my home to take the large profit offered."

"By the time Henderson's gang gets on your trail, you wont mind that," Mack Mason replied. "He'll do anything. He called me a crook once in a speech." Senator Logwood looked anxiously at Mack Mason to see if he was smiling at his joke, but Mason wore an aggrieved expression.

"WE might have something in the platform about the League of Nations, but I don't know anything about it. Do you?" asked Senator Logwood.

"Can't make head or tail of it," Walton replied. He looked toward Mason.

"You can search me," Mason said.

"I guess we will leave the treaty out," mused Senator Logwood. "Albert Wood will find out where each Democratic candidate for the presidential nomination is most popular, and you can refer to him there as a great Democrat." Adam Walton nodded. He was not greatly interested in politics, but the governorship appeared within reach after his record in the lower house, and he felt sure that with Senator Logwood at his elbow he could be as great a governor as he had been legislator.

Nor was his confidence misplaced. Senator Logwood had served the State of Mesquite in so many ways that he had come to regard himself as its godfather. He collected its historic documents and relics, preserved its traditions and had saved much of its history by his loving interest. Because of his scholarly attainments, great legal ability, statesmanship and diplomacy, his acquaintance was considered an honor, and his friendship was a rare jewel. Situations which called for superlobbying with honest purposes usually found their way by devious routes to his private office. His methods were not always above reproach, but his purposes were always patriotic. Certainly they stood the test of his own conscience. He loved the game, and if the rules were not perfect, he felt that he bore no part of the guilt for that fact. The time had come when business was so much affected by government—and so many theories which led away from proved ground "trod by the fathers of democracy" were being introduced—that he felt that his beloved State needed his own safe hand at the helm. So he was arranging to put it there through Adam Walton.

"You will go home now and rest and prepare to open your campaign with a speech in your own home town," said Senator Logwood, closing the conference. "Judge Henderson will speak the same day in his home town. Albert Wood will report to me on that speech and then join you for your tour. In the meantime do not forget the suit of old clothes. What Wood orders made for you must fit." Senator Logwood rose and extended his hand to the candidate.

"Senator, I don't know how to thank you," said Adam Walton. "You are the best friend I have in the world. I must lean upon you heavily, and I am sorry there is nothing I can do to repay you for your help."

"Make a good governor for the State we love, and you shall have paid me a thousandfold," Senator Logwood said as he bowed. There were tears in Adam Walton's eyes as he walked out of the room. George, Senator Logwood's aged negro servant, also bowed, and closed the door behind the departing visitor.

FIVE days later Albert Wood returned to Palo Pinto to report to Senator Logwood. Albert Wood was tall and slender and dark-complexioned. No feature of his face was impressive. He was neither good-looking nor otherwise. He dressed always in black, and his suit never appeared either new or old. He wore rubber heels. He had a way of being part of any crowd and never being noticed. He had attended ten sessions of the legislature, and his wanderings through the capital had never caused comment; each time he was supposed to be a stranger. He knew every nook and cranny of the State, and the public, private and family records of the public men, but scarcely any of them knew him. He was Senator Logwood's secret-service department. He would travel with Adam Walton and carry his clothing all during the campaign, and no one but Walton and Senator Logwood and Mack Mason would know it.

Senator Logwood drew a cigarette from his monogrammed silver case and slowly lighted it. When he had replaced the silver toy in the vest of his faultlessly tailored suit, he raised his eyebrows and Albert Wood made his report.

"Judge Henderson favors roads, schools, irrigation and forestry. Eloquent but nothing specific. He denounces profiteers

and deeply deplores the high cost of living. No remedy. He's for Americanism eloquently. Did not define it. He is for deporting all Bolsheviki. Avoids committing himself on presidential race. He is very eloquent and outspoken for ferocious enforcement of prohibition, and refers to his long record of service in that campaign."

"Which reminds me," Senator Logwood interrupted, "that it is five o'clock and I always take a drink at five o'clock. I have some excellent stuff saved from the holocaust. Mack Mason gave it to me from his stock." Senator Logwood reached into a lower drawer and drew forth the bottle, at the same time pressing the button which would summon George. This attended to, he raised his bushy gray eyebrows, and Albert Wood proceeded: "Judge Henderson is the most eloquent speaker I have heard in recent years. The effect was tremendous, especially as to prohibition, patriotism and the war. He referred to his age, which might suggest that Walton could have gone into the army. He also referred to his service as a speaker. For your information he bought eight thousand dollars' worth of bonds, but that is in a previous written report, and Mack Mason knows it. That's all."

George entered with two whiskey-glasses and a pitcher of ice-water.

"No, thank you," said Wood. He neither drank nor smoked. Usually he was chewing gum, perhaps because it made him still less conspicuous. Senator Logwood sipped his drink.

"No issue," he remarked. "That's a good start. Walton makes a very poor speech, but sincere and earnest. That's good, too. Everything is just as I want it. The drift will soon be toward Henderson. Then the bombshells. All is well. Join Walton." Albert Wood nodded and departed so silently that George neglected to open the door for him.

MACK MASON was already on the way to perform his task in the campaign. None of his speeches were ever reported in the newspapers. Most of them were delivered from the front steps of village general stores to less than three hundred persons. No one ever knew in advance where he was going to speak. The opposition was generally a week late in learning where he had spoken. He referred to himself as the "champion catch-as-catch-can wool-hat hypnotizer of the world." Where he spoke, there either was no telegraph office or it closed at six o'clock. If one of his speeches had found its way into a city newspaper, his campaigning would have been at a close. He was not a publicity-seeker.

The Saturday morning he rode into Hilldale in an aged and rattling automobile with one fender missing, the usual Saturday crowd was on the square which marked the center of the town. He began at the northeast corner of the square and walked all the way around, stopping everyone he met and telling each: "Brother, there's goin' to be a speakin' at eleven o'clock from the band-stand." The band-stand, a proud structure, was in the center of the square.

HAVING advertised his speech, he returned to the hotel and fished a lot of bunting out of a suitcase, and placards announcing the candidacy of Adam Walton. He summoned the negro boy who presided over the shoe-shining stand in the hotel lobby and said: "Jazbo, take this over to the band-stand and decorate it. Hang one of these pictures on each post and then hurry back and get your four bits. Make haste, because the mayor wants this done, and I'm here representing the next governor."

The negro boy showed the whites of his eyes and hurried away with bunting and placards. There was no mayor in Hilldale because the town was not incorporated, but Mack Mason enjoyed the joke, and the boy had much added pleasure in his task because he thought he served high officialdom.

At eleven o'clock two hundred men gathered around the band-stand. Mack Mason climbed the steps, carrying his coat across his shoulder. As he walked across the ten feet of floor, there was a kindly smile on every face in the crowd. His walk proclaimed him a young man accustomed to the plow. There was a certain hunching of one shoulder higher that the other that they recognized. He mopped his brow, laid the coat across the railing and said: "My fellow-countrymen, I'm just a farmer boy, but I come over here to tell you what I know about this here campaign. I'm through with my cotton-chopping and we aint got much weeds this year, so I can spare the time.

I come to tell you that I know both these men. They wont neither of them be here, and I want to tell you because you are farmers and live in a small place like I do, what I know you want to know about them."

"We do," shouted several men in the crowd.

"YOU men are prohibitionists mostly," Mack Mason continued, "and over our way we are mostly prohis." Mack Mason always pronounced *prohibition* or *prohibitionists* with heavy accent on the *hi,* making it *pro-high-bition.* "We have hearn tell a lot about what a great prohi this here Judge Henderson was, and I always believed it. We mostly voted for him whenever we could. But he went to the bar-association convention in town. A friend of mine sent me one of the bill-of-fares that they call menu. I got it with me here. I'll show it to you. It's got the date and the name of the place and the name of Judge Henderson as toastmaster and everything on it. And right at the start I see that great prohi had some caviar. Maybe you don't know what that is, but I can tell you. It's a Russian drink that'll make a tin cup turn green. And then, next they had some bouillon. That's a French drink that they use when they want to forget everything. And then that noble prohi sopped up some *filet de sole.* If a man gets enough of that in his hide, he'll pick little woolly worms off his coat-sleeves and bat his eyes all the time. And then they had some *filet mignon.* Whisky wasn't strong enough for them. They had to have their dynamite imported. That was the stuff that blew Napoleon to hell and lost the battle of Waterloo.

"But them prohis didn't stop there. They were a long ways from home, and they thought no one would suspect them, when they had been making hot-air law speeches all day; so they tied into some potatoes *au gratin.* Just think, fellow-citizens, of soaking a good honest boiled potato in bug-juice that would make a baby bite its grandma! And then they had some *paté de fois gras.* It's right here on the card, and I'm going to pass it around. They wrapped themselves around that stuff that would make a fishworm play tag with a rattle-snake, and then they had some plum pudding with hard sauce. I'll say it would have to be hard if they were going to feel it after what they'd been drinking. And they closed the damnable debauch with what they call *café noir,* which is another Russian thing that's the same as vodka that the Bolsheviki drink when they are going to kill a few more women and children. And that's the nice gang that's running Judge Henderson for governor, and him a-telling us farmers about all the things he done for prohibition!

"I'm getting tired being fooled. I voted for enough wet prohis. This time I'm agoing to vote for a dry anti. You can look at Adam Walton's face and tell he don't have nothing to do with no vodka nor bouillon. He's a clean young man that works for a living and when he goes to a banquet he takes his wife along. The electricians had a banquet too, but I don't have to translate French to tell you what they had because you can read it yourself. I'm going to show it to you. They ate something. They had soup and fish and fried chicken and baked potatoes with cheese and tea or milk. Here's the bill-of-fare cards, citizens. You can look 'em over and take your choice." Mack Mason handed the two menu-cards to the nearest hand reaching for them, while the crowd cheered.

His speech concluded, Mack Mason jerked down one suspender and ambled off the platform to follow the course of the menu-cards through the crowd. When they were finally returned to him, he went to the hotel for lunch. At two o'clock in the afternoon his bunting was again safely stowed in the suitcase, and he cranked his car and hastened away to repeat the performance that night at some similar place thirty or fifty miles away.

MEANWHILE Judge Henderson's campaign-manager was making these places absolutely safe for a lifelong prominent prohibitionist—places where no campaigning would be necessary.

Just before Mack Mason's rattletrap of an automobile left Hilldale, a young man guarding two suitcases hailed him.

"Going toward Timpson?" he asked.

"Climb in," Mack Mason roared cordially. The young man tried to open the rear door, but it was fastened with baling wire, and so he pitched his suitcases over the sides and then climbed into the front seat beside Mason.

"I heard your speech," the young man ventured timidly but with a twinkle in his

eye. "You ought to be in vaudeville. I'll swear it was the best piece of comedy I ever heard in my life, and they gulped it whole—bouillon and all. Damn me if you aren't an artist. Hopkins is my name. I travel for Schwartz and Smith. What's yours?"

Mason looked at the young man beside him with an expression that can best be compared to that of a calf. It was kindly but uncomprehending. In it there was no resentment, but a bland, childish appreciation of the kindly and complimentary tone of the stranger—also a total failure to comprehend his meaning and an utter inability to think of any fitting reply. Hopkins studied Mack Mason's face, waiting for the mask to fall; but it fell not, neither did it waver. Mason held out a limp and sweaty paw; Hopkins tried to shake heartily but could not. Then Hopkins settled back in his seat miserably and watched the scenery through the haze of dust.

Hopkins pondered the performance of the man beside him a long time. Shortly before the automobile bumped onto Main Street in Timpson he made up his mind to speak.

"My friend," he said, "I am in favor of your candidate. I am glad to see your effective work out here, where probably no other sort of campaigning would be worth while. Still, I feel that I ought to tell you as one honest man to another that you have been shamelessly imposed upon and that the French menu-card is not a wine-list—" Mason was staring with his calflike expression. He had to look at the road ahead, and so his eyes met those of his traveling companion only at intervals. Slowly and very gravely Mason winked one eye just about as an owl would wink. Hopkins stared—astounded.

"Damn you!" he finally exclaimed, and then laughed heartily. "I'm hanged if you didn't put it over on me too. I'm as big a boob as those rubes. Well, shake, and if we ever meet in town, we'll tie into some of that French and Russian poison. Here's my card." Mason tucked the card in the pocket of his dark blue shirt.

"I couldn't tip my hand till you tipped yours," Mason explained.

"Where on earth and how on earth did you learn such art?" Hopkins asked.

"DIDN'T learn it. It's a gift," Mason replied. "The Lord just naturally raised me up to be a politician in the State of Mesquite. I been to three universities to get cured, but it wasn't no use. Right here's the hotel. I don't stop here. There's a little town about eight miles from here where the mixed train stops Wednesdays and Fridays. That's where I'm going to speak tonight. It sure is a fine place. They got a phonograph in the hotel lobby, and two records. One of them is 'Nearer my God to Thee' and the other is a piece from 'Floradora.'"

"Good-by and good luck," Hopkins sang out as he carried his suitcases to the Timpson Hotel. "Don't lose my card."

"I wont," Mason replied. "Don't forget to vote." He stepped on the gas and raised a cloud of dust.

FOUR hours later Mason was speaking from the front porch of the hotel in Gardendale. The first part of his speech was the same as in Hilldale, but Gardendale had made an excellent record on Liberty Bonds during the war, and so he added a paragraph for their particular benefit.

"Adam Walton was working for eight dollars a day. He had a wife and children to support, just like you men. He wanted to go to war, but he couldn't. He wanted to buy more bonds, but he couldn't. So he and the good wife talked it over. They had an offer of fifteen thousand dollars for their little home that had cost them about a third that much. They decided they owed it to the Government to sell that home and buy Liberty Bonds, and that's what they did.

"Judge Henderson is a rich man. The war came on. He couldn't go because he was too old. He took counsel with himself to see what he could do for his country. He didn't have much money to spare, because he needed most of his money for caviar and bouillon, but he reached in his vest pocket and pinched off eight thousand dollars for Liberty Bonds and then went out and made speeches asking everybody to buy all the bonds they could. Now he's telling what he did. He's proud of his record. Adam Walton hasn't told what he did. He's sorry he couldn't do more. You pay your money, and you take your choice. Citizens, I thank you."

"And we're much obliged to you," a spokesman for the crowd yelled in response. . . . .

The campaign had been under way a month, and Judge Henderson's eloquence

as well as his dignity of bearing were telling in the campaign just as Senator Logwood had thought they would. Judge Henderson was a man of broad experience and great knowledge, but Senator Logwood considered him fundamentally unsound—which was generally his verdict on anyone who regarded prohibition as a "moral issue." The man who opposed liquor as a nuisance Senator Logwood reluctantly agreed with, though he never admitted it aloud. His theory of the remedy was to educate everyone to drink as he did—in moderation. But the man who regarded drinking intoxicants as inherently wicked Senator Logwood almost hated, and certainly distrusted as an executive or lawmaker. He could not hate anyone, though he sometimes thought he did. As a matter of fact, he had never known the feeling of hate.

His manner of approach was such that he knew he could never get close to Judge Henderson. If he were going to serve his clients in the future as he had in the past, he simply had to elect Walton.

The lack of a thrilling issue was a sore trial to Adam Walton. He was doing his best, but the generalities which so stirred the imagination of Judge Henderson left the more youthful Walton cold and uninterested. He wondered why Senator Logwood did not suggest something more interesting from the unfailingly fertile brain for which he was known far and wide. Senator Logwood waited patiently until Judge Henderson fell into his trap by saying: "The young man who opposes me cannot even make a speech. How would he grace the office that the mightiest minds of this great State have coveted?" Senator Logwood read this in five morning newspapers with glowing countenance. Then he told George to pack his traveling-bag and telegraphed Adam Walton that he would meet him the following day in San Antonio.

THE next afternoon when Senator Logwood had made himself comfortable in his room in the hotel in San Antonio, he summoned Walton.

"My young friend," said the Senator, when Walton had been ushered in and seated by the smiling George, "there are two more weeks before the primary election. Now we begin the campaign. Elections are queer things. I do not understand them. There is a drift of sentiment from time to time. The man who starts it his way two weeks before election wins. The man who gets the drift too early is in danger of losing. I do not know why there should be a drift at all, but there always is.

"In the cities there is a minority block vote that you hold securely. But you will not win in the cities. In the country Mack Mason is simply raising hell—to put it in his own plain terms. But he is only one man, and this is a big State. Now, you begin your campaign. You speak tonight in this city. Then you go to the country until the day before election, when you close in your home town.

"Tonight you must forget you are speaking in a city, for you are speaking to the country voter through the press. A battery of stenographers will prepare reports of what you say, and copies will go, in shape for immediate use, to every rural newspaper in the great State of Mesquite, and a full report of the speech will go out in circular form to a mailing-list never equaled in the State. I am a great believer in modern office equipment, and I have it all. It wins elections as it wins trade."

"But what am I going to say?" asked Walton.

"Your opponent," continued Senator Logwood, "has promised a greater State department of agriculture. Its function—for your information—is to hire professors to tell farmers how to produce more. You will make fun of book farmers. For some reason the farmers don't appreciate them. Then promise a great department of marketing which will help the farmer sell what he already raises—and when he does that, he can naturally be trusted to raise more."

"That may be mere politics, but it is sound economics," declared Walton with enthusiasm.

"Of course it is," replied Senator Logwood. "My young friend, I play politics because I have to, but I play it with sound economics because I am an honorable man.

"The department of agriculture spends thousands of dollars on experiments. You will promise to have all that work done by the experts of the Agricultural and Mechanical College, and provide funds for them to pay wages to such students as care to work. That will make it possible for thousands of sons of poor tenant farmers or city laborers to walk to that school penniless and work for their educations."

"I would to God I had had such a

chance!" said Walton. His voice was husky with emotion.

Senator Logwood's bright blue eyes glistened as he observed the deep impression his words were making.

"The State uses thousands of dollars' worth of such articles as brooms, mops and goods of simple manufacture in offices and institutions. You will promise to establish small industries near the State university where poor boys can work any sort of hours and make enough to pay board while getting an education. That will put behind you the alumni of those institutions, and they number thousands. I will give you the figures showing how few boys, compared to our population, attend those schools.

"You will pledge yourself to a State bond-issue to lend money to school districts during the present emergency so they can keep the schools up with the demands of the times. You will promise all of your salary as governor to some worthy rural school that is closed for lack of funds. I have a selection for you to choose from."

"HOW the devil will I live?" asked Walton with a smile.

"You will ask the electricians' union to take care of you, and they will—"

"The grandest opportunity for patriotic organized labor since the war!" exclaimed Walton, jumping to his feet.

"I knew you'd like it," said Senator Logwood. "It will give heart to the patriotic workingmen and make the other kind feel like the pariahs they ought to be. It is impossible for a governor to live on his salary anyway—so my purse will be always open to you."

"Why, Senator, the governor gets two dollars a day more than an electrician, and I have always saved money," Walton objected.

"Yes, but you were not a governor," said Senator Logwood. "You were an electrician."

"I must live within my income," protested Walton.

"All right, try it," said Senator Logwood; "but you have my telephone-number and I never desert a friend.

"Now, to proceed, you will promise a State system of good roads, the work to stop during the season when the farmers need labor and to be rushed wherever men are found idle and whenever men are needing employment. Call attention to the awful draining of our labor by industrial States during the war and explain that this must be checked. There you have the best that is in me. It will elect a cigar-store Indian if he can talk. And you can talk. I love you because you are so honest you can't talk unless you have something in your heart as well as on your mind. I like your attitude toward the governorship. You are willing to serve, but you do not covet the office. You see its responsibilities and not its tinsel.

"There is greatness in that broad chest of yours," went on Senator Logwood. "I love you and I trust you. You are going to win. I know what this State needs better than any man in it, and you have the best I could give you. Education is the most sacred responsibility of the State, and there we have been failing. When we fail there, Bolshevism is as natural as the boll weevil in a wet year. I have armed you with the only weapon there is to fight destructive discontent. No State ever went broke on education, and no State ever will, because it pays a thousand per cent interest compounded daily—yea, hourly. It is the only resource there is. Coal is not a resource; iron is not a resource. Men could freeze to death on a mountain of coal or hunt game with stone hatchets over surface iron-ore. But the human brain which knows the uses for these gifts of God is our resource. It is all that stands between us and savagery."

"May I use those very words?" pleaded Walton eagerly.

"Welcome, son, and thanks for the compliment to a talkative old man."

Senator Logwood rose and walked to the bed where his leather case was lying. He drew out the papers referred to previously and handed them to Walton, who studied them thoughtfully.

"One more thing," said Senator Logwood, "and then you must leave me, because I am tired. I'm not as young as I once was. Judge Shook will introduce you simply as 'the man who cannot make a speech.' You make no reference to the introduction. Just wade in and talk the way you feel."

"I can hardly wait," said Walton.

"First time you've felt that way since the campaign opened, isn't it?" asked Senator Logwood.

Walton nodded; Senator Logwood tumbled onto the bed and closed his eyes.

Adam Walton electrified his audience

that night. The crowd sat spellbound for nearly two hours in a torrid auditorium. The newspapers not only devoted three to ten columns each to the event, but picked out eloquent paragraphs for display in large type, in what the printer calls a two-column box. It was the first time more than one column of space had been devoted to a speech by Walton since his opening effort in his home city.

Senator Logwood was among the first to leave the auditorium at the close of the meeting. He hurried to the telegraph-office and sent a telegram which read: "Release posters." Three days later, as if by magic, the face of Adam Walton smiled from show-windows, telephone-poles, fences and walls all over the State of Mesquite. Under the picture were the words: *"Adam Walton, the Poor Man's Friend."*

Albert Wood was now called upon not only as scenic artist but as throat-doctor. Walton would make his speech first at the appointed place and then to the overflow, everywhere he went. The strain was terrific. He rode with a handkerchief tied over his nose to protect him from the irritation of dust. On reaching a destination, Albert Wood brought in the paraphernalia and flushed the speaker's nose and throat. Then he would place a piece of vaseline the size of a pea on Walton's tongue as far back as he could reach. Walton would sit silent for half an hour—and again he had a voice. By the time he reached the hall he was in good condition. Before he went to bed the inside of his nose was greased with cold cream, and there was an ice pack around his neck to hold down the fever. Every day he was speechless for several hours but when the time came, Albert Wood delivered him fresh as a prize-fighter. When he was through speaking, his hands trembled from nervous fatigue, but he would go through the exercises Albert Wood prescribed, and half an hour later he would be sleeping like a baby.

Meanwhile, Judge Henderson was cracking under the strain. He had nothing new to offer, and his voice would not last more than half an hour.

THE last week of the campaign two very frightened candidates sought counsel. Judge Henderson's committee said: "Promise the State will buy vast tracts of land and sell it on long time at low interest to men who served in the war." Judge Henderson did so. The following day Adam Walton received a telegram from Senator Logwood. It said: "Unconstitutional. Details by mail but say so now."

With the telegram in his hand Walton faced Albert Wood and wrote on a tablet, for his voice was gone. "Can I speak again?"

"You will speak every remaining day twice," said Albert Wood with a smile. "Then a long rest. I'll have you singing in an hour. Here's your glass of hot water."

Walton smiled his thanks. His eyes were bloodshot from riding in an automobile in the hot wind, but his sturdy frame yet held much reserve energy, and Albert Wood had measured it by ounces in every movement of the man under his charge—in every hour that Walton slept, in every bite of food he swallowed. Walton took the glass of hot water, and while he drank it, Wood went outside to see which way the wind was blowing. He always placed Walton with his back to the wind when he spoke in the open air.

FOUR days before the election Judge Henderson canceled his remaining engagements and went home, weary alike in body and spirit, and with a pain in his throat that would not let him sleep. He attempted bravely to keep up the fight by giving out statements daily. He held a last conference with his committee.

"Gentlemen," he whispered, the torture his effort cost him written on his face, "Adam Walton cannot be an electrician. He nailed the unconstitutionality of the land-scheme instantly, and he travels alone. He was that way in the legislature. The man has a legal mind of rare quality. We are making a weak close, but there remains the solid rural vote that remembers me well for years of service in a cause close to their hearts."

The committee members did not have the heart to tell their standard-bearer that very tardily they had learned of the activities of Mack Mason. They had sent speakers with proof that Mack Mason was an oil-speculator from Zephyr's fields and had not been a farmer since boyhood. It availed them little, however, because the farmers had seen Mack Mason walk. To deny he was a farmer was but to compound the treachery with a lie against a plain farmer youth.

Three days before the primary election

Mack Mason came noisily into Palo Pinto with his battered automobile and sought Senator Logwood's office.

"Gosh, I'm tired," he said as he flopped his heavy body into one of Senator Logwood's best chairs—utterly disregarding the danger of smashing it.

"Well, Senator, I reckon he's elected. I hope so, because I want to send him that Shetland pony. The feed-bills I get are awful. He's got some kids, and they'll enjoy it. I've sure had a lot of fun. Fourteen blacksmiths have repaired my car, and it's only seen a garage twice. Elections sure are hard on automobiles. Loosen up, Senator, and give me a drink. You know I couldn't carry it with me when I was talking to the witch-burners."

Senator Logwood placed the bottle on the table and rang for George. "Them posters about the poor man's friend are going to get the grapes," Mason continued. "You know, Senator, everyone now'days thinks he's a poor man. Even me, I'm trying to give away my pony. I just naturally can't get used to all these new prices for things. I don't see nobody starving to death, but everybody thinks he's going to. Them posters is genius."

"I'm glad you like them," said Senator Logwood modestly, but he was more proud of those posters than he was of the platform he had supplied Walton.

"SENATOR, I got to go to Colorado right away," Mason declared when he had finished his drink. Senator Logwood raised his eyebrows questioningly.

"All hell's broke loose," Mason declared.

"Baby sick?" Senator Logwood exclaimed.

"No, Samantha Pearline has quit again," Mason explained. "She wants to come home, and she's afraid to come by herself. And she don't like Denver."

"What's the matter with Denver?" asked Senator Logwood.

"Well, she says in her letter that she got all turned around, and ever since she's been there, it seems to her like the sun rises in the north, and it makes her nervous. She's afraid it's the end of the world. And she misses the hot weather."

"Is that why she quit?" asked Senator Logwood.

"No, that aint why she quit. She quit because she had a row with the trained nurse. That nurse wont let her give the baby a bacon-rind to chew on."

"Well, then your plan is to bring Samantha home. You are not going to fire the nurse?" asked Senator Logwood.

"I reckon I got to bring her home," said Mason disconsolately, "but I sure hate to do it. A baby needs a colored mammy. Good-by, Senator."

"Good-by, and don't take any diamond rings with you," said Senator Logwood, referring to Mack Mason's weakness for getting engaged to several girls at one time. Mason closed the door without replying.

On the night of the primary election Mack Mason sat in a Denver newspaper-office until midnight. Then a bulletin was received saying scattering returns from the State of Mesquite, tabulated at that hour, showed Judge Henderson 64,000; Adam Walton 54,000. He went to a telephone-booth and called up campaign headquarters by long distance, asking for Adam Walton.

"Wait until you hear from the forks of the creek," he said. "This is Mack Mason. I'm in Denver."

"Well, I'm in my bedroom," said Adam Walton. "I left campaign headquarters half an hour ago. Senator Logwood has gone home on the night train. He told me the same thing and prepared a statement for me predicting my election by forty thousand majority."

"It will be fifty thousand," declared Mack Mason. "Congratulations and good night."

TWO days later as Mack Mason piloted Samantha Pearline back to the State of Mesquite, he bought a newspaper on the train and eagerly searched the headlines until he found: "ADAM WALTON'S MAJORITY FORTY-ONE THOUSAND." Then he muttered to himself: "That silver-haired old darling is getting rotten in his old age. Missed it a thousand votes out of four hundred and eighty thousand cast. He sure is weak in the head. But I'll say one thing for him: he's got the best catch-as-catch-can, rough-and-tumble, boll-weevil orator in this whole country working for him."

**Another yarn of the versatile Senator Logwood and his inscrutable understudy Mack Mason will be printed in an early issue.**

# "Blink"

**HE was only a mongrel mutsky-dog, with waddly hind legs, a jelly backbone and a ludicrous black patch over one eye—but "Blink's" method of certifying his blue blood furnishes an appealing tale for lovers of dogs of whatever pedigree.**

## Warren H. Miller

THE brilliant glow of the campfire filled the chinks of its own backlogs with red light and cast a warm, orange coloring on the poles of a browse lean-to set up by a party of anglers for a night camp beside Lac Frênier in the Rideau country. Supper was over, and the four men were resting in the warm comfort of the campfire, busy with minor tasks, while the showers of sparks streamed up into the spruce-tops and the glow of the busy fire lit up the under-surfaces of the hemlock fronds overhead, painting them in pale yellows against the dark canopy of the starlit night.

Etienne, the French-Canadian guide, sat curled up on the browse in the back of the lean-to, smoking silently; Hollis Senior was mending a broken rod-tip by the firelight; and Barton Hollis, his son, was winding a silk line on his reel from the spool on which it had come from the maker. The spool danced and bobbed about in the leaves like a live thing, a merry, gamboling, wayward elfin; now rolling off for a short excursion in the duff, now climbing up almost to the fast-spinning reel. Barton guided the line onto the reel-drum carefully, absorbed in his work; his father eyed the bobbing spool pensively, puffing in reflective silence.

The fourth man in camp, Darrach the dog-fancier, was violating the night's peace with an endless harangue on the eternal subject of the thoroughbred. It irritated Hollis Senior, but the dog-man was warm with his subject, and anything *not* a thoroughbred was getting hot shot on the exasperating, wornout theme, "Blood will tell."

"Damn thoroughbreds, anyhow!" exploded Hollis Senior truculently, removing his pipe for an instant and then relapsing into his reverie again. Barton, the youth, jumped as he looked up, and nodded understandingly.

"Me too!" he muttered, and a sudden tear sprang to his eyes.

Darrach looked at them astonished, and was about to turn the batteries of his argument upon them when Hollis Senior held up his hand for silence.

"Barton, boy—get me my flask out of my duffle-bag," he ordered, his tones vibrant with suppressed emotion.

The youth jumped up with alacrity and

did as he was bid. The elder poured a tiny dram of the liquor and handed it to him. Then—

"HERE'S to the mutsky-dog 'Blink'!" he pronounced impressively. "Here's to the mut that—oh, heck, I haven't the words to make him a decent epitaph!" he broke off in rough tenderness, his voice becoming suddenly husky.

"Well—here's to his memory! How!" toasted the son, solemnly tossing off his dram.

The two, father and son, sat looking at each other for some time without speaking; it was evident that their thoughts were far away.

"Without that little yaller-dog cur—I wouldn't be here tonight, dad!" exclaimed the boy, shivering reminiscently, as his eyes blinked back a tear again. "Even I can almost remember it!"

The senior nodded. "Smart! There's nothing in the thoroughbred line that can touch the smartness of a mongrel puppy, let me tell you, friend!" he declared, turning to Darrach.

The latter was about to object, but Etienne stirred in his browse nest and seemed about to say something.

*"C'est vrai, ça!"* he grunted, shaking his head, sagely. "Heem was be ze only dog for ziss co'ntree, too!"

"Well, I seem to be in the minority here," grinned Darrach, nonplused. "Would you mind telling us the story, Hollis?"

Hollis Senior gazed into the firelight as he packed his pipe with his forefinger. He puffed awhile in silence, and then started in:

I HAVEN'T got anything in particular against the thoroughbred, except that he seems to be getting a good deal more than his share of the glory that is being handed round in dogdom. Most of the dogs in this America of ours are muts,—just plain dog, about ten million of them, more or less,—and yet they play their part and play it well in all our lives, too. Who hasn't a soft spot in his heart somewhere for some nondescript little cross-breed—out of Mutt by Jeff, maybe, as you essentially put it just now, I'll grant you; but he was a dog that you once loved, and lost.

This story is about one of them, the mutsky-dog "Blink," of hallowed memory. He came prancing into our camp,—up in old Pike, twenty years ago it was,—a little, round, lively ball of brown dog-flesh, with waddly hind legs and jelly backbone; with impertinent, saucy, black nose, cocked-up, collie ears and forever-busy, little deevil-duyvil of a tail—just a mutsky-dog pup! Where he came from heaven only knows—perhaps Heaven *does* know! Dropped out of some passing farmer's wagon, most likely; but anyhow, there he was, and I first became aware of him when something tugged at my line-spool, just such a black spool as Barton's here, which I was winding on my reel, as he is doing tonight.

"HELLO, Stumpo! Where'd *you* come from?" said I, grinning at the friendly little imp; but he had no eyes for *me*—he was having a prodigious time with that bobbing reel-spool! He'd cock his ears at it as if that bouncing thing were alive and something entirely new in his short life; and then he'd pounce on it with his clumsy little broom-handle paws, and dart back, barking shrill little puppy-barks at it, and then he'd charge forward and worry it, getting tangled up in the line and dashing away in ludicrous fright, as I went on, laughing at his antics quietly, and steadily winding up my line.

We were poor folk, then. The mother and Barton here—a baby of two years just about able to walk—and I, had to take our vacations as cheaply as might be. I loved to fish, just as I do now; and we had rented a little shack alongside a small Pennsylvania bass-pond. The mother and baby were in the cabin, fixing things to rights, while I sat out on the lake-bank winding a new line on my reel, when the mutsky-dog came waddling into our lives as I have described—God bless him!

Well, when the last of the line came off the reel, the pup grabbed up the empty spool, dodged out of my reach and made off with it up toward our cabin. There he met Barton, creeping around in the leaves, and I could hear the shrieks of baby delight. The wife ran out to see what was the matter and grabbed up the pup and adored him all over, from the tip of his moist black nose to the last hair on that vibrating tail of his—and then I knew we had *two* babies on our hands, believe me, for there would have been an awful howl if I had tried to take him away!

I said he was yellow-brown all over—just yaller-dog cur, you know—and soft as silk, didn't I? But he had also a patch on one eye,—the most comical black patch you ever looked at, when he cocked his naughty ears over it, which was most of the time,—and so we named him "Blink," for "blinkers." And he was "B'ink!" to baby Barton's little lips from that time on. Gad! I can hear it yet!

The mutsky-dog was smart, all right! That little devil couldn't have been more than three months old, but mischievous!—say, all the thoroughbred puppies I've ever seen, put together, couldn't hold a candle to him! Mischief was his long suit, and he was a born thief. That very night we missed a lot of things about camp—and you know how aggravating even the loss of a single spoon is when you can't get another.

THE next day was hot and sultry, and the wife and I, with baby in the boat for safe-keeping, went out to catch our meal. We didn't have much luck, only one smallish bass and two little pickerel just over the legal limit—about enough meat for that day and no more. When we got back to camp—*you bet* that mutsky-dog had been busy! He'd had a wonderful time! Everything in the cabin that could be reached had been chewed and bullied and worried to rags and tatters, and not only that—our store of frankfurters, saved against a fishless day, had been dragged down from the wall, and what was left of them wouldn't make a toothful! Worst of all, my wife's pet hat, a jaunty little gray-green felt hunting-hat, with a saucy cockade of hawk-feathers, bill and talon,—a trophy of some pretty decent shooting of mine with telescope-sight,—that hat, men, was a wreck! It looked like a cabbage-leaf "what de green wa'ms done been tamperin' wif," as Tad says down South; and of the feathers and claw but a few scraps were to be discovered in odd corners of the shack. You can bet that I looked for a switch then, and for the mutsky-dog, too; but of course he was nowhere to be found. Smart enough to be somewhere else—you just know it—when Old Man Trouble was out looking for him!

Old Dan Carter, who had a cabin next to ours along the lake, sauntered in that afternoon to pass the time o' heat, so to speak. Barton climbed all over him, baby-fashion, and the old man was delighted, for he loved children. But the idea of a baby in that howling wilderness worried him, too; you could see that in everything he said. After hinting of this and that, he came out with what was really on his mind.

"THERE'S only two things that are bad about old Pike County, Hollis," says he to the wife and me, while he held Barton on his knee and let him play with a maple-knob cup he had whittled, "and those two are the natives and the rattlers—they're bad! I wouldn't let this little fellow too far out of sight if I were you."

"Mercy, no!" cuts in the wife, as I laughed at the idea of snakes. "There's the lake, for one thing—he'd get drowned in a minute if I didn't have him on my mind all the day long."

"Sure!" agrees Carter. "You can laugh at snakes if you want to, Hollis, but let me tell you, I liked to have stepped onto one myself, this very morning! That's what I came over to tell you about. Right back of my cabin, too, it was. I was out to look for a woodpecker that I heard hammering at a tree in the woods, and while walking around gazing up into the trunks, dashed if I didn't step back right onto one of our old Pike rattlers! First I knew, I felt a thump on my leggins, as if some one had thrown a baseball, and I looked back behind me, and there he was, fixin' to strike again! Say—I just *hopped* out of that scenery, I was that scared with the suddenness of it, and, when I'd got myself together again and came back with a club, lookin' for him, he was gone. But, here's his fang-marks on my leggins, now!" he concluded, showing us the two small holes that had almost gone through the tough canvas.

You can bet my wife's eyes went wide at that news! She hugged up Barton, close, as we thanked Dan for the warning, and she wouldn't let him down again for a long while. After the old man had gone, in comes the mutsky-dog, prancing through the cabin door as innocent as anything, standing there with ears cocked and tail curled in the air, and looking for something more to devour, no doubt! Of course I couldn't lick him then,—too late for him to understand what it was all about, you know,—but I decided in my heart that he'd have to go if we had any more foolishness to put up with. So he and Barton

played together on the cabin floor all the rest of that afternoon—and my wife had a new white frock to mend when they got through.

NEXT day was Sunday, and we started off bright and early to get some fish, for our larder was pretty low. We hadn't been casting twenty minutes before a native came down to the lake-bank.

"Hey! It haint none of my business, of course," he called out from the stony field that bordered the lake, "but it's twenty-five dollars *fine* for each of ye—fer fishin' on Sunday! You want to watch out; the constable don't live more'n a mile fr'm here, an' I'm gittin' him right now if ye don't quit!"

You can bet the wife and I unshipped our rods mighty quick, at that! We thanked the hick for warning us, and told him not to bother about the constable, as we hadn't known about those old Sunday blue-laws which are still enforced in Pennsylvania; and then we rowed back to camp disconsolately.

"Anyhow, we have the steak, saved away in the spring cache, so we wont starve," said the wife, cheering me up. "I'll broil it, and we'll make it last over Sunday, and tomorrow we'll catch up on the fish-supply. We'll manage it somehow for today. We wont go hungry."

But there wasn't any steak at the spring when we got back to the camp! The mutsky-dog had attended to that! I trailed the ruins—here a shred of bloody paper, there a torn bit of meat ripped off by a catbrier, yon a discolored leaf—up to our shack. "Blink" had a lair, it developed, for I trailed him to it by the ruins of our steak. A hole in the stone foundation of our shack led to his retreat, and a man couldn't get in there after him without a pickax to chop out the stone masonry. Listening, I could hear him chewing and growling away at our precious steak—the last of our meat; but, as for us, we all went hungry that day! Not even a long pole poked in under the foundation could rout out mutsky-dog from his lair; he had his advantage, and he was plenty smart enough to use it!

Right there, even my wife agreed that the mutsky-dog must go! I was furious, but really half of my mad got away when mutsky-dog, an hour later, came waddling out, his belly a stuffed, solid ball that he could scarcely drag between his preposterous legs, and his tail waving plethorically. The wife and I laughed at the ludicrous little glutton until we nearly died; but just the same, I decided that some one would have to be stern about it, and that, as the mutsky-dog had no home that we could find, I'd have to put him out of business.

I'd brought up the little .22 rifle to camp. It was a fine, accurate little weapon, equipped with the latest thing in telescope-sights, and shooting the Long Rifle cartridge; and it was deadly accurate, for I rather prided myself on my shooting. I had hoped to get in solid with the farmers, if there should be any in that country, by laying out for field woodchucks and shooting them at long range. Of course it turned out that hemlocks and dense forests were a lot more plentiful than farmers and open fields in that country, so the rifle had stood idle in the cabin. But studying the matter over, it seemed the most humane way to be rid of the mutsky-dog, and the baby needn't know about it at all, nor the wife either. Barton would probably grieve a little after missing his pet, but he'd soon get over it; and we couldn't go on this way, not so far from fresh provisions as we were! All I had to do was to lay for the pup out in the brush; a single shot would end it, and there would be no more mutsky-dog to trouble us.

I CONFESS it galled me some to do any such cold-blooded thing, but I was head of the family, and the one responsible if we had to break camp and go home because of "Blink's" depredations; and I hated to leave them both to go on the four-mile tramp to the nearest provision-store. So next morning I finally braced myself to do it. I chose a little, open clearing, up back of camp on the hill, with forest and brush all around it. Hiding in a concealed spot that commanded every vista of it, I took up my station there, pretending that I had gone fishing—and waited. Sooner or later mutsky-dog would wander out there, on one of his puppy explorations. . . . . At any rate, it would be better than stones and a gunny sack in the lake.

After perhaps an hour of vigil, I was vaguely disturbed and then thoroughly alarmed by what seemed to be muffled cries, shrieks even, echoing faintly through the forest. Even at that distance I could tell that they were calls of fright from my wife, moving apparently along the lake-

bank, and I jumped to my feet and ran for the shore, calling back to her reassuringly.

"BABY! Baby! He's lost! Help! Help!" came the faint wails through the forest. As I dashed nearer, the tones became more distinct; she called his name, piteously, sobbing as she ran—I hope never again to hear such heartrending tones! Then I met her, whimpering and wringing her hands, along the lake-bank, sure that he had fallen in and been drowned. She was beside herself, her mother's heart lacerated with mortal anguish, terrified with unthinkable fears, and her pleading cries for her baby Barton, as she ran along the path, would have wrung the heart of a savage. I could not drive her away from that lake-bank, and finally I turned to the forest myself, running and quartering through the thick brush like a hound, ferreting and peering out every vista that opened up—all with no result! I prayed and swore, as I fought my way through the underbrush, searching, searching everywhere, anywhere, for just a sight of that loved little form. It did no good to reassure myself that Barton was just playing about somewhere in the forest. I had once heard the terror-stricken cries of a child lost in the forest who had at last realized that he was beyond human aid, and never could I forget them—the wild, unreasoning, childish terror, the frantic stumbling through stubborn briers, the desperate agony of childish fright. In such a mood, my baby, too, would do *anything*, and quite as like as not, burst out of the brush to cast himself headlong into the lake.

Finally, becoming more and more desperate, I worked up to that same little clearing where I had laid in wait for mutsky-dog, and there, out beyond in the gleaming sunlight, beside a small bush, I glimpsed the white flash of a child's dress! With a glad sob of relief I stopped an instant, and then something urgent—just like an inner voice, it was—whispered to me that there was no time to run forward, —that deadly danger was threatening the child that very instant—the thought, no doubt, induced by Carter's story of the snake the day before. So as the quickest possible way to get to him, I dropped swiftly on one knee, raised the rifle and put the telescope-sights right on baby Barton. The enlarged circular picture showed up instantly,—a close-up of him, as the movies say,—with the cross-hairs dividing and re-dividing his white dress, while the 'scope trembled in my shaking hands, and I peered intently, fearful what its more detailed vision might disclose.

THERE, gentlemen, in the grass in front of the child, I could just make out a round, dark form, like a mottled turban—with the baby's innocent, chubby hand already reaching out towards it! God, the shock of that disclosure; the kind of icy, electric thrill that took hold and wrung my spine until I shook like a leaf! I could even see the smile on baby Barton's face, and could imagine the coo with which he was making up to this new playmate! Then as I held the crazy cross-hairs hard on the spot, seeking some vulnerable mark to aim at, up out of the center of the coil rose a thin neck, topped by an evil, arrow-shaped head—weaving back, back, back, making ready to strike, the steely tongue darting out menacingly. Instantly I tried to pin the cross-hairs on it, following the head about; but it wasn't any use—I just couldn't get the rifle still enough to risk my only shot. When he would strike, no one could guess, but it would be with the swiftness of lightning; and then it would be all over for us—the mother and me! Only a bullet could be quicker now, and I prayed, with the sweat of blood on my brow, for the Lord to—just for one moment!—steady my hand and let me shoot as I never shot before!

AND then, into the 'scope's field of vision pranced—"Blink," the mutsky-dog!

I could see the snake turn its head to face this new menace, and it drew back to strike at him as I strove intensely to steady the cross-hairs on that narrow, flat head, no bigger than a clamshell.

Another innocent! But, was he so innocent? I could see the mutsky-dog's ears go back, and his shoulders hump as his little muzzle jerked up in short, puppy barks and he screwed up his courage to attack the snake. Was it instinct, or was it just his native, yaller-dog smartness that told him that this creature was no new playmate, but a terrible thing, the inveterate enemy of his race, to be fled from above all living things in the world? And, if instinct, why did he not follow its promptings, then—bolt in terror, run, fly for his life, instead of barking and turning

the attention of this deadly thing upon himself?

No, gentlemen; I believe that something of the age-long devotion of the dog for man, that devotion that causes him unhesitatingly to sacrifice his life to protect his master, had entered the mutsky-dog's mind, young as he was! And, if so,—one little canine innocent bravely giving his life to protect the life of another,—that, men, was nothing less than sublime!

THEN—all this had happened in a few seconds, you realize—I gripped the rifle with rigid intensity, and the cross-hairs wavered about and then rested a single, fleeting second, squarely dividing that tiny triangular mark; and I touched the hair-trigger! . . . .

God! I need not tell you of the wild paroxysm of joy that flooded a father's heart, as I saw the 'scope-field filled with writhing, flashing coils that leaped and quivered in the death-throes of that viper—showed the mutsky-dog charging into the thick of it, like a gallant little knight to the rescue—and showed baby Barton, frightened at the sudden violence of it all, attempting to creep away.

"Here he is! Here he is! I've got him! I've got him!" I yelled again and again, at the top of my lungs.

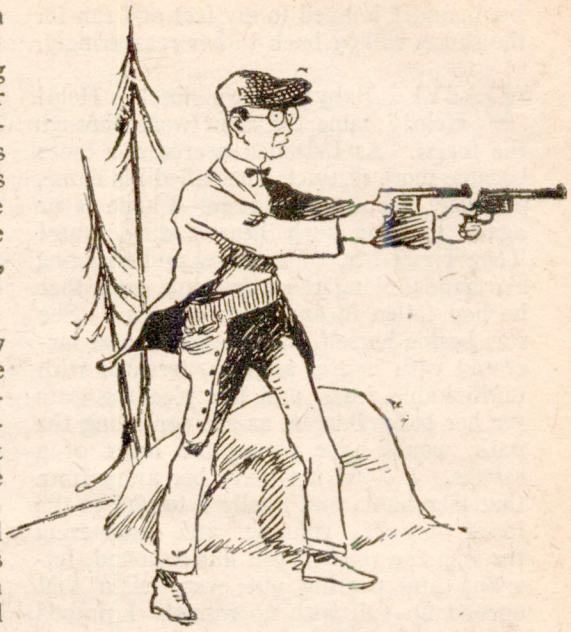
And then, we looked for the mutsky-dog, gentlemen. We found him, near by, lying very still—and on his side, two telltale, tiny spots of blood told of that dauntless courage and devotion that, even in doggish infancy, hesitated not an instant to fly into the jaws of death, that his little human playmate might live.

HOLLIS SENIOR'S voice choked as he finished, and the baby of the tale of twenty years ago watched the fire with tears in his eyes.

"Give me that flask, man!" cried Darrach, suddenly, impulsively, as Hollis remained silent, and grabbing it away fiercely, he poured himself a dram.

"Here's to your mutsky-dog, you two!" he barked. "No dog—no thoroughbred—no man, even, could have done better than he did!"

But it was Etienne, the guide, who pronounced the mutsky-dog's epitaph. "Heem no dead!" his soft voice whispered from the scented depths of his native balsam. "Heem was sleep, forever—in the hearts of M'sieur and hees garçon."



ON the envelope in which I shall seal this confession, I shall write: "Not to be opened until the day of my death." And considering how fortunately everything has turned out, and how happy we are in our little six-room bungalow, I can't refrain from hoping that the day will be far, far distant.

I am naturally a conscientious man; and I will confess it was no easy matter to fly in the face of conscience and withhold the true facts of this case from the ears of my dear wife. I cannot escape from the fact that I am really acting a lie every day; but on the other hand, I am not naturally stern or severe, and it is simply out of my power to shatter the delusions that the dear creature has regarding me—and besides, I truly believe some of them have ceased to be delusions.

But this is not the way I intended to begin—with an argument on the ethics of my position. My name is Horace Ivor Chumley. It is a much more imposing name than I am an imposing man. It always seems to me to work this way: a man who is inclined to be rather insignificant in appearance and such things is so often cursed with a name that should belong to a general.

In the first place, I am rather insignificant physically. I am only five feet six or such a matter, stretch as best I may; and slender in proportion. I have not had

# For Postmortem Perusal

By Edison Marshall

the heart to weigh myself since I was seventeen, when I tipped the beam—if one can use such an expression when the scale shows so slight a figure—at one hundred and ten. To hear the name Chumley, you would naturally picture a rather plump and jovial figure, instead of a mere wisp of a man. My eyes are so weak that I require an entire set of spectacles—long-distance and short-distance, reading, work, and recreation glasses. I always carry all five sets with me, and except for my dear wife I don't think I would ever be able to keep them straight. I have been cursed with a head of hair to which the English-speaking race has never had the heart to give a name. It is somewhat worse than sandy.

BUT this is not the worst. Ever since I was a little boy, when the big dogs on the street used to fill me with terror, I have suffered from timidity. I was never what you call a masterful man at all. When the need arose, it seemed to me that I could never find the courage to stand up bravely for my convictions. The words with which I always planned to overawe my adversaries would simply never come. I had only mediocre success in business. In another even greater matter, I had failed lamentably; and when I tried to enlist, during the late war, the recruiting-officer laughed in my face.

"You carry a gun?" he asked. "You couldn't carry a knittin'-needle!"

But in spite of all these failings, in spite of this timidity that oppressed me, in spite of my discouraging physical appearance and many other disadvantages, I find myself suddenly the most blessed of men. And even now such happiness is upon me that I want to stop and clasp my hands, rather than write. What kind Fate ordains such things? What Spirit of Good Will is it that so kindly watches out for the humbler creatures of the earth? I am still humble, in the face of fortune, but it isn't the same kind of humbleness that kept me down before.

THE event had its real beginning at the session of the L. P. B. It was the night that we chose our local delegate for the great convention in Wyoming. The L. P. B. is the well-known League for the Protection of Bird-life, and by force of circumstance I was a very active member of the organization. In the first place, I was never in particular demand at the dances and other social gatherings in our little middle-western community; and besides, I like the "little folks that chirp." I always have liked them; perhaps because they were timid even as myself. The great convention in Wyoming and my own summer vacation had come simultaneously; and I was secretly hoping that I would be chosen officially to represent our chapter of the League. But as usual, I lacked the courage to put myself forward as a candidate.

And who should be chosen for our representative but Betty herself! No words of mine could tell you about Betty. She is one of those wonderful creatures for whom there have never been any words invented. I used to just sit and wonder at her, at the way she laughed, and at the sparkle in her eyes, and her round, slender arms that I always thought would seem so miraculous about my neck. She wore clothes such as no man ever saw before—I am perfectly certain of that. Some of them were the various kinds of crêpe,—georgette and crêpe machine I believe they are called,—and some were of an airy, fairy kind of fabric that seemed to drift and blow about her like a mist.

She made a little speech of acceptance that was simply a delight to hear; and after the meeting, I met her in the hall.

"I am going to the Wyoming convention

too," I told her with an unusual burst of courage. "My vacation occurs about the same time, and I can't think of a more pleasant way to spend it."

If she wasn't glad, at least she wasn't sorry. So they gave us each a large metal star bearing the letters L. P. B., and sent us on our way. We left on the same train.

WE were a little way across the border of Wyoming when the journey began to lose its commonplace character—if any journey *could* be commonplace with Betty. We were sitting in the same seat, our combined breadths taking up a little more than half of it. She was gazing out the window, her big, lustrous eyes taking in every detail of the rugged landscape. She used some kind of faint and subtle perfume; and as her shoulder touched mine I found myself thinking all kinds of reckless thoughts. I thought how easy it would be for my arm to steal out and—

All at once I found myself pleading. "Betty!" I begged. "Isn't there any use of my asking you again? Can't you give me a crumb of comfort, Betty?"

There was only compassion and friendship in her eyes when she turned to me. "Don't begin that again, Horace," she said. "There is no chance at all. Besides—with girls, Horace, you don't want to ask for a crumb of comfort! You simply want to take it!"

I didn't know what she meant at first, and so I also gazed idly out the window. We had just come into a small city. Then we both laughed, for something very diverting was occurring on the platform.

THE train was pulling out; and a very large, fierce-looking man, with upturned mustaches, had come just too late to board. He was shaking his fist savagely, and swearing at the top of his lungs.

"By Jove!" I exclaimed. "I believe it's another delegate. I saw the gleam of a star on his vest."

The train moved on, ever more swiftly, through as wild and desolate a region as is to be found in all America: wide prairies between great mountains; and only here and there the desert dotted with the buildings of a cattle-ranch. Then we swung into a little, rude, remote frontier-village.

I was looking through the glass of the platform, where I had gone for a smoke, and I saw its name distinctly. "PURPLE GULCH," read the sign on the depot. It was the typical frontier-post of my dreams.

Even the blindest observer could see that some event of startling nature had just occurred in the town. Men were riding madly up and down the street, and all of them seemed to be waving pistols. An excited group had gathered in front of a small brown edifice that bore the title "THE PALACE BAR." The men were mostly clad in "chaps"—I could see a group of them waiting on the platform as the train came in. They all seemed unduly excited, and were evidently awaiting some passenger on our train. Their ponies stood with dangling reins, waiting for their riders.

Just what occurred in the next few seconds will never be quite plain—it was over in so short time. It is unbelievable what a few seconds—nay, a single second—can accomplish; what marvelous effects it can have on a man's life! I remember stepping down from the platform to find out if possible the cause of the excitement. And the next instant the wild, long-mustached, booted-and-spurred group of cowboys who were waiting on the platform seemed to spy me; and like so many madmen they came rushing toward me.

I DID not have time to get back into my car. In an instant they were around me. They did not seem to be unfriendly, and they all seemed to talk at once. Out of the corner of my eye I saw a number of others, evidently waiting for a signal, swing onto their horses and gallop up the street.

The wild crowd was all about me, and one of them was trying to put a pistol-belt around me. Some of them were slapping me on the back, and some were trying to tell the details of what was apparently a daring bank-robbery in the main street of the little city an hour before. "The first posse has gone," I managed to hear, "and we're just waiting for you to start a second."

"But gentlemen!" I tried to say. "What about the League?"

But they didn't seem to hear or understand. One long-mustached desperado came galloping up on a horse, and leading another by the bridle-rein.

"That's your horse," some one said, "and the sooner we get off the better."

Meanwhile I was vainly trying to tell them that they had made some hideous mistake, and I was not the man that they

were looking for. I mentioned the L. P. B. and looked wildly about for Betty. She, I thought, might make these wild creatures understand. They all seemed so excited, so frenzied, they would not listen to me at all. To make it worse, I had on my long-distance glasses and the entire group about me was a meaningless blur. But Betty was blissfully unaware of the situation.

THE whole episode took place within a few seconds; and I believe that in time I would have managed to make myself clear if it had not been for the circumstance of the riderless horse. "That's your horse," the desperado kept saying, "the fastest in the county."

They led it up close, and I turned to object. But the same long arms that had fastened the pistol-belt around me, lifted me up as if I were a sack of grain and threw me into the saddle. Other hands gave me the reins. The frenzied animal began to jump and plunge.

I could not explain to them now. It took all my effort to keep my seat in the saddle.

"He aint a big man, but he sure looks mean!" I heard some one say. It was as a voice in a dream, so busy was I with the plunging animal. "He looks mean!" Even upset as I was, excited and apprehensive, I confess that a little thrill of pleasure crept down my spine. The next instant, before I could speak or make myself plain, the mustang gave a great leap and began to speed like a deer down the street.

I only noticed one thing else, before the scene about the depot was left far behind. Out of the corner of my eye I saw the train starting up without me, and Betty in the act of hurrying down from the platform.

It was useless to try to stop my mount. In the first place, if there was any subject in the world of which I was profoundly ignorant, it was that of riding a horse. I had ridden only tame and civilized animals; and this creature that sped down the village street seemed to be an untamed mustang. I thanked my stars that I wore a tight outing-cap which even the speed of riding could not blow off my head.

I passed the horsemen who had started out first. They had seemed to be waiting for me. Then I heard wild shooting behind me, and at first I thought that probably the townspeople were crying to me to stop my desperate ride. It was several seconds before I had recovered my sense of balance enough so that I could cast a swift glance behind; and I was simply smitten speechless by what I saw.

Riding behind me, exactly as if I were their leader, came a great cavalcade of horsemen. There were at least forty men in it. They were all spurred, and all wore the same great kind of pistol-holsters that flopped at both of my hips. They seemed to be following me. They were shouting, too, and waving their hats.

And now I must confess a strange thing. As I rode in front of that wild army, toward a destination of which I had no idea, and on a mission that I could not guess, I began to feel a strange sense of exhilaration and pleasurable excitement. Perhaps it was the desert wind that streamed in my face. Perhaps it was the sense of leadership; for I could not doubt but that through some horrible mistake these men had mistaken me for their leader. It couldn't be that they were members of the L. P. B. In the first place, they did not wear the silver star; and in the second, the city where the convention was to be held was still one hundred miles distant. And perhaps the greatest reason of all for my queer sense of elation was pride in the horse I rode. The little animal seemed almost to fly as if with no expenditure of energy; and yet the men behind me had to lash and urge their horses to keep pace.

NOW we were at the end of the long village street, and I had lost the desire to return to my train; the thing had gone, anyway. Some imp inside of me told me to continue to play the game. It was such sport as I had never had in all my life before. But I saw the need of questioning some of the men behind me as to the road we were expected to take. Of course we were the second of the two posses in pursuit of the bank-robbers; and evidently its members had waited only for the arrival of their leader on the train.

So I began slowly, and at first unsuccessfully, to check my horse. "Whoa!" I shouted; but it seemed to give no ear. But I noticed when I pulled tight on the reins its pace was slowly checked. I pulled with all my might; and in a moment one of my followers rode alongside.

"Which way did the bandits go?" I shouted.

"Right out the main road," he said.

"Say, you sure do get speed out of that little hoss!"

The words pleased me—I don't know why. They pleased me more than if I had been chosen the official delegate to the L. P. B. convention. Riding madly as I was, I found time to enjoy a little tingle of pleasure all over my body. On we rode.

THE long highway streamed straight away into the mountains — range on range of brown hills that crossed in front of us. Faster we sped, the wildest troop of horsemen that ever raced across the pages of a romantic novel. "If the folks at home could only see me," I remember thinking. "If they could only see these brave followers of mine, all of them hot on my heels!"

By now, I had begun to catch the rhythm of the horse's gait. He moved at a swift and remarkably smooth gallop, and it was quite easy to hold my place in the saddle. The stirrups hung much too low for my short legs; but I managed to put my feet in the loops that held the stirrups. On we dashed, along the sun-baked desert, and on to the first slope of the hills.

No one can ever ride through those bleak, forbidding mountains and ever be the same again. They are cracked open here and there with ledges, quite bare except for an occasional clump of madrone or scrub-oak, and they have abrupt cliffs and deep ravines. The power and strength of the mountains seem to get into a man. By now the rocky road was merely a trail that skirted here and there along the great shoulders of the hills, and now and then dipped down into a valley or else crossed the dry bed of a stream.

All at once I came to a place where the trail ended in three forks, like the trident of Neptune. I drew up, and waited for the horsemen to catch up with me. They were fully one hundred yards behind. "I don't know these hills," I explained.

They talked a moment among themselves; and the man who had spoken before rode up beside me. "We've got it figured out they'll try to cross the divide," he told me. "There's better hidin'-places on the other side, where we'd never find 'em in God's earth. So it's best we divide up and take these three trails and try to cut 'em off."

"That's a good plan," I said. I didn't know whether it was or not, but I thought I might as well continue to act my part, so I agreed.

"You see they went in a car as far as the road allowed, and then they had hosses waitin', so they got a good start. We was countin' on spreadin' out up here and drivin' down through the ravines. Some of us'll watch passes and some of us'll beat through and try to flush 'em. Now you, Mister, have got the fastest horse; and it might be that you could cut 'em off at the old Bighorn Trail."

"Where is that?"

"We'll divide up and take the two outside trails, and you just follow down the center—clear to the edge of a big, deep cliff just opposite a red hill with an old cabin on it. One of us'll try to go with you, but don't wait for him if he can't keep up. With the advantage of surprise, I guess a man with your adeptitude with a six-shooter wouldn't have any trouble in stoppin' 'em alone."

With a six-shooter! My word! I had never previously held one of the things in my hand! But I didn't tell them this.

"That's all right," I said, quavering a little. "I guess I can stop them."

And I saw them exchange glances of honest admiration. I could not disappoint them after that.

"Only one or two at the most can hide themselves on the trail," he continued. "but I'll be glad to try it with you. I aint the shot you are, or the rider, but I'll try."

I assured him he was a splendid rider; and his eyes actually shone. The others divided on the outside trails, and my friend and I raced on up the other.

But it turned out that I was to go on alone, after all. A half-mile from the fork, my companion's horse developed a limp and had to drop behind. And I, Horace Ivor Chumley, who before had never killed anything larger than a mouse, rode on alone in the chase of a pair of desperate bank-robbers! I couldn't believe I was the same man.

I had no trouble in recognizing the Bighorn trail, and at once I set myself to watch. I tied my horse in a thick clump of brush just below the trail, and hid myself in a thicket on the trail itself.

It was a very lonely place. A buzzard slid about on his motionless wings; but he and I had the mountains all to ourselves. It was very still, too, and for the first time I had an opportunity to think and wonder at myself.

I have already confessed that I was naturally a timid man; and now that I was all alone, my timidity returned to me a hundred-fold. Who was I, that I should attempt to hold back two desperate robbers? I had never fired a revolver. I took one of my brace out, and cocked it. It was a tremendously heavy six-shooter, and I tried vainly to hold it steady in my hand. Then I laid it carefully on the trail beside me.

My heart had been thumping fast from the moment I took that step off the platform of the train; now it pounded like a hammer against my ribs. I wondered why the air should suddenly turn so cold. My hands felt like ice; and it seemed to me that the very perspiration on my forehead was cold as snow. But surely, I thought, the robbers would not come up the trail I watched. There were forty men, all hunting, and it was inconceivable that I should be the one to combat them.

Then I went suddenly prone — for I heard the unmistakable clatter of horses' feet in the ravine.

"It couldn't be them," I told myself; "it just *couldn't!*"

Couldn't, eh? It could be Mephisto himself, on *that* day of days. It was not like the tramp of two horses. It sounded like a cavalry-squadron. In a moment they appeared, not one hundred yards away. They came around the shoulder of the cliff. They were riding slowly; I could even see their savage faces. And there were four of them!

I HAD only expected two; I don't know why, except that one would hardly expect a posse to send forward a lone man to combat more than two. For a moment I thought that my heart would cease to beat.

I tried to pick up my revolver, but my hand shook so I could hardly hold it. With my left hand I drew the pistol from the opposite holster.

"That was slick to hide in the cave until the posse went by," I heard one of them say, "and then come up this trail. They never thought we'd go clear up here."

I understood at once. They did not dream of a second posse.

They were drawing steadily nearer. If I had ever thought of backing down and fleeing, it was too late now. Their horses looked as big as elephants, and I will swear that every one of the four men could have made two of me. Their belts seemed simply bristling with knives, and slung with innumerable holsters. And the horrible fact remained that in another moment their horses would be stepping on me!

At such times a man's thought is apt to take odd turns. Something told me that terrified as I was, I was lost unless I kept cool. And I remember whispering the opening paragraph of my speech for the L. P. B. convention. And now they were but sixty feet away.

I LIFTED up my guns, and filled my chest to call to them. I wanted to shout at them, to order them to throw up their hands, in a terrible, forceful voice; but something had happened to my lung-mechanism. For a long instant speech would not come at all. And then I managed to get words out.

"P-p-lease put up your hands!" I asked, and I jumped up and aimed my guns.

The words did not sound fierce at all. They sounded far away, as if some one else had spoken them, and mild and quiet as the bleat of any lamb. "Oh, heavens," I remember thinking, "all they'll do is draw their guns and shoot!"

I couldn't believe what happened — can't quite understand it yet. They must have seen how my guns shook in my hands, and my face was certainly white as paper. But whether from the surprise, or the sight of those vast guns in my hands, or the sudden sound of my voice in the silence, their horses all drew up with a jerk, and every bandit flung his hands into the air.

"Well, what the hell!" one of them said.

"You're my p-p-prisoners!" I told them. My voice was still about as fierce as that of a seven-year-old girl, and I spoke with even less conviction. "I don't want to have to k-k-kill you, but I will if you don't keep your hands up."

For a moment they eyed me as if I were a new breed of animal. I could see them taking me in, from my unspurred shoes to the top of my outing-cap. And then one of them began to curse.

"WHAT are we lettin' that little pinhead hold us up for?" he asked. "He aint more'n five feet high, and I

don't think he ever had his mitts on a gun before, even if he is a cop. In spite of that quiet voice of his, I think he's a four-flusher."

"Just drop those hands down an inch and you'll see. I've got two guns, and I'll get two of you with each before you can move a thumb."

I never told a more preposterous lie in all my days. "They've found me out already!" was what I was really thinking. But I knew I had to hold them; the minute they lost their fear of my black guns my only hope was gone.

I was all alone in those vast mountains —one against four! I didn't know when my friends would come, if they ever came at all. I was dimly aware that my knees were quaking under me.

"Let's rush the little fool," one of the others went on.

Then the man who had spoken first suddenly reached for his gun. I saw his hand waver in the air. There was nothing for me to do but shoot. I don't remember aiming. I don't think I could have aimed, with my long-distance glasses. I'd never aimed a pistol before in my life, and all I knew was to pull a trigger. I believe I uttered a little sigh as I pressed back.

"That's good-by for you, Horace!" a voice seemed to tell me, for the last thing in the world I hoped for was to hit anyone. I shut my eyes and pulled.

The mountain seemed to rock with the sound, and its echo was a high-pitched squeal of pain, followed by a curse. When I looked again the four of them had their arms perfectly rigid in the air — and it seemed to me that the eyes of every one of them were about to start from their heads. The right hand of the bandit, the hand that had reached for the gun, was minus a forefinger!

THEN one of them began to laugh. I heard him chuckle first; and all at once he exploded as if some one had tickled him. "Pinhead, eh?" he snorted. Then he opened his great mouth and roared: "Rush the little fool, eh! Bangs, do you still think he's a four-flusher? Took off your trigger-finger clean as a knife!"

"And don't any of you others try anything else, either," I warned. "You'll make me kill some of you yet. I couldn't hardly decide then whether to take his finger or his right ear. Now you, with the missing finger! Without lowering your hands an inch, get off that horse."

"But how—"

"Get off or I'll plug you again! Fall off, if you want to."

He *did* get off. He couldn't have demounted any quicker if the horse had thrown him. "Yes, Cap'n," he said.

"Now lower your wounded hand and take off your belt with your guns; and don't make a false move. And boys—I can shoot with my left as good as with my right; so don't try anything!"

My man threw off his belt. Across the trail, about fifteen feet from the nearest horsemen, a tree had stretched a branch almost as straight and round as a trapeze-bar. Something inside of me told me I could utilize that.

"Now all the rest of you, in turn, ride ahead and grasp that limb over the trail with your up-raised hands," I said, "and let your horses ride out from under. Then hang till I say 'fall.'"

They did it, one after another. My man with the bad hand took each man's guns away from him as each in turn hung down from the limb. The weapons made quite a formidable little heap on the trail. "Now," I told them, "you can all sit down together till the posse comes."

THERE wasn't much more to do. With my teeth still chattering so I could hardly talk, and my knees shaking like reeds under me, I kept them sitting down together on the trail. "I wont let 'em lynch you," I told them. "You'll all get a trial."

"Nut! How can you keep 'em from it?" one of them asked.

"Keep 'em from it!" exclaimed the man who had laughed before. "He could keep the American Army from its Thanksgivin' dinner if he wanted to!"

Heaven only knows what I said to them in the next hour. As soon as I began to let myself think how helpless I would be if they tried to attack me, and how I would ever get them down to the settlements, the ice would come back in my heart. So I didn't let myself think. I sang, and I told them stories, and I whistled; and all the time their eyes seemed to grow ever wider. Toward the end I dimly remember repeating for them the speech with which I was going to appeal to the convention of the League for the Protection of Bird-life.

"Just listen to that!" one of them said when I paused for breath. "Did you-all know that?" Then he turned to me. "If you aint the queerest cop I ever seen! If you aint, I'm a polecat!"

And then we heard a division of the posse, galloping up the trail.

THAT'S the end of the story. What happened thereafter is all very confused and vague. I remember hearing them shout, and watching them put the ropes about the bandits' hands; and I remember that they stared at me as if they had never seen the like before.

"One against four, eh, and he took every gun you got!" one of the posse exulted. "Why in the world did you let him do it?"

"What was we goin' to do?" one of the four prisoners replied. "What was we goin' to do with a man with a voice like a cold-chisel, who'll snick off your trigger-finger while you're reachin' for your gun? That part was bad enough but it was heaven to what came afterward. He sung to us! Yes he did! And did you know that a robin-redbreast et nine hundred and eighty-seven worms in the course of a week? And did you ever mark the little meadow-lark, a-hoppin' on the green, and carolin' all day to his mate? That's the kind of stuff we listened to. If he aint the damndest cop I ever seen!"

And then the cowboys put me on their shoulders, and carried me about the mountainside. They flung their hats into the air, and fired their pistols. "I guess you lived up to your name this time, Mr. Strong," one of them gloated.

We were riding back to the town by now, and the prisoners rode with shackled hands in front. It was then that I had a tweak of conscience—the first I had had the whole day.

"My name's not Strong," I said.

They checked their horses and looked at me. "Your—name's—not—Strong?" the man repeated. "Guess I didn't understand you."

"No, you fools! I don't even know this Strong person. I'm kind of strong myself, I've found out, but my name's Chumley. Where did you send for Strong—just to the next town?"

"Why, yes. He's a famous government detective, a dead-shot sent to stop cattle-rustlin', and fortunately he was in the next town—"

"Fortunately he missed the train," I told them. "My name's Chumley, Horace Ivor—"

"But why—why you wearin' that star?"

"Heavens, man!" Then I prevaricated in a way that quite offset my moment of truth. "I was a passenger on the train, bound for the L. P. B. session. This isn't an officer's star—it's the badge of the society. But if bank-robbers are going to be allowed to get away and go scot-free, what's our country coming to? I ask you, what's it coming to?"

For a moment they were too bewildered to speak—and then they began to shout. We shouted together all the way to town, and there I had to get down off their shoulders to kiss Betty.

Yes, that's the truth. I kissed her right there. It seemed to me that a man who would capture four desperadoes single-handed ought not to be afraid to take a kiss without permission. She blushed, and just as I had fondly dreamed, her arms crept about my neck. From what she said, I was almost persuaded to believe that she wasn't angry at all. "I see you've taken your crumb of comfort," she said. And the cowboys all threw up their hats.

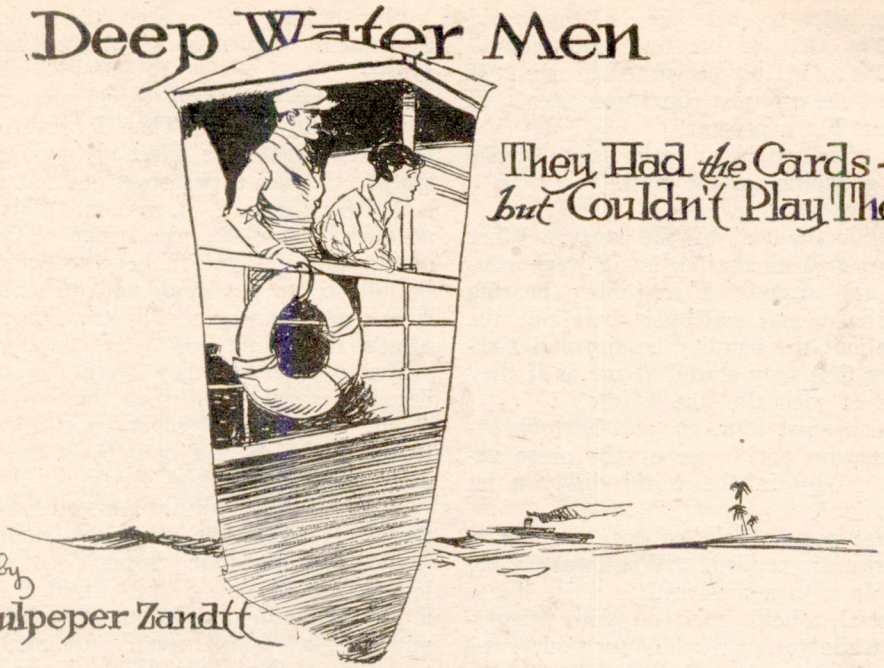
THAT isn't all—that isn't *nearly* all! That is just the beginning of the really miraculous things. The story was printed in all the papers, and was put under flaming headlines in the daily at home. "JUMPS OFF TRAIN TO JOIN POSSE," the headline read. "LOCAL HERO CAPTURES TROOP OF BANDITS SINGLE-HANDED."

It is scarcely important enough to tell that I was elected grand president of the L. P. B. for the ensuing year. But it does matter to say that the timidity that had always cursed me seemed vanished like a puff of smoke; and the very first day after my return home I asked for a raise in pay. And will you believe it—not only got the raise, but a promotion as well. My employer simply hammered me on the back. "You were always a modest, retiring fellow for the deadly, wrought-steel creature that you are," he said.

So I let him think it, and all the members of the L. P. B. Moreover, I let Betty think that I was the most natural protector of a home of anyone in town. And the reward I got for the bandits was enough to buy georgette and crêpe machine clothes for Betty for twenty years!

# Deep Water Men

## They Had the Cards - but Couldn't Play Them



By Culpeper Zandtt

WHEN you dig into a person's antecedents with the view to using that person at some future time, it is always time well spent to make a thorough job of it; otherwise the one or two insignificant facts which you overlook may entirely turn the tables at some crucial moment when everything appears to be going your way.

Miss Pauline Buckner came down to Singapore on the little missionary steamer from the Andamans, where she had been staying with the Resident's family, presumably engaged in missionary teaching among such natives as might be trusted in the compound or in the vicinity of white women. At least this was the first story to go the social rounds, and it naturally drew a good deal of attention from the church people. She might have spent two or three months accepting hospitalities in one bungalow after another; but within a day or two it became understood that Miss Buckner was possessed of independent means, and that her somewhat daring sojourn in the Andamans (white women don't go there except by way of what they consider duty) had been merely a visit to a former school-friend, the Resident's wife. In the course of a week it also became understood that she had inherited steamship money to a most respectable amount, and that although the Line was still managed by its former Board, this particular young woman in Singapore was actually a good sixty per cent of it. And Singapore ladies rather grudgingly admitted that she probably wasn't much over thirty, which might have been discounted three or four years or might not.

All this data, and considerably more, had been carefully jotted down by three people who happened to be in or about the Straits at the time, with a view to considering it in relation to certain underhand operations of their own. They were Madame Irma Vassilikoff, a supposed Russian opera diva, whose curiosity prompted her to cable London for confirmation of the facts and other details gratuitously supplied; Paul Kragorovitch, junior partner in a Vladivostok shipping-house, who had narrowly escaped imprisonment for piracy in Singapore and did not show himself openly in its streets, but made certain inquiries of his own after considering what Vassilikoff had obtained; and Nils Bergenstrom, a Swede who lived in a Tanglin bungalow, who contributed to the memoranda by digging through his copy of Lloyd's *Register* and making a list of the Nawab line of steamers, their tonnage, rig, speed, accommodation and ownership.

Having thus card-indexed the young woman for their own future purposes, which seemed more and more worth considering as they cultivated her acquaintance, the three supposed their information

covered all that was necessary for them to know. And this is where, like so many unscrupulous conspirators, they overlooked something which might have given them a different slant on Miss Buckner's mental processes—something which drew Jim Medford's attention to her when nothing else probably would, for Pauline happened to be the sort of well-built, athletic girl whose features appear rather plain until they light up, and whose charm is primarily so much a matter of thinking-capacity that one scarcely notices her almost perfect figure until she has said something unusual.

SHE was standing at the end of Johnston's Pier one morning with a daughter of her hostess' when Medford strolled out from the club to look for a coolie on one of the Chinese *sampans* in the flotilla off Collyer Quay, and to watch a Spanish barque which had been caught under full sail by a sudden squall while beating up for Keppel Harbor. As the first vicious puff of wind hit the pier, Miss Buckner glanced out at the barque and stepped toward the string-pieces as if it were possible to hail her. Then her fists clenched in exasperation.

"Oh, why doesn't the fool let go his halyards and come about! There aren't more than sixteen fathoms under him—sand and coral bottom! Two cables will hold her. My word, he'll lose his to'-gall'nt-masts in a minute or so and likely pile up on Pulau Brani! Told you so! There go his fore and main-to'gall'nts now! There go the halyards and his starboard mud-hook. Slovenly brute! I hope his agents were somewhere alongshore to see that!"—Turning, she caught Medford's vigorous nod of approval. "Is that barque consigned to you?"

"No, but that bit of carelessness will get to her agents all right! Plenty of people saw it along here. Reckon you've handled a 'square-rigger' yourself in narrow waters."

"Sailed with my father two years; acting mate for six months. Then they put him on the Board just when I was going up for a Master's Ticket, and he made me stay ashore. I boned a bit and passed for 'Steam,' just to see if I could, but the guv'nor and his brother died about that time and left me too much to look after ashore."

"Are you by any chance Miss Buckner, of the Nawab Line? I had a corking trip out to Rangoon on the *Nawab of Koram* a few years ago, with Cap'n Buckner aboard as passenger." She nodded, man-fashion, without offense. "My name is Medford. I'll get somebody to introduce us presently."

"Medford? Master of the *Bandarwallah* over yonder in Keppel Harbor? You are? Fancy! One hears quite a lot about you and your friends. John Satterlee, for example, an old pal of my guv'nor. We'll dispense with the bother of an introduction, Mr. Medford. This is Miss Graham. I'm with them for a week or so at Tanglin. Drop in for tea some afternoon, and we'll talk about ships. Fancy running across each other like this!" As she and her rather scandalized friend started to walk up the pier, he had a premonition, a "hunch" as he called it.

"Er—one moment, Miss Buckner! I can't say just why I make the suggestion—no particular reason, except that there happen to be quite a few men and women out here just at present who are no friends of England and her Allies. I was just wondering if it might not be well if no one in Singapore knows of your sea-faring experience. A number of shady things are happening under the surface. It might unexpectedly prove an advantage to you if that information about yourself were kept in reserve. You'll pardon the suggestion, I trust?"

"Why, quite so! I don't—just—see. You may be quite right, Mr. Medford, though it seems a bit odd that personal data of the sort should make a difference out here. Thanks just the same. Good morning."

AS the ladies reached the esplanade of Collyer Quay and were about to beckon a couple of *rikisha-wallahs,* Miss Buckner noticed her friend's expression and said laughingly: "Dare say you fancy me a crazy sort of person, 'Bel, picking up acquaintances like that! It was unconventional, of course, but I've never yet made a serious mistake in that sort of thing. Come, now! You seemed to know Mr. Medford by sight, even if you've never been introduced. What's wrong about him, or objectionable?"

"Why, nothing at all, Pauline. Quite the contrary. The man and his two companions on the little motor-ship are by way of being celebrities in the Straits.

They managed to find out in some way that a couple of German 'subs' had never been surrendered, located their hiding-place and captured them. They found more than a million dollars' worth of jewels which had been stolen from the Rajah of Trelak and actually returned them to him. They've had frightfully exciting adventures all over the Malay Archipelago, and are said to have made millions for themselves in salvage operations. I never heard a word of any sort against them, only—"

"Only—you don't like my indiscriminate way of picking up acquaintances—eh? The man is a gentleman; you saw that."

"Oh there's nothing against him on that score. And I think he was quite right in suggesting that you say nothing about having worked like a common sailor on one of your father's ships. Wealthy girls of good breeding aren't supposed to do that sort of work, you know. I shall most certainly never refer to it!"

"Hmph! You think that's what he had in mind, do you?"

Miss Buckner let it go at that. In another moment, they were in *rikishas,* running out to the Graham bungalow for tiffin. But the more she realized how naturally that view of Medford's suggestion might be taken among society folk, the more she was convinced that a much more serious meaning had prompted it, coming as it did from a man whose life had been threatened a dozen times within the past few months, as she'd been told.

IN chatting with his friend, Major Claude Worthington, supposed to be a retired army officer living on his private fortune, but actually of the British Secret Service, the shipping-millionairess happened to be mentioned as a rather wilful young woman who took more chances in the Orient than she really should. The Major was rather testy upon this point.

"Knew her guv'nor, the old Captain, quite well, d'ye see? He was runnin' out here as Master of an old-time East Indiaman when I was but a lad. Made one voyage with him when he was takin' back 'China Mixed' from Hongkong an' coffee an' peppers from Batavia. If I told you the time we made on that old square-rigger, around the Cape, from Sunda Strait to Gravesend, you'd swear I was spoofin' you.

"Well, the girl has a good bit of her father's venturesomeness an' dislike of the conventions. God knows the North Andaman is no place for a white woman. Yet Miss Pauline spends a week or so there just because a school-friend married the Resident; he went in for missionary an' Red Cross work. Resident's wife knows she may be knifed or have to shoot herself, some day when moral suasion fails to check a few murderous natives, but that's all in the day's work with her. With Miss Buckner it's a vastly different matter —carryin' that much dynamite to a place where it may explode at any moment.

"Now, here in Singapore, one would say that she's quite as safe as she would be in London, for example. But we've a sort of uneasy feelin' that she may not be. There's been a deal of unrest among the brownies for the past few months— contagion from the conditions in more civilized countries, I fancy. An' it seems to Governm'nt as if the more unwelcome specimens we find to keep an eye upon in each of the British an' French possessions, the more of 'em are poppin' up on every steamer.

"Where an' how Miss Pauline got in the way of hobnobbin' with the Vassilikoff woman, I'm blessed if I know. But it's a beastly dangerous acquaintance for her. The girl's known to have oodles of tin in her own right—no guardian or trustees to interfere with her. An' she's so much of the old chap's independence that she'd prob'ly take offense at well-meant hints as to goin' a bit slow on any financial proposition which may come her way. She'd take the ground that it's none of anyone's affair but her own."

"I'm not so sure of that, Major!" responded Medford. "It would depend, I think, somewhat upon her opinion of the person's motives—and how she was approached. As to the Vassilikoff woman, for instance, were I in your place, I should manage to have a hint dropped by some one known to be in the Government that the Russian woman is under espionage as a dangerous character; that she is implicated to some extent in an attempted murder and that anyone she purposely introduces may be of the same breed."

HAD Medford passed the young woman in a *rikisha* or even noticed her at one of the clubs, it is unlikely that she would have drawn his attention. In repose an artist might have pronounced her face handsome—nobody would have used the

word "pretty." In a group the girl was inconspicuous. One scarcely noticed her until some low-voiced remark betrayed an exceptionally keen mind, accustomed to doing much original thinking.

IN their brief talk at the end of Johnston's Pier that morning, Medford had caught a more revealing glimpse of Pauline Buckner's inner self than anyone else in Singapore. It stuck in his mind. He found himself recalling the sturdy old shipmaster, her father, as well as one or two stray bits of gossip which he'd heard in London concerning the girl herself. Worthington's remarks added to an interest which had been merely casual at first. Medford was neither a woman-hater nor a susceptible ladies'-man. He had known them of all breeds and races, worked with them, played with them upon rare occasion and forgot their existence when there was man's work to be done. Perhaps for all these reasons, he was the sort of man whom few women refuse anything.

However, he kept thinking about this particular woman enough during the few days to prompt a call at the Graham bungalow in time for afternoon tea. There were at least four people in the drawing-room who were well acquainted with him —not counting Madame Irma Vassilikoff, who had upon one occasion deliberately attempted to poison him.

Having no doubt that Major Worthington would act upon his suggestion in regard to warning Miss Buckner against the supposed Russian diva, Medford carefully avoided any reference to her; but Irma Vassilikoff believed in "direct action" at all times. She had been introduced to the ship-owner's daughter by people of sufficiently good standing to create a very favorable impression upon the girl; and Vassilikoff and other conspirators in a widespread German organization throughout Asia intended to utilize Miss Buckner for their own purposes at some critical moment.

The Russian woman was convinced that Medford would drop a hint of caution to the girl at first opportunity, so she took a peculiarly feminine way of forestalling him when the two were getting ready for dinner that night.

"I didn't know that you'd met Captain Medford, my dear! You find him an interesting personality, of course? So many women do upon first acquaintance. Hm! Oh yes, he has the reputation of being quite a lady-killer. Bluff, 'man's-man' sort of person, you know. The hero of countless adventures out here, a regular daredevil and quite the perfect lover when it comes to women, as a good many of them know to their cost, I fancy. I'll admit that I was smitten with him myself at first. But the great fault in all these sudden millionaires is that they think their money will buy *anything,* even a woman's scruples and conscience. This Medford isn't really vulgar about it, but he leaves no one in doubt that he's in the market to buy whatever he happens to fancy. And it's common talk in the bazaars that he fancies a good many. You might question your *ayah* some morning as to that."

Miss Buckner had considered herself under obligations to Madam Vassilikoff for recommending a most efficient Tamil girl as *ayah* during her stay in Singapore, the girl having been thoroughly coached before coming to her.

"It's rather bad form in England to consider servants' gossip in any way, because the opportunities for bribing them are so obvious, aside from its being *déclassée,*" replied Miss Buckner. "What you say in regard to Captain Medford is rather surprising to me. Of course, I've only been here a few days, but they were talking of him and his friends in the Andamans, and the impression I got was somewhat different. Still, you've had opportunity to know a lot more about the man. Dare say you may be right. I'll not forget the hint, you may be sure, though I don't mind saying that I like him in a way."

LATE that night a *rikisha-wallah* trotted out with a veiled woman-passenger to the bungalow occupied by Mr. Nils Bergenstrom, who had large rubber interests up the Peninsula, and left her on the veranda. It was something no sensible woman would have done at that time of night, yet the *wallah* instinctively felt that his passenger was abundantly able to look out for herself, and that at the first suspicious move from him a chunk of lead would have gone crashing through his ribs. He didn't know who she was, and didn't waste a minute watching to see what she did when he left her.

In answer to a peculiar knock upon the door, a white-jacketed coolie admitted her. In the smoking-room she found Bergenstrom and Paul Kragorovitch, the Vladi-

vostok shipping-agent. Settling herself comfortably into a long Bombay chair, she lighted a cigarette and began talking in a way which gave the impression that she was one of the executives in the organization and that the others were very much under her orders.

"Up to this afternoon I had thought we would have ample time to perfect our plans concerning the Buckner girl until there could be no possibility of a slip," the woman began. "But it appears that she has met that cursed Medford and his pals. I'm pretty sure it was since she landed here. Not knowing of my acquaintance with her, there would have been nothing to suggest his dropping a warning until he saw us together at tea this afternoon, and he had no opportunity then. I put a flea in her ear; did it rather artistically, too, I fancy! But we can't take the chance of delaying immediate action. Some one may give her a different impression of him.

"What was your plan, Kragorovitch? Give me the details. It may be possible to use it immediately, with a few slight changes!" On the mere chance that some of Bergenstrom's servants might be within hearing, the Russian leaned forward and rapidly outlined his scheme in tones which could not have been understood by anyone outside of the room. Once or twice the woman nodded in approval, and glanced across the table at Bergenstrom to see if he caught the details.

"THE only thing to delay you is the fact that your steamer doesn't leave until the 28th," said the woman after Kragorovitch had finished revealing his plans. "There's a six-thousand-ton China navigation-boat lying down in Keppel Harbor waiting for orders, far enough out from the wharves to muffle the sound of anything happening on her decks. There's no moon. We're likely to have thick weather within a few days, if I know anything about the indications. Seems to me there's no reason why your scheme wouldn't apply to her as easily as the other boat—more easily, in fact. And we couldn't ask a more favorable opportunity to settle with Medford. He's the moving spirit in that crowd. The others would go back to America or England and enjoy their recently piled-up money were it not for that cursed meddler! Even Satterlee, who was perhaps the most quietly dangerous of the lot when he was younger and hadn't so many millions, is likely to go home within a few weeks.

"As to the girl, if our information is correct, there is absolutely nothing to prevent her selling her interest in any steamer of the Nawab Line. And the shares are so held that she owns about forty sixty-fourths of each individual boat. A transfer of her interest would convey actual possession in any court. It couldn't be legally contested, unless she afterward turned up with a statement that the statement was made under duress. And Kragorovitch's idea fixes her so that she'll never care to make any such claim. I think we'll consider it settled and go to work at once!"

IN the room they caught not the faintest rustle from anything outside, but as Vassilikoff finished, a shadowy figure in Chinese clothes silently vanished down the hall of the bungalow. It occurred to Bergenstrom later that while he had never detected in any of his house-coolies the slightest evidence of treachery and couldn't see how they might have heard any important part of the talk in the smoking-room, it would be just as well to take extra precaution with the two who had been with him less than a year and who had not been tested as had his Number One boy and the others. Calling them down to a workshop in the cellar, he set them to a task which would take half the night. Then he locked the heavy door at the head of the stairs and left them. The two small windows near the ceiling, which ventilated the place, were heavily barred, and there was only one door.

Hop Yong, who had overheard the conference from the hall, made no objection to being locked in the cellar all night; in this way he successfully bluffed the Swede into a belief there was nothing about him to suspect. In the morning he was sent as usual into the city to do the marketing.

Once in the business quarter, however, he proceeded with no appearance of haste to the big *godown* of a Chinese merchant-prince in Telok Ayer Street. Mr. Lee Fong Yan, the head of the house, had not yet returned from his suburban residence, but a whispered word to his Number One set the telephone working, and the magnate arrived in twenty minutes. What Hop Yong had to say was poured out in a stream of gutturals far more quickly than those who have tried to puzzle out

Chinese ideographs would have believed possible. Soon Hop was on his way back to the bungalow with his purchases—and ten Straits dollars.

THE eminent Lee Fong Yan, who had been graduated at Cornell and spoke a number of languages fluently, immediately tried to get into communication at four different places with Medford or with one of his two friends, Stevens and Torrey. Eventually he located Stevens on the *Bandarwallah*, off Tanjong Pagar. As Stevens was uncertain as to Medford's whereabouts, Lee Fong Yan said that he would run at once in a fast power-launch from Johnston's Pier, for a consultation.

When the two were below in the marine-laboratory aboard the little hydrographic cruiser, and secure from espionage, Lee touched a match to a blacker cigar than he usually smoked and got down to business.

"Stevens, you and your pals are so used to constant risk in the open that you appear to consider it all in the day's work. You've acquired even more of our Asiatic fatalism than most of us have, and believe in your *kismet*. But I've warned you repeatedly that the most deadly risks in the Orient are insidious—the ones under the surface, which work in a way most difficult to guard against. I've told you how dangerous it was for either of you to sleep ashore, even in the homes of people whom you may trust implicitly. And you've had sense enough to be careful most of the time. But now, when I have a definite warning to give, you tell me that Sam Torrey spent the night with Major Worthington at his club, where he's probably safe, but that Medford is presumably in some bungalow in the suburbs with people who are relatives of an old newspaper chum in New York. You have no idea what bungalow or who the people are!"

"Fact is, Lee, I have very little chance to find out! Medford telephoned me from the Raffles, where he'd just been introduced to the people and found out the relationship. Didn't give any names. Said he was spending the night with them and would probably drop in at the Singapore Club for tiffin. Then he hung up! Now what's it all about? Give me the facts; then we'll both get busy with Sam and try to locate him!"

"A coolie, who belonging to one of the *tongs* in which I have some influence, happens to be in Bergenstrom's employ, overheard a pow-wow last night between him, Kragorovitch and that Vassilikoff woman. Unfortunately they lowered their voices during most of the important conferring so that he was able only to catch occasional words and piece them together afterward. It's rather incoherent at best, but it was a definite plot against Medford and Miss Pauline Buckner, as near as the coolie could make out. The when and the how of it he didn't get at all, but he figures they've laid it out to start something pretty soon and it has something to do with Miss Buckner's control of the Nawab Line. It would, you know, with that gang! Worst of it is, unless we block them they'll come dev'lish close to putting something across and getting hold of several ships in a way so nearly legal that they may be able to hold them in spite of the British or French governments. But this is only the small end of it! The thing that is getting on my nerves is what they might do to Jim Medford and that decent English girl who has everything to live for!"

"You've no idea what sort of a plan they're cooking up?"

"Unfortunately Hop Yong missed that! If we assume it to be an abduction and try to block it, we may find them both dead by poison before night in the houses of perfectly innocent people. Remember what happened at General Mount's bungalow when Irma Vassilikoff tried to get Medford?

"Presumably Miss Buckner was still with the Grahams last night. My boys are trying to locate her now. If we notify the police, it may prove a dangerous mistake; for we may tip that gang off to the fact that we suspect something and precipitate two murders. Worthington has never admitted that he has any connection with the Government, but I fancy he can do more for us in this matter, under the surface, than anyone else in the Straits. Suppose we get hold of him and also of Sam Torrey? Come ashore with me!"

IN spite of a quiet but thorough search, neither Medford nor the English heiress could be found. Just before dark the weather thickened up, with rain and mist alongshore, until it was impossible to make out riding-lights on the steamers

at anchor or to hear anything across the water. On the anchoring-ground off Tanjong Pagar, the *Tai-Kling*, a six-thousand-ton cargo-boat with limited passenger accommodations, lay in ballast, waiting orders, in charge of a second mate, an assistant engineer and the limited crew usually carried on a tramp of her type.

At six bells, when all but the anchor-watch were below, sixteen men came silently up the accommodation-ladder, like so many ghosts, from a motor-boat the power of which had been shut off five hundred feet away, the remaining distance having been covered by sculling. The anchor-watch were knocked senseless, bound and gagged without noticeable disturbance. One by one every man in the midshiphouse was overcome in the same way, while the crew was penned below.

At two bells, when city and harbor were asleep, a motor-launch ran into Keppel Harbor from the west coast of the island and located the *Tai-Kling*, after a preliminary examination of one or two other steamers. A woman's figure was carried up the accommodation-ladder by two men and afterward put to bed in one of the staterooms by a Tamil *ayah*. Then a man, apparently too drunk to stand up, was assisted aboard and put into another stateroom, the door of which was locked on the outside.

When the launch disappeared, the *Tai-Kling's* anchor was raised so carefully,—the capstan barely turning one pawl at a time,—that no attention was attracted by it. Apparently the man on the bridge knew the waters around Singapore by the tide-rip against the steamer's plates, for he conned her out into open water, the screw barely turning fast enough to give her headway, and got clear of the islands without scraping ship or reef, though there were a few hair-raising escapes.

IN the morning a confused heiress with a slight headache crept out upon the upper deck for a breath of fresh air and a cup of coffee. This her *ayah* obtained —and also bits of mis-information which she claimed she had picked up below. The *Tuan* Medford, whom her mistress had met in Singapore, was aboard in one of the other staterooms sleeping off a drunk, it was said. Orders had been given that he was to be treated as a passenger,—like herself,—fetched aboard against his will. Although a Master by the name of Grosserbaum was on the bridge, it was well understood he took his instructions from *Tuan* Medford, who had stolen the boat and planned her abduction.

WHILE Miss Buckner was endeavoring to digest this information and make it fit in with what Madam Vassilikoff had told her concerning the American, Medford appeared on deck. He looked somewhat haggard, but was fast recovering possession of his faculties. The door of his stateroom had been unlocked as soon as the steamer was clear of the land, and he found himself apparently free to go about the decks as he pleased. A most appetizing smell was coming up from the galley. Evidently breakfast would be served in the mess-saloon shortly, and he determined to do it full justice, with the conviction that he would be pretty much his normal self when he had finished it and was better able to use his wits. He was under no misapprehension whatsoever as to the identity of his captors or what might ultimately be coming to him, unless he managed to beat them at their own game.

Then he caught sight of the English girl, and an expression of consternation etched itself into his face. Her presence made the situation a thousand times worse. What happened to him was a matter of little consequence to anybody, as he supposed, but he didn't care to think about what might be in store for her—and that mattered to every decent man in the Orient. When he stepped across the deck and smiled at her, as if there were nothing alarming in their being aboard in these peculiar circumstances, he was amazed by her coolness and expression of contempt.

"Lovely morning we're having, isn't it, Mr. Medford! In your own good time and when you're quite in the mood for it, perhaps you'll give me some idea as to where we're bound and what you propose doing with me?"

"What! Surely, Miss Buckner, you understand I'm not on this boat intentionally, any more than you are!"

"Oh, certainly. I know all about the arrangement to have you appear in that light! Gives the affair a rather better appearance for the moment, doesn't it! But we're at sea now, with little chance of interference from any other boat, if you people have made your plans with sufficient care, as you naturally would. So why keep up the farce? A few days more or

less of fancied security aren't worth the trouble. I might as well know what's to be done with me this morning. Then I can decide how long I care to live."

A light of comprehension slowly appeared in Medford's eyes, and she read it. She saw that the man was honest; that he was a gentleman with whom she was absolutely safe so far as he alone was concerned. But in the magnetic glance of mutual understanding there was also a warning that for the present it was best to play the game as it had been started. So Medford pretended to some gruffness and an attempt at lying and evasion.

"I don't know who's been filling your head with any such rot as that! Ridiculous of course! Perhaps we'd better have a talk. You'll see that you've got the wrong idea about me altogether! Meanwhile, let's go below and eat some breakfast! We can do that without quarreling, can't we?"

For a moment she thought he was overdoing it. Then she caught a puzzled grin on the face of the German at the end of the bridge and decided that Medford's cool nerve and audacity in any emergency must be all she'd heard of them.

IN the mess-saloon Grosserbaum was sitting at the head of the table, with four Germans and Swedes near him. They were talking gruffly and wolfing their food. Below them were vacant seats which Medford and Miss Buckner might occupy, if they chose. The Germans paid no attention to them. The original mess-steward and cooks of the ship had been Chinamen, with a couple of coolie helpers. Apparently it had not been considered necessary to confine or remove them. The original stokers and oilers had been permitted to go on with their work unmolested under the orders of a German assistant engineer.

As the Chinese mess-steward got his first good look at Medford in the tropic morning light reflected under the awnings, an expression of wonderment came into his eyes for an instant. The American caught it. Then the man's face was impassive as ever. However, when he returned to the pantry, there was a subdued chattering in the Shantung dialect. Had the guzzling Prussians been more observant, they would have noticed that the breakfast served to Medford and the English girl was of better quality and much more appetizingly cooked than their own.

When they had finished and had lighted particularly vile cigars, Grosserbaum called out down the length of the table:

"Hey, you, Medtford! You lis'n to somet'ings, ja! In half an hour, we let up dose crew mit der forecastle. Undt we haf no use for t'em aboardt, nein! 'Cause t'ey might start somet'ing, see? Vell, we gif t'em der numper t'ree poat, ja! Mit wasser, undt biskit, undt oars, undt der compass. In t'irty-six hour', t'ey couldt make der nort' coast of Banka, if t'ey pull like der teufel—due sout', ja!"

"WELL? I supposed you'd do something of the sort, of course. Why tell me about it? Where do I come in? Going to send me and Miss Buckner along?"

"Nein, not py damn! You two iss to remain aboardt! But you mus' be der Herr Kommander of t'is poat, Medtford. You mus' gif der order for let t'ose crew come up from der forecastle, ja! You mus' tell t'em apout goingk away in der poat undt steer for Banka! Undt you mus' order us apout like you woultn' stand no damn nonsense from anybodty, nein!"

"I see. You want those men to get ashore in some port with the idea that I stole this steamer and abducted Miss Buckner! Want them to be so damned sure of it that they'll swear to it before any court!"

"Vell? Vhat's t'e difference? You didt sdeal der poat, didn't you? Put you mus'n't pe foolish undt t'ink you make us der goat, undt maype git us hang' for piracy, bimeby, nein! Tell der woman vhat you like, if she swallow it. But you mus' put dose crew in der poat undt cast t'em drift, ja!"

"Suppose I refuse? What then?"

"We shust cut der t'roat of each of t'ose men, undt heave t'em ofer der side. T'at's all! Shust as you like. We don'd risk our neck' py keeping t'em alife, efen if you wass goingk to take der chance."

"Oh, all right, Grosserbaum. Have it your own way. I'll give the orders."

"Ja, undt don'd forget t'at t'ose men vill tell der story to der Dutch court when t'ey git ashore—nodt to der Engklish, who might nodt pelieve it! If we make some mistake undt git caught der Net'erlandts government don'd gif a dam apoudt der goot reputation t'at maype you hadt once! T'ey conwict you of piracy shust der same undt you vass hang' mit der rest of us, ja!"

It seemed an excellent joke to the Ger-

mans. They roared over it, pounding each other on the back, as they lumbered out on deck, leaving the two at the lower end of the table. The girl looked across in horrified silence at the American, who was thoughtfully tracing what seemed to be an intricate pattern in the molasses on his plate left from his pancakes. For a moment she thought his mind must be weakening under the strain of what she now realized to be a desperate situation for herself, at least. It seemed a childish thing for a grown man to do under the circumstances. Why didn't he pull himself together and try to think of something? Unless—could it be true that he was really the leader of the gang and was feeling a twinge of remorse at what he was about to do?

Pauline Buckner was by no means as helpless or terrorized as the average girl would have been in her position—which was the crucial point left out of the Germans' calculations. She had an eight-shot automatic concealed in her clothes, and was a dead shot at fifty yards. She also knew where any white woman in Asia places the last shot, if necessary, and had calmly figured upon such a contingency more than once.

She was strongly inclined to believe what she'd heard of Medford and to trust her own instinct which, to the best of her recollection, had never betrayed her. Appearances were undeniably against him. Events had moved so rapidly that Major Worthington had found no opportunity to warn her against Irma Vassilikoff. On the other hand, if the man was really the dare-devil indicated by his war-record and the stories current throughout the archipelago, —the brilliant adventurer whose nerve and resourcefulness in emergencies worked with the cold precision of steel machinery, —his actions were undoubtedly calculated upon what he recognized as possibilities. She glanced again at the molasses-pattern he was drawing on his plate and saw that it was now a clear-cut Chinese ideograph.

JUST then the mess-steward came in to remove the dishes. Glancing at his impassive face, she saw the features twitch with an expression of amazed respect as he looked down at the American's plate. He made a low salaam from his hips until he was bent double. This was accompanied by a peculiar gesture with thumb and two fingers. The whole action was a matter of two seconds—had any of the Germans glanced in at the ports or companion, the Chinaman would have appeared merely to be picking up something from the deck. He then prepared to clear the table in his leisurely Asiatic way, but there was time for a brief *sotto voce* conversation, very much to the point, and carried on without moving the lips.

"This man, Sam Ku, b'long top-side with fo' man man. Catchee what big *tong* mans say. Can do!"

"Maskee! Catchee plenty b'low-side, too?"

"One, fi', seven man man b'low-side—stoke-hol'. Allee same *tong* this mans."

"Suppose devil-mans catchee bobbery one time, plentee drunk? This man, this woman, fetchee China man man top-side —fetchee devil-man below-side chop chop. Can do?"

"Can happen!"

"Maskee! China man wait one time."

MISS BUCKNER suppressed the impulse to ask a detailed explanation; she was familiar enough with *pidgin* to catch the gist of what was said, but could not account for the sudden and amazing control Medford appeared to have obtained over all the Chinese aboard. A barely perceptible shake of the head warned her, however, that explanations would have to wait.

In another moment Medford was called to play his part as pirate commander and cast the former crew adrift in their boat. Knowing that the slightest action which might arouse suspicion in their minds that he was a prisoner like themselves would result in having their throats cut, he carried out the farce so perfectly that they cursed him as they went over the side, and swore if they ever got ashore there would be more than one cruiser sent out to sink him wherever found. With a grim smile he merely wished them luck and went up to the hurricane-deck, where Miss Buckner sat waiting for him under the awning.

As the men shipped their oars and began pulling away, due south, a Chinese stoker poked his head out of a lower port for a second and babbled something in Cantonese, which the Germans on deck and bridge took for gratuitous abuse. But the former second mate of the *Tai-Kling,* who was steering the boat, had been running out to the Orient long enough to pick up

a smattering of Cantonese and Malay. For an hour he kept turning over in mind what he had heard, piecing it together with the various meanings which could be given each syllable with different inflections. Finally he ordered the men to stop rowing for a few minutes and told them what the stoker had said, adding what had been common talk in Singapore concerning Captain Medford's reputation and adventures. Deep-water sailors may at times be credulous fools in the dives alongshore, but when it comes to life as it is lived on the seven seas, it's no easy matter to hoodwink them.

BY now Medford had learned from Sam Ku how many Germans, Russians and Swedes there were aboard and just how many had been apportioned to each watch. When he joined Miss Buckner on the hurricane-deck, he was morally certain that none of them were abaft the after well-deck. Figuring that it would be possible to talk there without being overheard, he took her down aft to the turtle-deck at the stern where, had the breeze died out, the heat would have been intolerable.

"Luckily your *ayah* had a chance to bring your parasol and sun-helmet, or I wouldn't dare keep you here ten minutes. We'll cut it as short as we can, but some understanding between us is absolutely necessary. How did they trap you?"

"Somebody drugged my food or coffee. I was thinking of running down to Sourabaya on this boat because of a letter I received from our old shipping-agents. But I expected to do so in a regular, civilized way, arranging for a passage with the Singapore agents. The letter was brought to me just after dinner at the Grahams'. I merely gave Isabel a hurried general idea of it, because I'd promised to spend the night with Madame Vassilikoff, that fascinating Russian heiress—"

"Against whom, I suppose, Major Worthington had found no time to warn you as the most dangerous German intrigante and secret agent in the whole Malay Archipelago!" interrupted Medford. "That accounts for the chance they got to drug you. By the way, did you bring that *ayah* down from the Andamans? She's a Tamil. Her face is familiar—"

"Why, no! Irma Vassilikoff recommended her—"

"No wonder you hadn't a chance from the very start! That secret German organization out here, besides incessantly spreading propaganda, is buying, stealing, sinking and obtaining in a dozen different ways all the deep-sea tonnage they can possibly get hold of! The idea is to appear suddenly in Eastern waters, at the earliest moment the Peace Treaty will stand for it, with an immense merchant-marine under German colors, to replace their loss in the war, and simply to cut the shipping-trade to pieces until they control it all. You are known to be majority shareholder of the Nawab Line, with its eighteen steamers of fairly big tonnage.

"Oh, boy, if the Straits government only could have known about that cursed *ayah* and your intention to spend the night with the Vassilikoff vampire! And that letter, forged, of course, probably about some shipping-deal or complication upon which your old agents would naturally communicate with you! Does Miss Graham know the gist of it? By now your intention to leave on this boat for Sourabaya is probably known in every Singapore club and bungalow! When her agents and Master emphatically deny that there was any possibility of her getting orders for Sourabaya in ballast, it implicates you in this whole damned piracy game! Of course, the Government knows better; your antecedents are too much against such a supposition. And yet you have the reputation of doing reckless, unconventional things. You're a ship-owner. Don't you see there's just enough surface plausibility to sow a little seed of doubt, which will grow and grow in spite of your good reputation, unless we manage somehow to block their game within a few days?"

"And I'm not at all sure we wont, Mr. Medford. I'm not a weakling. You'll find that out before we're through! By the way, how did they get you?"

"I FELL for a story about those Swedes being relatives of a newspaper chum whom I'd trust with my life. They knew things about him which seemed impossible for anyone to have obtained save through just such relationship. And they drugged me. They're running a rather plausible bluff in implicating me with them—so plausible that ninety-nine women might have swallowed it. When they've used me in various ways as far as they can, I'm due to pass out in what they mean to be

a very thorough manner. But I'm not dead yet—and I've been in pretty tight places before!

"They don't hold all the cards in this game by a darned sight! That ideograph I drew for Sam Ku must be, as nearly as I can figure it, the high sign of the *Great Tong* which controls every other *tong* in China. It was given me by Wu Chang Lun in Batavia to use in just such an emergency as this, and I've found it about the most far-reaching talisman I've yet struck.

"Now that we understand each other, I'm ready to sit in at this game and draw cards. Grosserbaum probably wont spill anything until he gets a little nearer to where he's bound, wherever that is, but I think I can force a showdown before very long. This'll be a short cruise, I think."

AS both were navigators, and had been permitted to roam anywhere about the ship except in the wheel-house and engine-room, they had managed to glance into the binnacle once or twice during the morning. The course had remained unchanged—E. by S. ¼ S. If Grosserbaum had run out of Singapore Roads through Rhio Strait, this would bring them up against the west coast of Borneo at the lower fork of the Kapuas delta a little south of the Punur River, provided the ship held on the same course. But neither believed that Grosserbaum had risked the dangerous navigation through Rhio at three o'clock on a thick, black morning when any of the range-lights might have been obscured. If this surmise was correct, they must have come out through the much broader fairway between Bentan Island and the Horsburgh Light, which they would have passed about eight bells of the morning watch. In that case, as they remembered the charts, the steamer was heading straight for Pontianak and the bar of Great Kapuas River. Both managed to get a pretty close idea of what she was drawing, forward and aft, though the stern-draft was largely guess-work from the apparent submergence of the screw and the exposed plating below the water-line. After tiffin they returned to the turtle-deck for another talk.

"She's drawing about fifteen-and-a-half, for'ard, and rather close to eighteen, aft. I remember as she lay off Tanjong Pagar, about a foot of one propeller-blade was above water; so whoever Grosserbaum has in the engine-room must have filled the ballast-tanks and limbers with all the water they'd take before hauling up the anchor in order to get the full thrust of the screw and prevent a splashing that would have been heard all over the place as we pulled out. Now the only steamer which gets up the Great Kapuas with any regularity is one of the smaller *Koninklijke* boats out of Batavia which draw under seven or eight feet.

"Unless the Dutch or this German gang have been doing some dredging on that bar, which is not shown on any of the charts, there're but nine feet at the flood. When we went up there beyond Sintang on the *Bandarwallah,* we got one sounding of fourteen at full tide, but couldn't find anything over twelve in other places. I'm convinced that there is a twisting channel over that bar, because this German gang took half a dozen deep-sea boats up there and hid them; which, of course, might have been done with pontoons drawing six or seven feet. Anyhow, what I'm getting at is this: they've been painting out the funnel-marks ever since daylight and unshipping the derrick-booms around each mast; but that's all they're doing by way of disguise. So it's pretty clear to me that Grosserbaum expects to get this boat off the high seas and out of sight within the next twenty-four hours, before she's seen by more than one or two passing ships. If that hunch is correct, the only place he can do it is up the Great Kapuas. It's two hundred miles up to Sintang, but probably there aren't a dozen white men on the river in that stretch, and there are several good-sized tributaries up which he can run this boat."

"Do you suppose Grosserbaum has aboard Dutch charts of the river?"

"UNDOUBTEDLY. But I don't figure I'll need them except as a last resort. If this boat gets fifty miles up that river, we've only one chance in a hundred. The Dutch government doesn't interfere with the rajahs as long as they pay their taxes regularly and don't attempt to sell rubber, tobacco or other products to traders of other nationalities. And I've darned good reason to believe that the Germans stand in pretty close with a good many of the rajahs. If they once get us over the bar of that river, the influence in every quarter is against us. I'm under the impression that the stealing of this boat was

pulled off a week or more sooner than the gang meant to do it; in which case, there'll be no pontoons in readiness to float us over the bar, and Grosserbaum will have to pump her ballast-tanks and bilges dry to get any fourteen feet or less. Well, I'm working out a little scheme to prevent that if possible! Trouble is, the time's pretty short!

"We must have passed the Horsburgh Light not later than eight bells this morning, and I figure she's been doing around twelve since then. This should bring us up to the bar a little before nine tomorrow morning, to the best of my reckoning. I'll manage to give you a hint within a few hours as to what I think we can do."

JUST before dark a chunky little white steamer of possibly two hundred tons showed up on the horizon ahead. Grosserbaum stopped his engines as she came up, evidently having been expecting her. In a few moments she dropped a launch rather smartly into the water, bringing two men, in white drill and pith helmets, across to the accommodation-ladder which he lowered over the side. The launch then returned, and the little steamer ran back over her course at a clip which one would not have suspected from her build.

As the two men stepped on deck, Miss Buckner noticed with surprise that they were Malays or Bornese of the higher class who had been educated in Europe, because of the excellent German and occasional English words they spoke. Medford was not in the least surprised, having once had the high-caste one pointed out to him in Batavia; but his uneasiness increased at this recognition of H. R. H. the Rajah of Sikayam, a graduate of Leyden, a connoisseur of paintings, of jewels and of women. The Malay accompanying him was his private secretary and business agent.

At dinner in the mess-saloon the Rajah was introduced to Medford and Miss Buckner in Grosserbaum's ponderous manner. He proceeded to make himself so agreeable that Pauline Buckner was at first rather pleasantly impressed and later went out on deck to chat with him, with the mental reservation, however, that she needed more than ever to be on her guard.

After her departure, when the Germans were noisily leaving the saloon, Medford suggested to Grosserbaum that it might be well for them to have a conference.

"You tell me I wass stay mit you undt talk ofer some'ings! Py damn! You haf der grosser nerf! For why shouldt I do so?"

"Just because you expect to use me, or my signature, in some of your 'cursed plans. And if things don't work out according to the orders given you by Irma Vassilikoff or Bergenstrom, you'll get merry hell, that's all! Why, you fool, do you think for a moment that I don't know why you haven't attemped to shoot or knife me since I was lugged aboard this hooker? Now, sit down and light your damned old china-pipe while we go over this thing a bit. You might as well lay your cards on the table, because I've doped out pretty much your whole game. Partly guess-work, partly more than that, but it's none of your business how much of each. Suppose I outline it? See how wide I am of the mark."

"Vell, go on! Undt if you get too fresh, I squash you deadt!" His small piggish eyes blazed with malevolence.

"Eventually, of course. Those were your orders, too, but not until I had been used to pull out a few chestnuts, eh? Now, your gang expects to get from Miss Buckner a bill-of-sale for six, eight, possibly ten, of the Nawab Line boats made out to some navigation and trading company, with certain other properties mentioned in exchange as *quid pro quo*. In order to make it appear like a reasonable business transaction, say that she has been induced to invest in rubber and oil properties somewhere up in the Rajah's territory, transferring her shares in half her steamers for shares in the rubber company, the new fleet being purchased by it for transportation of crude rubber to the European market and such other freights as the company expects to control. That sort of transaction would hold in most any court. My name has become fairly well known out here. Suppose I'm elected treasurer of the new corporation, signing the share-certificates in that capacity and witnessing her bills-of-sale? This makes it all the more difficult to question her going into the transaction of her own free will, doesn't it? And if I take up temporary residence at the new company's headquarters, up some tributary of the Great Kapuas, and happen to die there of fever or any old thing, it's a simple matter to elect another treasurer and ship the remains home to my friends, isn't it? I notice you follow me."

"Ja, I get you! Undt w'en I find oudt where you git der dope, I shust squash somepody deadt! Sure!"

"That'll be all right, too—*when* you find out. But it wouldn't be nice of you to make a mistake and squash the wrong man; that wouldn't be good form.

"HOWEVER, I was coming to the rest of your plan about the lady we have on board. Suppose, just for argument, that she becomes a bit fascinated with the Rajah? He is an attractive sort of chap, —quite the ladies'-man, with a reputation which made even the Parisian apaches rather sick when he spent a few months there. Anyhow, say she falls in love with him; consents to marry him? He's said to have a dozen wives now up the river, some of them pretty light *cafe-au-lait*. If she goes through the farce of a marriage with him, who's to forbid the banns? In any of the British or French possessions no Rajah dares take a white woman into his harem unless she walks in of her own free will, which no white woman of any class or breeding ever does. But here in Dutch Borneo conditions are different, eh?

"Let's drop the fooling and get down to cases, Grosserbaum. It's all framed up. Neither the girl nor I have a chance in the world, and there wont be any farcical wedding in her case after she has transferred those steamers! If she refuses, she'll be told that the Rajah's harem is the alternative. Of course I'm done for—anyhow. We'll not waste time arguing that point. But if you get that decent girl back safely to Singapore, or even around to Sarawak, it will be very much to your advantage. That's all!"

"Nein, t'at iss impossible! How it wass to my advantage?"

"Of course, you'll have to bribe some of your men; you know their price better than I do. But I'll write you an order on the Hongkong & Shanghai Bank for one million dollars, which will be paid to you in any port you consider safe, if Miss Buckner is known to be with her friends in Singapore at the time. You've undoubtedly heard enough about me to be reasonably sure I've got that much on deposit with those people."

"Undt—if I refuse?"

"The girl will kill herself. You'll get no steamers, and you're out of pocket just one cold million dollars, less what you have to give your underlings—say nine hundred thousand net. If you'll think it over a bit, you'll see that you can have one whale of a time with that much anywhere in the world. Of course it's understood that you hold on to me until you get the money."

"But how der teufel mus' I sqvare meinself wit' der Rajah? He haf der few millions himse'f, undt he vants der white woman for der harem!"

"Couldn't you pick up something a little more showy—say in Batavia, Sourabaya or possibly in Saigon? This boat isn't across the Kapuas bar yet, you know. You might tell him that Miss Buckner has one hell of a temper in spite of her quiet appearance. Tell him she was sulky all the morning and just now tried to scratch your eyes out. Put a few strips of plaster over your face. Say you know where you can get something pretty nice in Saigon—warranted healthy and good natured."

"Vell, maype I t'ink him ofer. So long as I cut your t'roat goodt undt deep, maybe der High Kommandt wont kick so much apoudt der woman, prowided she transfers der ships pefore I let her go, undt understandt t'at I cut your t'roat if she don't say der transfer wass all right, ja. I t'ink t'at wouldt keep her mout' shut. Vell, p'raps we talk him ofer some more pefore we cross der bar, ja!"

As the brute lumbered out on deck, Medford knew perfectly well that he stood too much in fear of the secret organization to carry out any such agreement without double-crossing him. But the slow-witted fool might delay going up the river as long as possible in order to think the matter over in every light and figure how he could get his hands on the million.

Presently Sam Ku reappeared to clear the table. Again there was a good deal of low-pitched talk between him and Medford, without any noticeable motion of the lips.

THAT night Pauline Buckner very carefully locked and barricaded her door, after procuring from Sam Ku a reserve of food and coffee sufficient to last two or three days if necessary. At six bells in the middle watch, the sleepy German assistant, who merely held the "ticket" of a "Third" and was incompetent in some ways to handle the big reciprocating-engines, went on deck to cool off. He'd been up scarcely five minutes when there was a muffled crash in the engine-room, followed shortly by three more. But as

the sound came up through the gratings around the funnel, it might have been the clanging of fire-doors in the stokehold or the dropping of heavy slice-bars on the steel flooring. The assistant paid no attention to the crashes; nor was he familiar enough with the engine-room to notice anything amiss when he went below again. However, when Grosserbaum ordered the ballast-tanks emptied at eight bells in the morning, with the Great Kapuas River bar in sight, dead ahead, the pumping-system was found to be completely out of commission as far as they were concerned. Some heavy object had been slammed down upon the pipes leading from the pumps to the starboard and port manifolds, smashing them wide open. To repair the damage was a job for a marine-yard or an engineer with far more resources than anyone aboard the *Tai-Kling*.

Presumably Medford had been in his stateroom all night. The assistant swore that none but the Chinese stokers and oilers had been in the engine-room—and was knocked flat into the scuppers for having no better explanation. Grosserbaum was in a murderous mood during breakfast—so much so that his four immediate subordinates scattered to distant parts of the ship the moment they had bolted their meal, and the Rajah took Miss Buckner up to the hurricane-deck.

When they were alone, Grosserbaum began cursing Medford as the man responsible for his ridiculous predicament. With a cheerful grin, the American drew deeply upon his cigar, then puffed a long jet of tobacco-smoke across the table into his face. Knowing his supposed victim to be unarmed, the brute reached under his dirty white coat for a pistol, neither remembering nor considering that his back was to the pantry door. Before he could raise the pistol, Sam Ku glided silently up behind him, reached over his right shoulder and expertly shoved eight inches of razor-edged steel down inside the hollow where his collar-bones met. There was merely a gurgling moan as the body drooped forward across the table.

This move in the game put Medford in possession of two serviceable automatics, which he immediately belted under his coat as he started for the engine-room. From the second grating, however, he saw that nothing was to be done in that quarter. Two motionless German forms lay huddled upon the steel plating near the tunnel into the stoke-hold. The stokers were phlegmatically banking their fires according to previous orders, and the oilers were busily cleaning the pistons and cranks from surplus accumulations of grease.

This left thirteen of the Germans and Swedes scattered over the ship, eight of them being asleep in their bunks during their watch below. When Medford casually approached the five on deck,—three in the forward "well" and two in the after one,—Sam Ku and his men were busy upon errands in the immediate vicinity which enabled them to slip up behind and bind the men's arms.

WITH the ship entirely in his possession, Medford courteously asked the Rajah for the wireless-call of his yacht—and had her alongside in two hours. Nothing was said as to the Rajah's business aboard; he believes to this day that neither the American nor the girl knew the details of the hideous scheme in which they were to have played the leading parts. And the conspirators in Singapore (Irma Vassilikoff having instinctively removed herself to Saigon in the meantime) agreed that their most stupid blunder was in failing to dig up the facts that Pauline Buckner held a Master's Ticket for Steam and had the quality of cool nerve which marks the difference between an able shipmaster and the average young woman. For it was she who brought the *Tai-Kling* into Keppel Harbor again without leaving the bridge, while Medford went thirty hours without sleep in the engine-room, putting to practical use the knowledge of marine engines he had picked up from Larry Stevens during the past eight months.

As the cable roared through the hawse-pipe off Tanjong Pagar, Pauline went below, first stopping a moment or two in her stateroom to put her hair in order. She beckoned Medford into the chief engineer's room off the upper grating.

"Jimmy, I happened to overhear, through the skylight, the talk you had with Grosserbaum. My nerves are pretty reliable when I'm facing an emergency, but I'll shiver at times as long as I live, when I think of what would have happened but for you. I fancy I shall know after this what a real man is. Oh, don't stand there like a fool! Take me in your arms and kiss me! It—it needn't mean anything, you know!"

# "Antonio"

## Henry Leverage

**CHESTER FAY, prince of the underworld, here starts a saturnalia of crime that has a highly moral purpose back of it: one of Henry Leverage's best.**

"HIGGENS!"

The butler paused between the portières.

"Higgens, unlatch the front door, open it slightly and go to the back of the house."

"Yes sir."

"I'm expecting a gentleman who does not wish to be seen."

George Mott leaned forward in his chair. He drew out a flat key, unlocked a drawer and carefully sorted a number of newspaper clippings. These clippings concerned all lovers of good government.

Clean politics was George Mott's particular hobby. He had lived to see his home town debauched by an unsavory crew of latter-day pirates. The leader of the buccaneers was an aggressive, bulldog-type chief of police, named Calvin Grimm, who had come originally from New York.

George Mott sent to the same city for talent of a different order. A soft step in the hall and a low cough—soon after Higgens disappeared toward the butler's pantry—announced the caller.

The portières separated. A slender, ingenuous-appearing young man bowed, removed a checked cap from his silver-gray head and approached the table upon which the reformer had spread the clippings.

"You are on time, Fay."

"I always try to be."

George Mott leaned back. He eyed Chester Fay.

"I need your services in order to clean up this city," he said.

Fay recalled that Flintport was known as a "right" town for gamblers, sure-thing grafters, lottery men and concessionaires. It was a dangerous place for ordinary crooks.

"I don't know what I can do for you, Mr. Mott."

"I want Calvin Grimm, chief of police and detectives, removed for cause. I want Frank Tucker, an honorable and fearless man, put in his place. The better element of Flintport wants Mr. Tucker."

"I could get evidence against the political ring, Mr. Mott."

"We tried that! Fay, we've tried everything! The crooked ring is stronger than ever. You're my last resort."

FAY walked back and forth in front of the table. He stared at the reformer and dropped his glance to the newspaper clippings. The wealth of the room-furnishings made the air oppressive.

George Mott was the owner of extensive manufacturing plants in and around Flintport. He inherited the original shops from his father, a philanthropist. Most of the profit from the business was spent by George Mott for prison-reform and civic improvement. It was through his reform associates that he had met Chester Fay, alias Edward Letchmere, otherwise known as Sir Arthur Stephney. Fay had considerable influence in the underworld.

"The trouble with Flintport," said George Mott, "is that there are too many crooks in high office. The chief of police is an old New York ward-heeler. You know what that means?"

Fay nodded: "Yes, I know."

"And the rest of the City Hall crowd here in town are as bad as Calvin Grimm. They've doubled the tax-rate in the last three years. The streets are in need of repair. Gambling-houses run wide open. A lottery flourishes."

"Who controls the elections?"

"The ring!"

"And the City Aldermen?"

"The grafters!"

"What's the population of Flintport?"

"A hundred and sixty thousand. Three hundred police and thirty-seven detectives are supposed to suppress vice. They encourage it."

George Mott spread out the newspaper clippings. "Violent crimes in Flintport—burglaries, hold-ups, murders, robberies—are practically nil. Secret crime is everywhere."

Chester Fay glanced at the clippings. He raised his eyes to George Mott. "You mean the investigating committees report very little surface crime?"

"Yes; their investigating isn't much!"

"That's the trouble, then. You need more crime."

"What?"

"Yes. Import fifty or sixty house-prowlers, yeggs and pickpockets and tell them to get busy. The public will demand that Calvin Grimm be removed from office, and your friend—"

"Frank Tucker."

"Mr. Tucker placed in his stead."

George Mott gathered up the newspaper clippings. "I hadn't thought of that," he admitted.

Fay's glance was piercing. "You did me one or two good turns, Mr. Mott. You sent little Emily O'Mara to a boarding-school and paid for her education. You pensioned old Jack Knafe. You got a friend or two of mine out of Rockglen. I'll do you a favor. Give me the word to go ahead, and I'll try to make this town too hot for the chief of police. Providing—"

"What, Fay?"

"There's honest men enough in town to represent a decent public sentiment."

"There's plenty of public sentiment—if we can arouse it. The ring controls the workers and the grafters. The workers wont stand for a carnival of crime such as you propose."

"It should be all over in two weeks. How about the newspapers?"

"I own one—the *Record*. The political ring owns one. The third paper is neutral. A saturnalia of crime would swing the third paper to my side."

"How about expenses?" Fay turned and picked up his cap, cane and gloves from the padded-leather chair.

"Draw on me for anything you want, Chester?"

The cracksman moved toward the portières. "I'll look Flintport over," he said. "I'll send to Hope Hall for little Emily O'Mara. She and I may be able to accomplish something."

"A moment, Fay."

"What is it?"

"No word must get out that I am involved in this."

"Leave that to me, Mr. Mott!"

CHESTER FAY left the Mott mansion and strolled about Flintport. He found it an average town of the second class. His activities extended to a thorough inspection of the City Hall and the jail, and a visit to a retired yegg who lived in a

southern suburb. The yegg knew the inside facts concerning every politician in Flintport. "All rotten," was his general summing-up. "They'd rob a blind widow of her last cent. They're so crooked they couldn't hide behind a grapevine."

Leaving the yegg, Fay phoned to Hope Hall, the Duchess' home for ex-convicts on the Hudson. He requested the Duchess to send little Emily O'Mara to the best hotel in Flintport. Also he acquainted her with the situation in the crooked city. "Give out the word—spread it!" he exclaimed. "Tell our friends it's a good place for easy money."

Minnie May promised to do her part. She was acquainted with fully one half of the active lights in the Eastern underworld. This list of acquaintances was made up of porch-climbers, store-histers, second-story men, "guns" or pickpockets, heavy-men, stickups and safe-blowers. She added that she would also send along a particularly aggressive mob of gipsies whose specialty was opening safes with can-openers.

Little Emily O'Mara registered at Flintport's best hotel that evening. Fay met her in the ladies' parlor. The girl's father had been an old-time bank-robber. He had been killed in attempting to make a getaway from prison.

"Everything is set!" said Fay. "I have a job for you in the morning. How would you like to sell cigars in the basement of the City Hall?"

"I never sold them, but I can try."

"Good! It's all arranged. I bought the concession from a crooked politician. Also I bought a bootblack-stand from an Italian. He moves out tomorrow. I move in. My name will be Antonio, called Tony for short."

"You, shine boots?" The girl's brown eyes glowed.

"Sure!"

"Why, Chester!"

THE cracksman looked around the ladies' parlor. No one was watching. "Sure," he repeated. "The Detective Department is in the basement of the Town Hall. Calvin Grimm has an office not ten feet from the bootblack-stand. All the fly-muggs in this town—thirty-seven—will buy their cigars from you and get their shoes blacked at my stand."

"What's the idea, Chester?"

"You go upstairs and get a good night's sleep. Move your bag to a quiet, inexpensive boarding-house at daylight tomorrow. Meet me at the cigar-stand at seven o'clock. The idea is to help George Mott get rid of a grafting ring that hasn't one particle of honor."

"I'm keen for Mr. Mott!" declared little Emily.

THE basement of the City Hall was a dingy, damp floor divided into corridors and offices. The Bertillon room, the chief's office, detectives' headquarters, a row of telephone-booths, a candy- and flower-stand—occupied the floor.

Fay had looked the situation over and found it to his liking. The bootblack-stand had been sold by an Italian who was not satisfied with the tips given him by Flintport's detectives. Most of them owed him money. He left behind a wizened fellow-countryman named Gabriel, who could talk Italian fluently. Fay did not know a word of the language.

He appeared dressed as a New York Italian of the second generation. Walnut stain darkened his skin. A handkerchief of a bright hue was wound about his neck. His trousers and coat were corduroy.

The cigar-stand had not been used for many months. The politician who sold it to Fay explained that the old owner never kept a cheap enough brand of goods for the detectives.

Fay installed little Emily behind the counter and helped her open the boxes. He wiped off the cases. He got Gabriel to assist him in sweeping up. The janitor of the City Hall furnished new electric bulbs. Fay tipped him with two five-cent cigars.

"What a time do the detectives comma to work?" he asked ingenuously.

"Any time they damn please, wop!"

Fay waited until the janitor disappeared around a corner of the corridor. He leaned over the counter and said to little Emily.

"Sell all your goods at less than cost. I'm expecting a cigar-lighter from New York. It takes a photograph every time a man lights a cigar. We want the detectives to patronize this stand."

"Why do you want their photographs?"

"It's turn about! They mug the criminals—why can't we make a rogues' gallery of detectives?"

Little Emily's eyes glowed delightedly. "Why have you taken that bootblack-stand?"

"I'm going to mark every detective who gets a shine there."

"How do you think you can work that?"

"I've figured two ways—both effective."

Gabriel jumped down from one of the chairs on the bootblack-stand. A florid-faced man came out of the chief of detective's office. The man plumped into a seat.

"Clean 'em off!" he growled.

Fay glided over the stones of the basement. He assisted Gabriel in polishing shoes with inch-thick soles.

The customer tossed Fay a nickel, sprang from the chair, and stopped in front of the cigar-stand. "Hello, what's this?"

Little Emily O'Mara smiled over the counter. "Will you have a cigar?"

The man chose six. He eyed the girl.

"Charge them up, kid," he grunted. "You know me?"

"No, I don't!"

"I'm Grimm—Calvin Grimm!"

THE chief of detectives went through a stone arch and disappeared.

"Gabriel, who was that?" asked Fay.

"That's the bigga-da-boss!"

"Fine fellow," said Fay with glittering eyes.

As Antonio, from the East Side of New York, and of the second generation, Fay made a presentable Italian bootstand proprietor. He learned the names of most of Chief Grimm's sleuths. Gabriel knew them all. The picturesqueness of his costume allowed Fay considerable latitude in the basement of the dingy City Hall. He was called into the jail to polish a murderer's boots who was going up for trial. The cracksman made a swift mental note of the jail, the cells, the sleepy-looking guards.

He adjusted the combined electric-cigar-lighter and flash-camera when it arrived from New York. The apparatus had been manufactured by an ex-fence and model-maker, to Fay's order. It took a one-inch picture of any individual lighting a cigar at the cigar-lighter. The flame from the tip of the jet was acetylene-gas instead of alcohol.

"Just mug the detectives," Fay told little Emily. "We want a complete rogues' gallery."

"I'm not sure which are the detectives, Chester."

"Always snap the camera when I drop a brush on the floor. We've got a day to get a complete gallery. Mark down those quarter cigars to five cents. That'll bring them all to the counter."

The girl was a magnet which drew many of Chief Grimm's sergeants. Her brown hair and eyes, her youth and the fact that she was almost alone in a dingy basement lured the detectives away from their duties.

"WHAT are you waiting for?" little Emily asked Fay one evening.

"More good thieves. I've connected with about thirty. They're hanging out with a yegg I know in the southern part of town. I want more than thirty before I tell them to start."

"Grimm looked very uneasy today, Chester."

"Yes. Two or three of the boys started working on their own hook. They prowled about twenty houses. They stuck up the president of the street-railroad company."

"Is it in the papers?"

"It's in Mr. Mott's paper, big. There's just a few lines in the two other papers. We have got to turn this town over and get everybody convinced that the chief of police can't stop the crime-wave."

A telephone message to "Antonio" on the next day, caused Fay to hurry from the City Hall into an outside telephone-booth. There he communicated with Minnie May.

"More coming," she said. "I've heard from six of the best short-workers in the East. They want the mugs of the town detectives. That's all they need."

A "short-worker," in the argot of the underworld, is a pickpocket. Fay smiled keenly when he hung up the receiver. Six fast dips, equipped with a working knowledge of the faces of Flintport's detectives, could operate with impunity. They would wade through every street-car where a detective wasn't aboard.

Fay phoned his friend the yegg that night. His orders were tense: "Tell them to cut loose! Am sending more pictures."

The yegg promised to tell the "boys." Fay worked in a closet until midnight, developing negatives and prints as fast as possible. Gabriel proved a willing messenger. The bootblack was as thick-headed as some of Calvin Grimm's detective sergeants. He went to the yegg's house and returned with a note from the old safebreaker.

Fay showed the note to little Emily. It stated that the gang was getting anxious. They wanted to put the cleaner on the town, as the yegg expressed it.

"Trouble starts for Calvin Grimm today," Fay told the girl.

She leaned her elbows on the cigar-counter. Detectives and policemen in uniform went in and out of headquarters. An order had come from men higher up to stop the house-prowling and hold-ups in the suburbs of Flintport.

"We may be suspected," said little Emily O'Mara.

Fay adjusted the bandana scarf around his neck, pulled down his torn cap and said: "This is the last place they will suspect anybody. I've polished the shoes of every detective on the force. I've brushed them and talked with them. Little do they know that in their own Bertillon files are my photograph, finger-prints and police record."

THE girl heard Fay humming a tune from an Italian opera when he left the stand. A stout detective called loudly for a shine. Fay's brush went over the man's overcoat before he finished with the customer and took a smooth dime. To little Emily's fancy there had magically sprung on the detective's back a green mark—faintly discernible in the half-light of the basement.

"I'm marking them all," said Fay. "I've got a piece of chalk in the whisk-broom."

Little Emily opened the cigar-case and served a customer who asked for a five-cent perfecto. The man paused for a light, looked at Fay and declared:

"This is the best cigar in town for the money!"

"I no gotta big store," Fay said. "I no pay bigga rent."

The man braced his shoulders and went toward Calvin Grimm's office. The chief of detectives stood in the doorway. His florid face had changed to a livid purple.

"I wont talk to newspaper men!" he roared. "Get away!"

"But how about this recent series of robberies in the outskirts?" asked the reporter when he removed the perfecto from his mouth.

"Nothin' to it!"

Calvin Grimm buttoned up his overcoat, thrust the man aside and charged past the cigar-stand. Fay raised his brows slightly.

"Did you see the green mark on his shoulder?"

"Yes," said Emily.

"I've got them all tagged. My friend the yegg suggested that a photograph wasn't as good an identification as a distinct mark. A detective can wear glasses, shave off his mustache or turn up his coat-collar and pull down his hat. That prevents the pickpockets' recognizing them on the street-cars. A green chalk-mark on the left shoulder, high up, is a better means of spotting the sleuths of this town."

Fay went to the bootblack-stand. He sat on a chair and watched the door leading to Calvin Grimm's office. A buzzing sounded inside as if a score of bees were aroused. Telephones rang. Detectives arrived and departed with worried strides. The mobs were operating with success.

These mobs, and a few single workers, made a specialty of picking out a city, working hard for a week or two and departing for new and unaroused communities. Minnie May had sent Flintport the cream of the underworld. The word was out, from Chatham Square to Chicago, that the city was due for a plucking.

Fay escorted little Emily to her boarding-house that night, said good-by and went to his own modest room with a feeling that Flintport was not exactly a safe place for a pedestrian. Patrol-wagons clanged through the streets. A crowd gathered around a street-car office where complaints concerning lost pocket-books and jewelry were received.

Twenty or thirty professional pickpockets had reaped a harvest. The morning papers were filled with a list of the victims. Editorials in the *Record* denounced the chief of police.

FAY read this paper and smiled. George Mott was on the job. The reformer appealed for honest government and cited the crime-wave as an example of corruption in police circles.

"Have you seen the papers?" Fay asked little Emily when she appeared for work at the cigar-stand.

"Goodness, yes!"

"Looks good, Emily!"

The girl removed her gloves. She gazed at Fay's walnut-stained features. "We must be very careful," she warned. "Suppose one of those pickpockets or robbers should inform on you? They've seen Gabriel bringing the photographs and the notes. They know that the pictures and marks were made in this basement."

"They'll not squeal, Emily. There's a fifty-thousand-dollar blanket-bond to spring any of them if they get caught. The Duchess put the money in the hands of a lawyer."

"Where did she get all that money, Chester?"

"Through friends. The chances are that very little of it will be lost. The crooks she sent to Flintport are the best in the world. They don't look like pickpockets and house-prowlers. They look like prosperous business men."

Calvin Grimm's voice woke the echoes of the damp basement. He shouted for a shine. Fay turned from the cigar-counter and hurried to the stand. He daubed the chief of detectives' broad shoes with a pasty mess. His elbows worked back and forth. He snapped the polishing cloth with professional skill.

"Where did you come from, wop?" asked the police chief.

"Delancy Street, New York. I gotta two bootblack-stands there, boss."

"Know Big Tim?"

Fay knew Big Tim. He pretended to be deeply interested in brushing off Calvin Grimm's dark overcoat. The mark he made with the green chalk was distinct enough to suit any pickpocket. The Chief strode out to the street.

"Be careful," whispered little Emily when Fay came to the cigar-stand. "Everybody will see that chalk-mark, Chester."

"I want everybody to see it. Grimm thinks he's a smart man. He can't move in this town without being noticed by the bunch that Minnie May sent over to help Mr. Mott out."

"I'm afraid you're chalking the detectives too plainly."

"I'll change the mark tomorrow."

LATE that evening the basement of the City Hall filled with an assortment of men. Calvin Grimm was waited on by delegations from two civic leagues. Thin-faced reporters dogged the Chief's footsteps. His sleuths were overworked. They succeeded in catching three pickpockets. Their leader was exhibited to the newspapermen.

"Is that all?" they asked the sleuths.

"Grimm's got two more locked up!"

Fay elbowed his way toward the Chief's office. He heard the names of the dips mentioned. Two were friends of Minnie May's. The other was Nollie Matches, of choice police memory. They had been unfortunate enough to get caught with their pockets filled with "unweeded leathers."

"I'll have to save them," Fay said to little Emily.

They walked toward her boarding-house.

"Can you do it, you think, Chester?"

"Yes. I'd better wait a day or two. Grimm may accidently catch some more."

The girl thought of the staring headlines in the evening papers. The crime-wave was laid to the Chief's inefficiency. Broad hints were thrown concerning police graft.

"Will he be recalled?" the girl asked.

"I think so. I heard, through a cipher note sent by Gabriel, that one bank, a shoe-store, a jeweler and a pawnbroker are going to be robbed tonight. The bank job will be on the First National."

"The great big one on Main Street, Chester?"

"Yes. If that don't wake this town up, we'll try another. There's bound to be some excitement at headquarters tomorrow. Grimm may get lynched."

The chief of Flintport's detective bureau and police force was a worried-looking man when he entered his office on the following morning. He had not slept. His clothes were wrinkled. The green chalk-mark was still on his overcoat.

Fay learned the news of the night. The First National Bank, a shoe-store, half a dozen lesser "touches," had been made. The city was in an uproar. Extras were being circulated through the streets. The *Record* demanded Grimm's immediate removal. It suggested Frank Tucker for the position. The Police Commissioners were divided regarding this move.

"They wont stay divided long," Fay told little Emily. "My yegg friend, the Duchess, and the New Shanghai Club of New York, have invited all the pickpockets and safe-robbers at large to visit Flintport. It'll be a regular rogues' convention."

"How about the ones they caught?"

"Nollie Matches and the others?"

"Yes."

"They wont release them on bail. Grimm is very hostile. I'll go in the jail this afternoon. Perhaps I can do something."

Fay kept Gabriel running errands. He did not want the Italian around the bootblack-stand. The streets were muddy, because of a rain that morning. Fay took more than usual care in scraping the heels of the detectives who asked for a shine. Upon each detective's shoe he made a cross with a sharp scraper. This mark would serve for identification in case the chalk rubbed off the overcoats.

Grimm charged from his office at noon. The Chief ignored Fay's appeal: "Shine em up, boss?"

"Damn you! Get out of my way!" he roared, and plunged like a mad bull toward the street.

Fay heard little Emily's warning cough. He went to the cigar-stand.

"They've caught some more pickpockets," she said. "I overheard a reporter say that two were brought in to the jail—handcuffed, and surrounded by a crowd who wanted to kill them."

Fay waited until Gabriel came from lunch. He picked up a shoe-shining box, cloth and scraper. "Watch things," he told little Emily. "I'm going to visit the jail."

HE was back within an hour. Laying the box on the counter, he said:

"They can catch all they want now. I slipped Nollie Matches twelve hacksaw blades. The guards let me in to polish that murderer's shoes. Nollie's cell was on murderers' row. He says he'll make a general jail-delivery. That ought to finish Calvin Grimm."

"Be careful of those chalk-marks, Chester. I saw one detective brushing his coat off. They may guess who put the sign on them."

"This is a hick burg! There should be no trouble robbing everybody in this town. Every detective, with one or two exceptions, has a green spot on the upper left-hand part of his coat. Almost all of them have crosses marked on their shoes."

The girl's brown eyes flashed. "We're in danger, just the same, Chester."

Fay opened his corduroy jacket and glanced at a platinum and gold watch.

"Another six hours, Emily, should bring action from the Police Commissioners. The holiday crowds are being worked by that bunch of dips. I expect to see blue fire around here about seven o'clock. We'll keep both stands open and watch results."

The City Hall was crowded when night came. Rain did not keep back the reporters or indignant citizens. Two riot-calls were sent in to Grimm's office before nine o'clock. Patrolmen, detectives and ambulance-chasers ran through the basement.

Fay sat hunched on the bootblack-stand looking for all the world like a sleeping Italian. The walnut stain aged his face. The cap he wore had been discarded by the former owner of the stand. His well-manicured fingers were coated with shoe-blacking.

He watched the arrival of a delegation from a civic league. They were led into Calvin Grimm's office. After them came the five Police Commissioners. Boys shouted "Extra!" in the corridor. Little Emily did a thriving business at the cigar-stand. She glanced over the case at Fay. He seemed to be waiting for something to explode in Grimm's office.

Disappointment stamped his features when the Commissioners and the civic-league members came out without reaching a decision regarding Grimm's removal. The Chief had promised to make good within twelve hours or resign.

Fay went to little Emily when the crowd had dispersed.

"They're ripping the town right open," he said, "but they've got to do more than that. The Duchess didn't send enough dips. She should have added a few Bolsheviki with bombs. Grimm still holds his job. Frank Tucker hasn't taken his place yet."

"Mr. Mott will be disappointed."

"We'll see what happens tomorrow, Emily. Close up the stand, and I'll take you home."

FAY returned to the City Hall after seeing little Emily to her boarding-house. He idled around the jail and visited the poolrooms. He learned that writs of habeas corpus were denied the pickpockets held in the prison. Grimm and the judges refused to allow Nollie Matches and his pals to go out on bail.

Striding toward his lodgings at midnight, Fay suddenly heard shots and shouts. He retraced his steps toward the City Hall. A crowd gathered in no time. Jeers were hurled at a police wagon. Grimm's first assistant appeared on horseback. He was hooted at.

"What happened?" asked Fay innocently.

A citizen exclaimed:

"The jail is out! That's what happened!"

Fay eyed the citizen. "Somebody escaped?"

"Eight escaped! They shot two guards. The chief of police is to blame!"

Fay went to his room, phoned the yegg at daybreak, and learned that the mobs were about ready to leave Flintport. "There'll be a few necktie-parties if some of them don't," said the old crook. "Look at the papers this morning, Chester. We're doin' wot we can."

The papers were startling enough to sat-

isfy Fay. He glanced at the headlines, saw six safe-breaking jobs listed, counted the number of citizens who had been robbed on street-cars and stuck up by masked men, and told little Emily that Grimm's end was a matter of hours.

"Get ready to leave here, Emily. Just walk out, when I give the word. Go to your boarding-house, get your grip, and take a trolley to Hope Hall. I'll close the stand or give it to Gabriel. Nollie Matches, Jimmy the Wire, Eddy Goldman and five others ripped the jail wide open. They're gone. We better be going, too."

"I want to see the finish, Chester."

"We'll stay that long."

GRIMM emerged from headquarters at noon. He glared up and down the dingy corridor. Beads of sweat were on his brow. The news of the night had driven a spike of fear in his heart.

"They want you on the phone," somebody called through the doorway.

"Who?"

"The Commissioners!"

Fay straightened his legs and dropped from the chair he had been pretending to sleep in.

"Shine! Polish!" he offered.

Grimm's eyes flared. He stepped back and picked up a suitcase. He advanced in the direction of little Emily. Leaning over the counter, he muttered:

"Check this for me, kid. I'll be back for it in twenty minutes."

Fay watched the Chief hurry into the office. A reporter slouched through the basement. An auto-horn honked in the street. The Mayor and the Board of Aldermen came trooping in, single file. They right-faced and went into headquarters.

Gliding swiftly toward little Emily, Fay motioned for her to lift the suitcase to the counter. "Let me see it," he asked. "I'll bet there's plunder in it. Yes, an easy lock. I'll open it. Stall for me. That's right, Emily. Get out in front of the stand. Watch for Grimm. He'll try to sneak out. We'll hand him back his case after we put the cleaner on it."

"A cleaner," in the argot of the underworld, was a thorough weeding-out process. Fay spent some time over Calvin Grimm's suitcase. He glanced up once and saw Mr. Mott, a tall, square-jawed man, and the Police Commissioners, going by the stand. They were headed in the direction of Calvin Grimm's office.

A newsboy shouted through the basement:

"Extra! Pickpockets reap rich harvest!"

Fay placed the suitcase under the cigar-counter. "Get behind the stand," he told little Emily. "Grimm is going to make a get-away."

"With swag, Chester."

"Without swag."

The Commissioners entered the office of the Chief of Police. Fay glided to the stand, sent Gabriel away and picked up a brush. He stood at attention.

Grimm appeared. He glared through the gloom, braced his shoulders and started toward the cigar-counter.

"Polish them up, boss?" asked Fay nonchalantly.

"No!"

The detective leaned over the counter. "Give me my case, quick."

Little Emily handed him his suitcase. He pulled down a slouch hat and lunged toward the street door. He bowled over a reporter and shouted for a taxicab.

"That's the finish," said Fay to little Emily. "I put everything he had in the case, under the counter. You'll find about twelve thousand dollars hidden there. He was a cheap grafter."

"But he'll notice how light the case is and come back, Chester."

"He wont come back."

"Why?"

"I saw Frank Tucker with Mr. Mott. That means that Grimm is fired. We'll notify my friend the yegg to send the pickpockets and heavy men out of town right away."

Little Emily looked toward the street door.

"Don't worry about Grimm," said Fay. "I filled his suitcase with that cigar-lighter and all the spare photos of his detectives. I should have added the brush with the chalk in it and the scraper."

"What will he think when he finds them?"

Fay smiled and stared intently at little Emily.

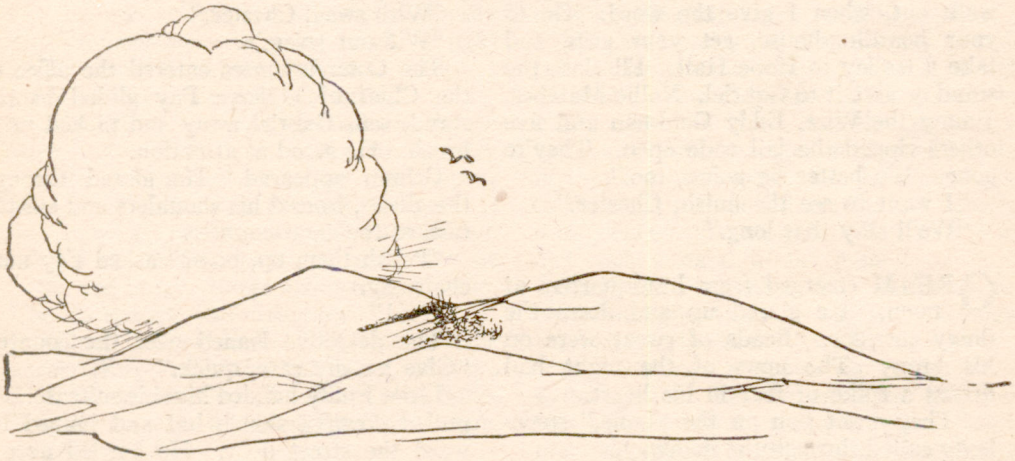
"We don't care what he thinks. You pack that twelve thousand in cigar-boxes. It belongs to the city of Flintport."

"What are you going to do, Chester?"

"I'm going in and congratulate the new chief of detectives—Mr. Tucker. I'll assure him, through George Mott, that the crime wave is no longer a menace to this town."

# Cross Currents

## A Three-Part Novel



*(What Happened in the Opening Chapters:)*

DICK MOHUN had adventured to New York and to a job as private secretary to a great Wall Street broker, Henry Ambrose. There he came in contact with divers people important in financial circles, and with Martha Ambrose, his employer's daughter —whom everyone supposed would marry a wealthy fellow named Amerton. When, however, Ambrose asked Mohun to help him in an unfair operation designed to swallow a ilttle Southern railroad owned by Ambrose's friend, Colonel Harrison, and some other Virginia gentleman, Dick rebelled and resigned. He revealed Ambrose's treacherous scheme to Colonel Harrison and his nephew, however, and the threatened absorption of the Colonel's beloved R. & W. was prevented.

With Ashley Harrison, the nephew of the old Colonel, Mohun established a small brokerage-office of his own, and succeeded fairly well. And then, through an old pal, Jim Edwards, and an acquaintance also named Mohun (an Englishman who pronounced his name *Moon*), Dick became interested in an oil-prospect in Lower California. He invested most of his savings in the well, and induced friends to purchase stock. But when Mexico boiled over in revolution, Dick's oil-property was leveled to the ground by marauding natives.

Discouraged, Dick Mohun "pulled stakes" for Simon Walker's ranch in Wyoming, and a new life began for him. The hardy existence of the range developed him, and he earned his position among the men by victorious combat with their belligerent foreman, Wildman. Local ranchmen had been troubled by persistent cattle-thieves, and by means of a marked branding-iron Wildman was identified as a leader of the gang, and was fired.

At a meeting of the directors of the Chicago, Omaha and Vancouver Railroad, in Chicago, which both Henry M. Ambrose and Philip Amerton attended, notice was read of the discovery of oil adjacent to the railroad's holdings in Montana. Later, Martha Ambrose heard Simon Walker's name mentioned in connection with the oil-holdings, and suggested that a car-party be made up to visit the territory.

*(The Story Continues:)*

### CHAPTER XVII

WITH the passing of Bosco a source of worry was removed and Simon had more time for his outside interests. Among these was the sale of his land which was watered by the ditch. The

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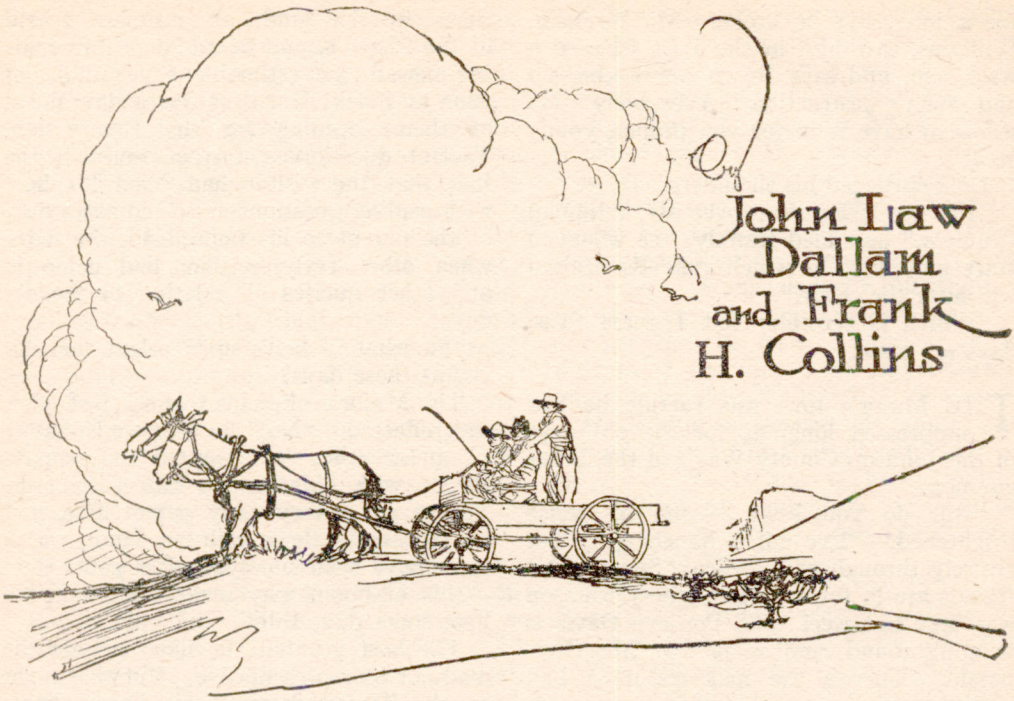



discovery of oil in Montana had resulted in a boom through all that section, and Wyoming land-owners had become interested.

The oil-find had proved a genuine one; wells were being sunk all over the neighborhood; a town of tents had sprung up, and the Indian agent on the Reservation to the south had been pestered by trespassers on Government holdings. The Omaha Railroad was building a spur into the field, and the Publicity Bureau was advertising freely. But the road maintained a discreet silence as to its plans for Wyoming. Simon Walker, being interested in any development that might improve his own holdings, had written the road, but his letter had yielded no satisfactory reply. Nor would Mr. Stiles at Otter Forks hold out any promises: the Omaha might open its Wyoming lands, or it might not.

First, however, Simon had his beef round-up. This proved very satisfactory; few if any cattle were missing, and if a conspiracy to steal them on a large scale had existed, it had been apparently nipped in the bud. Even Major Butler was mollified. The two owners shipped a trainload of steers to Omaha, with Fatty Harris, now foreman, in charge, and Dick for the first time saw the departure of a cattle-train.

"And now that's off our chest," said the testy Major as Dick drove the buckboard from the station to the town, "let's get busy with something else. You're goin' to take a look at this oil-strike; all right—I'll go with you. We may be able to find out if the railroad's goin' to do anything this side the State line. We'll nose around the Reservation; Briggs is liable to know something—coals of hell, man! Look where you're going!"

The last objurgation was aimed at Dick, who had driven through a chuck-hole.

"Damn this road," the Major continued. "My spine's most broke."

He resumed in more amiable tones:

"Of course, Si, the Omaha will take advantage of this discovery; they own subsidies in Wyoming, you know—whereabouts do their holdings lie?"

Simon shook his head.

"You can search me—somewhere near the Reservation, of course; that's near their right of way."

"I reckon!" Major Butler glared daggers at the owner of a passing Ford. "Only the Road knows exactly and it wont tell."

"WHAT'S new?" asked Dick presently at a venture. "Things are quiet up-river."

"Nothin', 'cept your friend Wildman has been in town."

"Has he! Still here?"

"No; gone over to Black Bear. Looking

for a job; says he broke. My foreman, Williams, saw him in the Last Chance a week ago, and says Bosco was taking up and vowing destruction to everybody. He seems to have it in for you proper, young man!"

Dick shrugged his shoulders.

"I'm not losing sleep over Mr. Wildman —unless," he added frankly, "he wants to start gun-play, in which case R. Mohun will hunt the cellar."

"Which is sensible; but I guess those days are gone."

THE Major's tone was rueful; he had suppressed longings for the old days of the Johnson County War and the Texas gunmen.

"But do you know,"—and his voice brightened,—"I've got a hunch we're not entirely through with Bosco. Some of his friends are in town. That ornery Manson was here last week, and Pop-eye Davis is hanging round, and so is that Mex Fernando. There's the makings of a bad gang."

"Thought Pop-eye was in a Colorado pen'," said Simon.

"He's out, worse luck! Williams saw all three of 'em."

"Humph! Gates watching them?"

"Sure, but he hasn't anything on 'em just now."

"They'll probably head for this oil-excitement," suggested Dick. "If they're broke, they ought to be able to earn a living over there."

"Work!" said Major Butler. "You don't know Davis and the Mex. . . . . Well, here's the barn. About seven tomorrow then? Right! I'll get a team of my own from the stable."

It is a long drive from Otter Forks to the Montana line, more than a hundred miles, and so an early start was made. Unable to hire a rig at the livery-barn, the irascible Major was forced to a seat in Simon's wagon. According to the proprietor of the barn, Mr. Stiles had just taken the last team in town for a trip to Black Bear, and this information further irritated the veteran cattleman. He loathed Stiles and distrusted him, and vented his wrath on Simon's horses.

At seven the next morning they started, and were all day crossing the high land which runs into Montana. The drive was not especially interesting; but they passed that night at a ranch owned by an old-timer in the land, an intimate friend of the Major's, and heard some illuminating news: the estimable Stiles had not gone to Black Bear, but was a day ahead of them, heading for the Reservation. Tactful questioning further revealed the fact that the visitor had plied his host with leading questions as to the exact date of the patent to his homestead, the dates when other early settlers had come in and other queries all relating to the old days.

"So what in hell's up?" asked the old-claims these days?"

The Major cocked his feet a little higher and reflected. "No," he answered finally; "I guess Stiles just wanted to compare dates with his own railroad-records. You've got a very early patent here, and he represents these railroad lands which must have been surveyed after yours were —this oil-boom may make land valuable here some day, Bill."

The host grunted; he liked neither the road nor its representative. But that night as the Major dropped his heavy boots on the floor preparatory to crawling into bed, Dick heard him say: "Si, what's Stiles wantin' the dates of old patents for? Hey?"

There came an unintelligible mumble from Mr. Walker, followed by the squeak of the bed, and last of all a muffled voice: "Dammit, man! You're hoggin' all the soogans. . . . . Honest, Si, it wouldn't surprise me if the Omaha's goin' to try and steal some land."

THEY started early on the morrow, and in a few hours reached the southern boundary of the Reservation. Dick was somewhat disappointed. Instead of the picture-book tepee the only habitation they saw in the first hour was a small log house closely resembling those of the South Fork ranches. It was smaller and dirtier; that was the only difference. And the noble savage that came within his vision was a singularly dirty individual wearing overalls, flannel shirt and a nondescript soft hat. Dick's face must have shown disilusionment, for Simon smiled at him.

"Disappointed, eh? Well, there isn't much to see; the Injun has become rich and civilized. All these lands are owned by the Injuns themselves; they're born to them by the kindness of the Government. Each buck's entitled to a hundred and sixty, and in certain cases they have a right

to a lot more. They own horses by the hundreds and some cattle, and they can lease their land for grazing to cattle-men if the agent says so; but they're always hard up. We'll come to one of the sub-agencies pretty soon, and you'll see a store there I bet has nearly every family of this quarter on its books. They're a lazy, triflin' lot, but they do own a bunch of ponies and some good land. Of course, there are exceptions. There's a fine old fellow farther north, Chief Ironheels, who's a real man. Butler and I know him well; we want you to meet him."

They spent that night at the sub-agency and learned that Mr. Stiles had passed through the day before, heading for the oil-fields, but the railroad was not mentioned.

BY noon next day, they reached the comfortable dwelling of Chief Ironheels. In him the young man met a highly intelligent Indian. He was over seventy, but he stood an erect six feet in his beautifully beaded moccasins, and if his face was wrinkled, his eyes were as bright as a child's. He greeted his old acquaintances with a dignified cordiality that would have done credit to a Newport social leader. A young squaw, one of his granddaughters, served a very good meal, and Dick was pleased with the neatness shown. Dinner over, came the inevitable pipes and a conversation more direct and pointed than it had been at the agent's quarters.

Chief Ironheels had been over the oil-fields. He was somewhat of a privileged person and had accompanied the Indian Agent on a trip. He believed it to be a valuable pool. Many men were on the ground, and habitations of various kinds had been built. There was talk of a refinery; much land had been leased; borings were being made in a dozen different places every day. Pumps were drawing in at least six spots; the railroad should get in before the heavy snows; there was much money on all sides. Yes, he had heard that prospectors had tried to buy Indian land near the field, but none had been sold; the Government would not allow it. For that he was glad; let the white man keep away from the Crows. He could not say if anybody representing the railroad had been over the Reservation—the ordinary employees at the stations, of course, but of others he knew not. He had heard a surveyor had been over the land to the north, but he had not seen him. Stiles—a fat man with a red face who limped a little in the left leg? Yes; he had gone through and had stopped to smoke a pipe with Ironheels. He had asked questions—yes. He had asked Ironheels how long the Indians had built their houses on the Reservation, and did Ironheels remember about what year it was—and where. Ironheels knew but would not tell the man who was fat and limped; he did not like the man. Ironheels did like the Major and Simon; if they wanted to know he would tell them.

Major Butler showed his appreciation. "Thank you, Chief Ironheels," he said gravely. "It is not a great matter—now. Some day, many moons from now, it may be. Then I will come to my friend the chief of the Crows."

The Indian bent his head. "It is well," he said. "The man who limped has gone on; he should be where the oil is by now."

They shook hands and drove away. To Dick's astonishment he found in the wagon a pair of moccasins. The beading on them was a work of art.

The older man laughed. "That's a present from the Chief to you, Dick. You can thank him as we come back. He saw you were a friend of ours; it is his way of recognizing you. You will always be welcome here. I'll bet Manya-nana made them."

"Who?" gasped Dick.

"Manya-nana! Maiden with the Voice of the West Wind, Ironheel's good-looking granddaughter—she wasn't around at dinner."

"Whoever made them, I'm for her. Let's go back!"

"Wait till we come back; then you can say your pretty speeches. Here's Bear Creek; we're gettin' close to the north line."

JUST at dusk they came in sight of the "development." Through the half-light, tents showed faintly and ghostlike. Great derricks rose before them with spectral arms and legs; squat tanks were in position, and pumps clanked steadily. Lights sprang into being like a thousand fireflies, voices were heard and occasionally a gust of wind brought to them the smell of burning oil. Suddenly some greasy waste caught fire, blazed and reddened in the dusk, throwing all things near it into

vivid relief; then lessened, flickered and went out, leaving behind it only a giant eye that winked from the ground.

The camp was crowded, and it was some time before they obtained sleeping-quarters. The older men finally found a bed in a so-called hotel, a dirty shack made of cottonwood logs, but Dick couldn't stomach the place and sought shelter elsewhere. Finally he discovered an energetic woman who owned a tent containing three camp beds. It was rough but clean, and the Easterner bought a night's lodging.

When Dick went to retire he was somewhat surprised to see no less a person than Mr. William Stiles getting ready for bed by the dim light of a cheap lantern. The two had never met, but the railroad agent nodded with his usual good humor. Then he introduced himself. Dick did the same. Mr. Stiles asked affably what Dick thought of the camp.

"Seems a busy sort of place, Mr. Stiles."

"It's all of that—lots of faces I never saw before. Going to take a little flier in oil, Mr. Mohun?"

The question was asked in a most casual tone, but Dick was on guard; the man was here for some definite purpose.

"No," he answered. "Just drove over with Simon Walker to look around, and see if some of these people can be persuaded to buy land under his ditch if they don't strike oil."

"Ah!" Mr. Stiles' tones were very bland. "Wideawake business men, eh? Well, I'm on a similar errand. You may have heard I represent the Omaha on little matters connected with their colonizations department, and I wondered if I could interest some of these deluded oil-seekers in some of our land near here."

"Or across the Wyoming line," Dick suggested. Mr. Stiles shot a quick look at him, but the younger man was already putting up the blankets.

"No," said Mr. Stiles, "I hardly think the road is ready to develop its Wyoming holdings."

"Ah!" Dick stretched himself. "That's comfortable! Well, I'm sleepy. Good night, Mr. Stiles."

"Good night, Mr. Mohun."

THE return journey was uneventful. Simon and Major Butler talked but little and always on general topics. At Chief Ironheels' they stopped for dinner, and Dick was able to thank his host for the moccasins. Manya-nana stole in for a moment, a very pretty girl of seventeen, and received his compliments and thanks with downcast eyes.

It was not until the horses drew near town that Major Butler approached the subject that had taken up much of the time on the trip over.

"Then for the time being we'll just keep our mouths shut—and you'll get in touch with Hastings. Write soon, Si; there may be somethin' doing any day."

DICK hadn't the faintest idea what they were talking about, but understood that Simon would take him into confidence before long.

"So long, then! Mum's the word, Dick—you understand?"

The younger man assumed an aspect of intense gravity and bowed. "Sure."

There was little news in town; Fernando the Mexican had gotten into a saloon brawl, and being requested to leave town, had promptly done so. Pop-eye Davis was reported as still patronizing the Last Chance, and there was a rumor a sheep-man had been held up near Black Bear and relieved of a good-sized pay-roll.

This story proved true, for when Simon and Dick paid a friendly visit to Jack Gates, the sheriff verified it.

"Hank Brown," he said briefly. "Going out of his camp to pay off two herders and a cook—they wanted the money for some special reason, and Hank was taking it to them. They didn't get it; by Cut Coulee out steps a guy with a mask and gun, and Hank coughed up. Fellow tied Hank to the wheels of his own buggy, cut the traces and vanished—absolutely no clue as to who he was. Had a horse tied somewheres and made a clean getaway. Hank's roaring a lot, but it's all he can do. Your friend Bosco is over there at the N-A outfit, but we can't prove anything on him."

"So!" Simon blew a cloud of smoke. "Bosco workin' for them?"

"No, just riding the grub-line, I think; the boys say he's dead broke. It may have been him, but there's nothing to go on. What did you fellows see over at the camp?"

Simon told him. On learning Mr. Stiles had also been there, Gates' eyes showed interest; hearing that the agent had asked many questions, those eyes fairly snapped.

"Now, what is he doing nosing around there?" he demanded. "He may be try-

ing to sell land, but I doubt it; the road has another agent in Montana. He's got something up his sleeve, Si."

"That's what Butler and I think," replied the stockman, "and some of these days we're going to find out."

"And some of these days," rejoined Mr. Gates, "this railroad agent is going to make just one little slip, and I'll have him where I want him."

Dick was glad to be at the ranch again. A week's steady driving had tired him, and though the trip had been more or less interesting, he hated working blindfold—and neither Simon or the Major had stated their precise suspicions as to Mr. Stiles' actions.

But enlightenment soon came, and Simon's confidence was given to him a day or two after their return. It was night, and the men as usual had sought the bunkhouse, leaving Dick and the cattleman alone in the office; in the kitchen Sloe Gin moved about chanting his never-ending Chinese ditty.

Walker reached to a cubbyhole of the desk, drew out a visiting card, scanned it and then turned to the younger man. "Dick, we've got to write a letter tonight. I want you to help me write to a man in Cheyenne, a lawyer and a real man, tell him what I think is coming, and ask him to look out for things there in the legislature."

"That oughtn't to be hard to write."

"But the trouble is I'm not sure anything is wrong; neither is Butler or Gates or some other fellows interested. We just suspicion."

"Well, Simon, there's no harm telling your suspicions—especially to a lawyer."

The other reflected over this. "Let's see how it looks on paper. This lawyer's name"—he held up the card—"is Hastings—Odo Lawrence Hastings."

"Odo Hastings," repeated Dick. "Why, I know him, or rather I know who he is: he comes from my State, and he was the greatest pitcher the University ever turned out—the New York Giants wanted him. What's he doing out here?"

"Makin' a good livin'," replied Simon. "He's the best of all the young lawyers in Wyoming, and what's more, he's honest as the day. He's in politics too. They wanted to send him to the legislature last term, but he wouldn't have it; said he would rather do his fightin' outside. I wouldn't be surprised if he was our next United States Senator; they say old Johnson wont run again—he's gettin' old. So you know Hastings—that's good!"

"I don't know him personally," corrected Dick; "he was graduated several years before I went to Chicago; but I know of him—everybody at college did. Also he belongs to the same fraternity I do."

"I see. Does that give you a pull with Hastings?"

"Not really a pull, but it establishes cordial relations between us at once."

"Humph! Well, we'll need lots of cordiality before we get through. Now how shall we begin this letter?"

HE put his finger-tips together, half closed his eyes and meditated—Simon always approached a business letter with becoming care. Presently Simon opened his eyes, and confidence came with words.

"I believe the railroad—put this in your own words, Dick—is goin' to try to gobble some Wyoming land near this oil-find. I don't think anybody knows exactly where the Indian Reservation land stops and where the land owned by the United States in Wyoming begins. Once the Government took some land south of the Reservation and gave the State some other in exchange—Hastings will remember that. Also Wyoming has some State land just south of the oil-camp, and some people claim the Reservation is partly on it. I don't know; I want Hastings to find out. And I want him to look up the charter of the Omaha and find out the location, the exact location, of their land-grants along the right of way in this State, and what the chances are that the United States might give or sell or exchange some of the Indian land the Injuns don't own themselves for other land owned by the railroad—the Government sometimes does sell or trade Indian land; I know that. Ask him if he's heard of any scheme at Cheyenne in the legislature by which the Omaha is plannin' anything. Have any bills been introduced? Tell him a lot of us up here are very much interested, and we think the road may be tryin' to put something over on us taxpayers. And we wont stand for it; if there's any vacant land comin' into the market, the settlers and the folks that live here, and the men who are putting their money into irrigating companies, ought to have first crack at it. Ask him if he will act as our legal representative in this

matter and watch our interests, and what fee he wants. Do you get all that?"

"I got the gist of it. I'll write a rough draft of a letter and we'll go over it together."

"All right! Put it polite, Dick, and make it plain. Hastings doesn't like the Omaha very much, and if he finds there's any monkey-business goin' on, he'll fight hard. And he loves an honest scrap; I know of half a dozen he's been in."

Dick filled his pipe, turned the lamp-wick higher and set to work. For twenty minutes his pencil ran over the paper; after some correctings he read it aloud. It was concise, explanatory of what Simon wished to convey, and yet could not be construed into a charge against the Omaha. The cattleman was delighted.

"Fine!" he declared. "That's a first rate letter, Dick—you sure can sling ink; it's a world better than I could have done. Write it over in ink, and I'll sign it right away."

This was done, and with it went another letter from Dick, a personal one introducing himself to Mr. Hastings as Simon's employee and a fellow-member of Hastings' college fraternity.

"Now," announced the older man as the letters were dropped into the mail-bag, "all we can do is to wait for an answer. Hastings is a hustler, and we'll hear from him soon; then maybe we'll get some action."

## CHAPTER XVIII

THE New Year came to New York amid the usual tooting of horns and blowing of whistles. King Alcohol was crowned or banished; auction bridge was continued or abandoned; cigars were eliminated or multiplied, all depending on that personal equation. But among drinking men, smoking men and card-players, among those who dissipated in high-speed motors, one little compact group of men stood forth serenely, making no resolutions and continuing the even tenor of their way —the money-makers. And not the least of the group was Henry M. Ambrose.

The year had treated him fairly; he had no complaints. If he had lost money in some directions, he had made it in others; the red entries in his private ledger balanced. His one great mistake, the Crawford Concessions, had been wound up and settled. A foolhardy body of English capitalists had rushed in where the American syndicate had failed, bought what there was to buy of the Crawford assets and included in the purchase the tract of land owned by Mr. Ambrose individually. They paid for it through the nose; it controlled a definite site and was desirable, and the banker's Mexican agent set a high price.

Mr. Ambrose made a final entry in that private ledger and allowed himself a sigh of relief. The Crawford Concession was now a closed incident, and though he had lost more than he cared to remember, he had gotten back more than he hoped. So on the surface it looked as if he and Mexico were henceforth strangers. But now Kismet took a hand in the game.

Early in November Mr. Ambrose received a letter from his agent in Mexico, the same individual who had once sent a cryptic cablegram about the moon. The writer stated that he expected to come north at Christmas, partly to take a vacation and partly to see Mr. Ambrose on a matter of importance concerning future possibilities in Lower California.

The letter required no answer; the banker put the note away and turned to other things. There were many.

For some months he had become more and more interested in his Western affairs. After considerable thought he had resigned from the directorate of the Ottawa, Winnipeg & Behring Straits Railroad, sold his holdings and concentrated in the Omaha system. He had profound faith in this road. He trusted Mr. Jennison's judgment, and his fellow-directors were men after his own heart. And the news from the Northwest was most encouraging. There seemed a good chance the Montana oil-field would reach into Wyoming, and on or very near the lands owned by the road. A real-estate company had been quietly organized for the purchase of likely land. It possessed the pleasing title of the Setting Sun Realty Company, and its officers and directors were unassuming clerks and secretaries who took orders from Mr. Jennison. But it did have capital to which Mr. Ambrose and Philip Amerton had subscribed. As yet no land had been bought by the Setting Sun; nor had the railroad taken any official action on the wording of its charter regarding the old land-grants; but the alert Mr. Stiles had reached the conclusion that the time was about ripe for concerted action by both corporations.

So the new year found the banker with many interests.

To Martha the months since Dick's departure had passed like many other months. That she missed him, that she thought of him many times, she cheerfully acknowledged to herself. His name was never mentioned in her father's house, and she seldom saw Ashley Harrison, who might have given her some information of the absent man. She now had three letters from Wyoming—frank, friendly, chatty letters, but wholly impersonal.

Her relations with her father were affectionate, but sometimes it seemed as if a cloud, a very small one, had slipped between them. Many active men of business become gentler, more lenient, broader as they grow older; other grow sterner, harder, less tolerant of the rights of others as the years pass. Mr. Ambrose was of the latter class; he did not soften with the years. He took little part in his daughters' daily lives. He went frequently, it is true, to Mrs. Van Wikoff's and played mechanically with the children and gave them royal presents, but such presents came only from the ink of a fountain-pen. Both women knew it, and it hurt.

Sometimes Mr. Ambrose found himself vaguely wondering if Martha would some day marry Philip Amerton; then the thought would pass and his attention focus on a bond-issue. And Martha would dimly sense this also, and it carried a sting for her.

As for Philip, he continued along the lines of least resistance; not caring a deal whether school kept or not, so long as Martha did not marry, and he too made money and went on his way rejoicing.

ON a January morning Mr. Ambrose was told a Mr. Robinson wished to see him. The caller entered, a tall man who would have been fine-looking had it not been for a curious twist in his nose. They shook hands, and the visitor dropped into a chair. After the customary civilities the banker came straight to the point.

"Well, Robinson, what brings you to New York?"

"The usual thing, Mr. Ambrose, the elusive dollar."

"Commendable if not original. What is it this time?"

The man tapped the toe of his shoe with a malacca cane.

"It's the Orozco oil," said Robinson.

Mr. Ambrose showed little interest.

"I take little interest in that now."

"But I have it in far better shape now, Mr. Ambrose, than Moon and Edwards ever had."

"INDEED? I thought that with these bandits running loose, capital might as well be thrown on a bonfire as put into Mexico."

"Ordinarily—yes! In this specific case—no! The Orozco family happen to stand very well with the new government; they are ace-high with all the powers that be. Orozco has contributed largely to the party and can just about have anything he wants—except the presidency or the handling of the money-chest. To do him justice, the old fellow doesn't want a political office—he does want his unproductive land developed. These oil-lands give him a chance, and you—if you'll come in. You remember I wrote you last October I thought I saw which way the wind was blowing—she's blown, all right, and it's a gale."

"I don't believe I'm interested."

Robinson was not discouraged; he knew his business. "We all know the oil is there," he continued evenly. "When that Englishman Moon and Jim Edwards and their New York capitalist"—here Mr. Ambrose's face took on an ugly look—"were working it, the one thing in the way of success was the political situation—and we know what happened. But now things are different. Lower California is solid for the present government; Villa and the others haven't any influence across the Gulf. What's more, the Government will give the new lessees a guard of soldiers if needed—that lawyer Da Costa told me so the last thing before I left. Mr. Ambrose, it's a cinch; you'll get the greatest return on any money you ever invested."

"My dear Robinson, if it's so good, why doesn't the Mexican owner develop it?"

"He hasn't the ready money. To do this thing properly will cost close to a quarter of a million. Orozco and his friends have ten times this amount in land and cattle, but they can't sell land today—you know that! And there's very little actual cash in Mexico at present; what there is the Government or the banks have in their vaults, you know that as well as I do. This money must come from outside."

"A quarter of a million! My remembrance of the original undertaking was that Moon and his associates needed only a hundred thousand to become millionaires in a week."

"So they estimated; but that was piker finance. To develop that pool properly will cost twice that amount. You know far better than I do the utter nonsense of undercapitalization—your hands are tied, and you lose a whale in sparing a sprat. No sir; this thing is big, and a quarter of a million is nothing to what's going to be taken from it."

MR. AMBROSE smiled; the man's enthusiasm pleased him.

"You're a born promoter, Robinson. . . . . But I don't see how I can handle it at this time. I'm very busy these days; the Omaha takes up a good deal of my time; I'm on the board as you probably know, and then I have all my business and financial interests here in the city. No, I don't see how I can go into it—though it may be good."

"I should say it was! Well, I tell you what I'll do, Mr. Ambrose. I need a rest from business, so I wont bother you for a week or so; the oil wont run away, and that gives you time to think it over."

"Very well, but I hardly think I'll change my mind."

"I'll take a chance! By the way, how are those oil-fields in Montana panning out, the ones on the Omaha's right of way?"

"How did you hear about those fields?"

"Some fellow in Vera Cruz told me. An oil-find is like a gold-discovery; it's known from Frisco to New York in twenty-four hours."

Mr. Ambrose nodded; he knew rumor.

"Great things are prophesied for them," he said, "but I really know little about the discovery. They are not on our right of way, unfortunately—wish they were; we had to build a spur into the field."

"That so? Well, I hope for your sake they prove money-makers; no reason why oil shouldn't be found in that country. Good-by. I'll drop in before very long. Think it over."

"Always glad to see you, Robinson. Dear me, I nearly forgot—I must owe you something for your services about that Crawford matter."

"Only some trifling expense-charges; I'll make up the account before I go back."

He went to the door; with his hand on the knob a thought came to him.

"Incidentally, Mr. Ambrose, did you ever hear what became of those fellows who first stumbled on this Orozco pool—they had pretty hard luck, when you think it over—Moon and Edwards and the youngster from New York who put up the money—Bohunk, or some such name. Somebody told me that they had gone to Colorado, or was it Nevada?"

The banker shook his head.

"I know nothing about them," he replied. "I haven't seen Mr. Moon for a year or so, not since he tried to interest me in this very proposition. But one of his schemes was enough; you remember he got me into the Crawford Concessions. I have no idea where he is and care less; the other man I only know by name."

"And the New Yorker with the funny name?"

"I heard indirectly he had gone West—Wyoming, I think. A good place for him; hope he stays there. I have little use for Mr. Mohun, as he calls himself."

ROBINSON reached the street and stood for a moment on the busy corner to let an automobile slide by. He tapped the pavement with his walking-stick and dodged the hurrying throngs.

"I'll let it soak a week," he mused. Then his thoughts changed. "What pet corn did I tramp on when I mentioned this New Yorker—what's his name—Mohun? The old man certainly has no use for him, yet he was all interest when he told me to pump Da Costa. Now, what's doing?"

Then the traffic swallowed him, and finance knew him no more that day.

When Mr. Ambrose found himself once more alone, he wrote a letter, a long and very confidential letter, to a very big man in Mexico City. The letter contained several leading questions, among them these two: was the lawyer Da Costa a man of good reputation and responsibility; and what was the exact standing of Senor Juan Orozco with the present government of Mexico?

ON the very same morning that Robinson and Mr. Ambrose had their conversation, Martha Ambrose had a little adventure of her own. She had gone to the Metropolitan Museum of Art to see some newly arrived pieces of sculpture by a famous French artist. Then she went

upstairs to see the pictures; like many another good New Yorker, she had not been in the Metropolitan for years. In one of the galleries a number of people had their attention riveted on one canvas.

A guard told her it was a recent gift of a public-spirited citizen. She joined the crowd and found herself confronting an example of the old Dutch school: a wonderful interior, a woman bending over a piece of sewing, with the sunlight flooding her from an open window in the background. Martha drew a long breath; it was not a painting she beheld—it was a slice of life; only a great genius could have done it. As she looked, her elbow touched a man who stood in rapt contemplation before the canvas.

He moved and begged her pardon in a quiet, pleasant voice. She too looked up and smiled her apologies. She saw a well-built man in the young prime of life, an open, smooth-shaven face with high forehead and cheek-bones, and a coloring that suggested Scandinavian ancestry. And there was also about him something that smacked of the open air; his one movement was quick, free and sinewy. A sailor, she decided.

Honest interest in art levels convention; the man addressed her in unaffected admiration.

"That is the finest thing I have ever seen," he said quietly.

"I agree with you," she answered as frankly.

His eyes came back to her face, and he colored a little.

"I must apologize for speaking to you," he said as simply as a child, "but I felt that if I didn't say something about that picture I'd blow up."

Martha understood. The man was decidedly prepossessing. "No harm done," she replied cheerfully. "I understand how you feel—it is a beautiful thing." Then she added from her own good nature: "Sometimes I think we New Yorkers don't appreciate what the city really has in the Metropolitan."

The man smiled, a pleasant, almost boyish smile. "To tell the truth, I don't know; I've been so long away from big cities—I live in Wyoming," he explained. Martha stared at him; evidently very, very nice men lived in the Rocky Mountains.

"You do? Why, I have a friend in Wyoming. I wonder if you know him? He lives in the Big Horn Basin."

"It's a pretty big place," he volunteered. "May I ask the name of your friend? I know a good many people in the State."

"His name is Mohun,—Richard Mohun, —and he lives—" But the Westerner was staring at her with wide-open eyes. "Don't tell me you know him?"

The smile on the face of her new acquaintance broadened. "Know him? Of course I know him. What a small world this is, after all. Less than a month ago Richard Mohun and that nice old friend of his—Simon Walker—were in my office at Cheyenne; and now— Let me introduce myself—my name is Hastings. I am a lawyer at Cheyenne; I have some business with both Walker and Mohun, and I expect to see a good deal of them when I go home."

"How nice! I am Miss Ambrose."

"Ambrose?"

"Yes, possibly you have heard of my father, Henry M. Ambrose?"

"Henry M.—the banker—and of the Omaha system? Of course; I know Mr. Ambrose's name very well. I'm awfully glad to meet you, Miss Ambrose. I'm almost homesick for Wyoming, and to meet some one who knows some one I know at home is bully. And you hope to get out in the spring—bully again! I only hope you will allow me to try to do something for you while you are in my State."

"I know that both my father and I would appreciate your courtesy."

"Your father—" For an instant Hastings' face clouded, it lightened again. It was only a momentary shadow, but the girl saw it. He continued hurriedly:

"That's settled, then."

THAT night after dinner Martha said to her father, "I made an acquaintance today, Father."

Mr. Ambrose looked up from the financial column of the evening paper.

"Who was it?"

"A man from Wyoming," said Martha mysteriously.

"A man from—who was he? Who introduced you?"

"An old Dutch gentleman of the seventeenth century."

"Martha," said her father testily, "you know I don't like mysteries. What are you talking about?"

The girl laughed.

"I was at the Metropolitan looking at that new Vermeer—it's a beauty, by the

way; and I bumped into a gentleman who was as much absorbed as I was. He apologized before I could. and we fell to talking. He comes from Cheyenne, and he wants to make our trip to the Rockies this summer as pleasant as possible—for we are going, aren't we, father? And I told him—"

"Martha," her father interrupted, "when will you grow out of this childish habit of speaking to any stranger you happen to meet? Edith told me the other day you stopped some man on the street and talked to him simply because he had a bulldog you fancied. Now, stop it; you're old enough to know better. Now, who is this latest acquaintance? He couldn't have had a bulldog in a picture-gallery."

Martha produced the visiting card.

"Odo L. Hastings. He is a lawyer, I believe." She handed the card to her father.

As Mr. Ambrose heard the name, a look of recognition crossed his face, and he took the card mechanically.

"Odo L.—I suppose, Martha, you have an idea who this gentleman may be? No! You never read the newspapers, do you? So the name is not familiar?"

"I know that he's a gentleman, Father, and as he told me—a lawyer."

"He may be a gentleman, and he is unquestionably a lawyer; but he also happens to be the new United States Senator from Wyoming."

## CHAPTER XIX

WINTER is ordinarily an easy time for the Wyoming stockman, but the New Year which found Mr. Ambrose so content with things in general found Simon and Dick in a whirl of affairs. Odo Hastings had accepted with alacrity the cattleman's commission to watch the movements of the Omaha at Cheyenne, accompanying his acceptance with a cordial personal letter to Dick; but the lawyer had hardly begun his investigations when a series of events followed in rapid succession.

The first was the sudden death of old Senator Johnson and the illness of Congressman Adams, Wyoming's one representative at Washington, the latter occurrence leaving the State's interests unguarded on the floor of the House for the time being. The second was the finding of oil in the Indian Reservation south of the Montana line, a discovery resulting in a wild rush of prospectors to the spot, with consequent trouble to the Indians and the Federal Agent. And following this oil-strike came the introduction into Congress of an unassuming bill known as H. R. 10050.

Congressman Adams being absent, the purpose of this bill was not immediately brought to the attention of Wyoming citizens, and it was referred to its proper committee and disappeared before news of it reached Cheyenne.

But H. R. 10050 was fraught with much interest to many in this story. The Omaha wanted certain specified lands within the boundaries of Wyoming in exchange for the road's old holdings—all of which the bill set forth was duly in accordance with the charter granted the road by the U. S. And as the land desired lay on the Indian Reservation, and incidentally in the oil-field, though this fact was not mentioned, the exchange became a Federal matter, and the State had nothing to do with it.

As soon as the modest request of the Omaha became known to Wyoming, the forces opposed to the road were at once in arms and Odo Hastings had his hands full; and almost at the same time the Governor, in response to popular demand, appointed the lawyer Senator to fill the unexpired term of the late Senator Johnson. No section of the State was more urgent for Hastings' appointment than was Otter Forks, and it is needless to say that Simon Walker, Major Butler and Dick were prominent in molding public opinion.

In the midst of all this excitement trouble broke out near the Reservation between an Indian and a ferret-faced man over a lease alleged to have been obtained by lavish use of whisky, and Jack Gates was summoned in his official capacity to quell it.

THE Sheriff took Dick, and after a cold drive through snow and wind the pair reached their destination, only to find the trouble amicably settled. Mr. Stiles had reached the scene first, and the white man who claimed to be an agent for the Setting Sun Realty Co., whatever that was, announced himself perfectly satisfied. The Indian also had subsided, and the Sheriff had had his cold drive for naught. Gates was disgusted; he loathed Stiles, and at every point the two men seemed to

clash. Also, the sudden appearance of a heretofore unknown realty company was a disturbing factor, and the travelers were troubled in mind when they accepted the hospitality of Chief Ironheels. The Chief was also disturbed; he had cause. Prospectors were constantly in the neighborhood smuggling whisky to his young men, filling them with fanciful ideas of the riches to be derived from oil-leases and generally creating a spirit of discontent.

Furthermore, Ironheels' household included three young women who were good to look at, and some of the prospectors were vile. Ironheels kept the gates of his ranch closed and his gun handy, and the Indian Agent winked at the possession of firearms.

Gates and Dick sensed the trouble but could do nothing. They saw the watchful care exercised about the ranch, noticed the ready rifle and understood.

Manya-nana, pretty and demure as ever, glided about the house, cooked the visitors good meals, spoke when spoken to and disappeared when the meals were over. Only once did she show interest; that was when Dick gave her a pencil in a gun-metal case. It was a trifling thing, but he wanted to give her something in return for the moccasins.

"It is a gift from a friend to a friend," he said as he gave it, "and Manya-nana may find it useful."

The girl glanced at her grandfather, and receiving assent, took the trifle. She looked at Dick, colored and then fled.

The Sheriff laughed and Ironheels bowed gravely; the ceremony was over.

In the morning, as the guests prepared to leave, Gates said to the chief: "I stand ready to help you at any time, Ironheels; don't forget that."

The old warrior looked earnestly at his white friend. "Ironheels knows that," he answered simply. "He hopes no trouble may come from these oil-men or from those who want our land. But if trouble comes, Ironheels will remember the words of Gates."

"That is right—and remember also, Chief, if anybody brings the law against you, submit to that law and then protest; don't put yourself in the wrong by resisting at first. Then—send for me, or Dick here, or Simon Walker; we are your friends and the friends of your house."

"Ironheels knows that too," was the answer.

He walked with them through the falling snow and opened the gate. They shook hands, and the horses started on the long trip homeward.

After a dismal ride Dick and Gates reached town, and find Simon waiting for them at the Eagle. The lobby was filled with men, and the conversation was in a high key. Dick learned a meeting had been called for the following night to take some concerted action over the much discussed House Bill 10050. Copies of this had reached Otter Forks and were being widely discussed.

Walker welcomed his friends, and after supper the three retired to the bar-room and played solo in a little cubby-hole in one corner used for this purpose. They were alone, and over the cards the ranchman told his news. A long and forceful letter had come from Odo Hastings. It explained the present situation of 10050, promised a close investigation of the possibilities of the old charter of the Omaha and stated that in the writer's opinion no definite result could be reached for some months. Hastings closed his letter with many thanks for Mr. Walker's support of the candidacy and expressed the earnest wish that a personal interview would soon take place.

Dick liked the letter; it was frank, uncompromising and rang true. Hastings had also written him a few lines suggesting that he come to Cheyenne for a visit and mix pleasure with business.

"You'd better go around Christmas," suggested Simon, shuffling the cards. "There'll be nothin' doin' up the river unless there's a dance somewheres, and you're not keen on dancing, I know."

"I might do that," said Dick. "I wouldn't mind getting a little change, and I would like to meet Hastings."

"You'll meet him before long," Gates put in. "He's bound to come here when he gets back from Washington."

"Tomorrow night," said Simon, "we'll get busy on this railroad matter. Want to make a speech, Dick?"

"Not I," exclaimed the terrified young man.

BUT Dick did make a speech. Masonic Hall, where the meeting was held, was crowded to the doors when Major Butler rapped on the table, and the audience yearned for speeches.

A motion commending the Governor for

his appointment of Hastings was passed, and the meeting got down to business. Nearly every man in the room was ready to abuse the Omaha and H. R. 10050, whose scope by this time had been grasped and roundly cursed. A number of citizens of the town spoke, and then a man from one of the up-river ranches called for Dick, whose encounter with Wildman had made him known.

So the Easterner found himself on his feet, and after a few common-sense remarks moved that a committee be appointed to take full charge of the matter under discussion and communicate at once with the newly appointed Senator and with Congressman Adams, in whose capable hands the speaker was sure the interests of the people of Wyoming could be safely trusted. This motion having been carried unanimously, Dick closed his career as a public speaker; but Mr. Stiles, who had come to the meeting out of curiosity, made a mental note that this dude from the East was worthy of some consideration.

THE definite winter and the indefinite spring passed and early summer came. Through the open windows of the office the warm air sifted, mingled with the sounds and dust of the Cheyenne streets. Odo Hastings arranged the pile of papers upon his desk in a symmetrical heap and addressed his friends.

"And that's where we stand today, Mr. Walker. We can do nothing more until Congress reconvenes in the fall, and we'll be ready for them. Everything that can be done has been done; we must wait."

Simon moved uneasily in his chair.

"Nuisance to wait, especially as you say the Committee on Public Lands will probably turn this bill over to the Indian commissioners."

"That's what they will do; I thought so when I first learned the facts. I'm sure of it now."

"And then?"

"Unless I'm very much mistaken, the commissioners will quash it; they wont hear of the exchange of these Indian lands, and if the bill is once turned down by this board, it would be useless for the Omaha to bring it up in another form before the House. No, Mr. Walker; rest easy and let the road be content with the Wyoming land it got legitimately by filing or leasing. The Crows will keep what they've always had."

The ranchman grunted, an unquestioned grunt of relief.

"I'm sure we're all obliged to you, Senator," he said. "I hate to think of the Omaha getting all that easy money."

"They'll have to pay for what they get now," said Hastings grimly. "Since it has been proved that these Wyoming oil-fields are the real thing, every bit of land near them that could be taken has been taken; only the Indian stuff is left."

"And some of that is gone," said Simon. "But the Crows were paid, all right; the last time I saw Chief Ironheels, he told me about some of the rentals—and if the pool proves very valuable, some of these Injuns will be rich men."

"And you don't think, Senator, there's any chance that any of the Indians or the settlers who have legitimately homesteaded in that vicinity can be dispossessed?"

"No, Mohun! The Government couldn't possibly allow any action of that kind by a railroad against a legitimate settler. Had oil not been found and had this bill been presented under ordinary circumstances, it's possible the Committee on Public Lands might have considered it and suggested some kind of recompense for settlers already in possession; as it is, no committee would dare to suggest such a thing."

"Then we've got 'em whipped!" exclaimed Simon.

"I think so; but we musn't crow until we are out of the woods. The Omaha unquestionably has some rights under its charter; those old land-grants are most sweeping, and there seems no question that when the original subsidies were given an exchange of lands was made possible; but certainly an exchange of ordinary farm- or pasture-land for oil-land was not contemplated. As I have told you before, the kernel of the nut lies in the wording in the grant—*'or lands of corresponding character.'* No judge in the world would hold that farm-land and oil-land correspond. I also told you that in the other old grants I found recorded at Washington—those of the N. P. and M. P.—the words *'or equal value'* are inserted. In the Omaha grant these words are not present. Why?"

SENATOR HASTINGS looked keenly at his constituents. Simon Walker left the window and resumed his chair. Then he deliberately filled his pipe and rubbed the bowl in his palm.

"You can search me," he slowly replied.

"What do you think about it, Mohun?"

Dick stretched his legs. "I hardly know what to think; do you suppose the original charter of the road with these old grants tacked to it reads as the records show, or—"

"Precisely!" Hastings interposed. "The bill giving the Omaha these public lands as a subsidy for opening the country was introduced by Congressman James K. Smith of Nebraska over thirty years ago. He is dead, of course, and nearly everybody interested is dead; there may be a couple of men still alive who were Congressmen at that time, but even if we found them, do you think they could remember the exact wording of the Omaha bill? Certainly not! Our only record is the official record, and that reads as I have quoted; why, even the transcription-clerks of that day who had charge of entering on the records every bill passed by Congress are dead; I took the trouble to hunt up their names—Wilson, Williams and Robinson; there were three of them, and every man has been dead for years. So we can't possibly discover anything along those lines."

"Unless one of those three clerks left behind him a last dying speech and confession," said Dick.

"What is all this guff?" demanded Walker. "What are you drivin' at?"

The Senator laughed.

"That's just what it is, Mr. Walker—guff! The same thought evidently crossed Mohun's mind as it did mine—apparently both of us are suspicious persons: that possibly these words *or equal value* were in the Omaha bill as originally drawn, but were omitted when the transcript was made."

"I never thought of that!" cried Simon.

"And we have no right to think it. I was only trying to show Dick that even if these words were once in the bill, they are not today."

"But they might have been left out on purpose."

"True; or by accident; or they may never have been there—we don't know and probably we never will. So let's forget it."

"Then as the Senator must be pretty busy, Simon," said Dick, "and has done everything that can be done for the present, let's call it a day. I'm sure we can leave everything in his hands."

The ranchman rose.

"Sure! I forgot we were keepin' you so long, Senator."

"No apologies needed; as a Wyoming citizen I'm just as much interested in this confounded bill as you are. Can't you take dinner with me at the club tonight before you go, and we'll mix some pleasure with politics?"

"Glad to—and you and Dick can talk college stuff."

"We have lots to talk about. By the way, Mohun, may I ask if you've heard from Miss Ambrose lately? I hope she gets out here this summer."

"I got a letter a couple of weeks ago; Mr. Ambrose expects to come in July after the Park is open. I believe there will be a number in the party."

"Private car, I suppose."

"Yes."

"Nothing like being a director, is there? Look here, Mr. Walker," he added with a grin, "you'll have to entertain these people at your ranch. You are a prominent citizen, you know, and the Park's near by."

"Entertain them!" snorted Simon. "I'd be more likely to set the dogs on Mr. Henry M. Ambrose."

THE next evening found Dick and Simon at Otter Forks. The rush to the new oil-development had had the usual effect, and the town was enjoying a wave of prosperity. New faces were seen on the streets; among them the ferret-faced man Dick and the Sheriff had seen at the Reservation. He had hung up a sign announcing to the curious that the Setting Sun Realty Co. was ready to do business. He appeared to have money, and as he promptly made some purchases of both land and leases, the townspeople concluded that heavy interests were behind him. A few, however, including Jack Gates, maintained he represented the Omaha, and this impression was strengthened when Mr. Stiles sought his company and proclaimed to his acquaintances that Mr. Wiggins was a first-rate fellow.

Gates had been surprised to see Bosco Wildman entering Mr. Wiggins' office on several occasions, but the ex-foreman was reported as having a job at the oil-fields which claimed most of his time.

A letter from Jim Edwards awaited Dick. Conditions were not wholly satisfactory with the writer and Edward Mohun. The ore near the present Nevada mining-camp showed unmistakable signs

of petering out; the place was suffering from dry rot and the days of prosperity were no more. Both men had made a little money,—*stake* was Edwards' word,—and they now longed for pastures new. What could Dick tell them of this oil-field in Montana? Would Dick please write?

Dick did—a long and cordial letter stating just what he knew of the Montana field and also the recent strike in Wyoming, urged them to come and ended with a cordial invitation on Simon's behalf to pay an unlimited visit to the ranch before determining what they would do.

So summer came to the mountains and the Bar X.

MEANTIME, two thousand miles to the east, Mr. Ambrose was arranging his affairs for a long summer vacation. It must be understood, however, that the banker's holidays were not days of absolute idleness. As an envious rival once said of him, "The wheels of Ambrose's private car made money." He would stop a day or so in Chicago, where he would meet some financial cronies, learn of anything new to be perpetrated in the Chicago market, see some inside workings of the Omaha system and have a heart-to-heart talk with Hiram K. Jennison. Mr. Ambrose expected much from Hiram K. Then there was this little matter of the exchange of the Omaha lands! There had been a hitch in its progress; Mr. Jennison reported through Mr. Olcott, and Mr. Olcott through the chief of the road's lobby at Washington, that the course of H. R. 10050 would not be all fair sailing. A sentiment, grossly unwarranted of course, had been aroused in the House by the machinations of a young man named Hastings who had been recently appointed by the Governor of Wyoming to fill the unexpired term of the late Senator Johnson. This Hastings person had slipped in somehow or other before the Road was aware of it, and was proving a nuisance. Then there was a fellow named Adams who represented Wyoming in the House, and Adams was a dreamer and filled with Utopian views. And still more unfortunately, just as 10050 had been introduced, an oil-stake had been made on the very lands the Omaha wanted. Of course people had rushed in, and of course the lazy Indians had to own certain of these lands. It was all very provoking, almost annoying.

The banker wanted a favorable report from that Committee on Public Lands, but from Washington came the whisper that there was a chance the bill would be referred to the Board of Indian Commissioners. Commissions are uncertain quantities; there are always a few members who are old-fashioned, behind the times and narrow-minded. Mr. Ambrose didn't fancy the commissioners; it would be far better if the Committee on Public Lands were to report favorably on 10050 and have it placed on the joint calendar for debate; it would be well to impress this on the gentleman who handled the Washington end of such matters for the road.

However, a confidential chat with Mr. Jennison might clear the sky; and perhaps this special agent Mr. Stiles might have exaggerated conditions—agents were prone to increase their difficulties. An interview with Mr. Stiles might help. Altogether the banker was looking forward to his western trip.

AS for Martha, she was gloriously excited and expectant. She was to see those mountains she had always longed to see, and she was to be free in that clear, vibrant atmosphere of which she had read so much. She would see new faces and surroundings, and if a stay could be arranged at some ranch, new interests and a daily life that would be strange indeed. Her father had given her permission to send Senator Hastings a few lines announcing their arrival at Cheyenne on an approximate date; to Richard Mohun she would also write—but would he try to find her?

It took very little time to determine on the guests. Philip Amerton would be one, but as he was a director of the Omaha he hardly ranked as a guest; then Marjorie Lewis, daughter of that strong-minded man who dared to live on the Drive instead of the Avenue; and Mary Knowles, who amused Mr. Ambrose and played a good game of bridge, besides being Martha's most intimate friend; and finally Bob Carruthers, who was everybody's friend. This made a party of six, and as Martha had no wish to ask anyone, man or woman, with whom she was not very intimate (a car-party is a close corporation) she closed her list with young Carruthers, who was a sort of negative person, though an authority on polo and baseball. A few days before they were to

leave New York, however, Mr. Ambrose announced that he had asked another man, a business acquaintance, a Mr. Robinson.

"He wont bother you young people," Mr. Ambrose explained. "He's an older man with whom I have had business relations for years. But he's very presentable and an interesting man. He knows lots about Mexico and Central America and all kinds of places you children have never been."

"Certainly, Father—anybody you want. Will Mr. Robinson bring a servant? I want to know, so as to make arrangements; there will be one maid and Philip's man."

"No, daughter, Mr. Robinson will bring no servant." And the banker smiled again, very grimly this time. "He is not carrying a valet across the continent; in fact, Mr. Robinson has had rather hard luck in Mexico, and I am helping him to get established out West—that's for your private car, of course."

All of this was strictly true. The feeling against Americans in Mexico had grown so bitter the last few months that Mr. Robinson had left the country. He had gravitated to New York, and wanting a job, had sought the banker who, knowing the man's ability as a go-between and having nothing to offer him in the East, conceived the idea that Mr. Robinson might be of some service to either the Omaha or the Setting Sun. So he became one of the party—ostensibly a guest. In what capacity he would eventually appear, no one knew.

## CHAPTER XX

BOSCO WILDMAN looked at the tents about him, and a sneer showed on his face. The heavy black eyebrows contracted, and more than ever he looked the villain of a Grand Opera chorus. He was disgusted with the world, furious at his own bad luck and not altogether pleased with himself. He needed money badly and saw no way to get it. Since his expulsion from South Fork he had had no regular job. Small loans from Stiles, a few little adventures such as his meeting with the Blackbear sheep-owner and desultory work here at the oil-fields had kept him through the fall and winter. But with the coming of summer, a period when he had thought to find a job without much trouble, he still lacked employment.

So he stood by the door of the log hut and glared at the scene before him. On all sides were men and women earning a hard and honest living; only behind him in the partial shadow of the evil-smelling saloon were idlers. He glanced over his shoulder and confronted the scowling face of the Mexican Fernando, who had once more drifted to the camp, and Pop-eye Davis arguing amiably with the barkeeper and a useless mortal named Hunk who had no objective save to hold plenty of bad whisky.

Then a light wagon came in sight, and soon Wildman recognized Mr. Stiles. The man from Otter Forks took his horses to a ramshackle livery-barn and then joined Bosco.

"How are things stackin' up, Bosco?"

The other growled in answer.

"As bad as that! Why don't you get to work? I hear Number 8 is needing a checker; go and see Howell and strike him for the job."

"I don't want any pumps and derricks in mine."

"Well, what do you want, anyway? Somebody to come along and feed you from a silver spoon?"

Bosco growled again.

"It's about time you settled down to do something," Stiles went on. "You're a nuisance to yourself and an eyesore to the scenery. I got you that job with Wiggins, and you stuck there a week; Emerson took you on that Blackbear drill, and you stayed ten days. What the devil's the matter with you?"

"Do you 'spose I could work for that rat-faced guy—selling land to suckers and gettin' ten dollars a lot—and three quarters of the time the suckers wouldn't bite!"

"Ten dollars is better than loafing. Look here—I want to speak to you a minute." He looked through the open door, and then beckoning, moved around the corner of the shack.

"SEE here," Stiles said quietly. "I've just come from town, and there's particular hell being raised over Old Man Smiley—you know him, and you know how everybody likes him. Now, did you go through him at Paradise last week?"

"No," shouted Bosco. "Don't know a thing about it—first I've heard of it."

"Honest?"

"I'm tellin' you. I haven't heard a word. What happened?"

"The old gazabo was asleep, and somebody took his roll. He's a good egg, old Smiley, and hasn't got much, and the town is mad. Jack Gates is hot over it."

"It's not my business," Bosco retorted sullenly, "and if that old sport chooses to get loaded and go asleep, he deserves to lose his roll."

Stiles motioned over his shoulder.

"When did that Mex get here?"

"Yesterday."

"Has he any money?"

"Dunno."

"Has Pop-eye?"

"Dunno."

"You don't seem to know much!"

"That any business of yours?"

Mr. Stiles gave up his friend as a bad job.

"Have it your own way; but if you don't get busy pretty soon, they'll put you breaking stones on the road."

A snarl was the only response.

"All right. Don't say I didn't warn you. Well, I must be moving along; I'm on my way to the Reservation. Don't suppose you want a drink so early in the morning? You do? Oh, very well, then!"

They went inside, and Stiles nodded to the men at the bar.

"Howdy, boys! Have something?"

Those addressed slouched against the rail and gave their orders.

"On my way to the Reservation," explained Stiles. "I want to pick up some ponies that are broken to drive. Otter Forks is clean out of driving-stock since that Christian Endeavor excursion went through."

"Goin' in the dude business?" demanded Pop-eye.

"No—but the town and the Park are going to get a touch of New York high life. Henry M. Ambrose, his daughter and Mr. Amerton, a director of the Omaha, and a party of friends are going through the Park, and I've been deputed to see they don't come to grief, get lost, held up by bandits and all that sort of thing. They want their own teams. That's why I need horses." He turned to Bosco.

"There is one thing you can do better than a New York millionaire, Wildman—judge a horse. Come and choose these ponies for me; I can't tell one Indian cayuse from another."

Wildman's face cleared. It was a pleasure for him to pick horses, even for other people. He nodded acceptance.

"Come along, then; I've wasted enough time. Want to come, Fernando?"

"*Si, señor!*" The evil face of the Mexican beamed, for he too loved horses.

It was very hot as the men climbed into the buckboard. The sun beat down upon the plain from a sky of vivid blue where never a cloud rested; there was no wind, yet the air was full of life and tonic. In a little while the Reservation was reached and the noise behind them died away.

"Indians are all at their summer camps," Stiles remarked, "and old Ironheels or Many Tepees or Plenty Horses may be hard to find."

TOWARD noon they came to a cluster of skin tepees. Some mongrel dogs rushed out and barked, and three half-naked children looked stealthily at the strangers. Then a brave appeared—moccasined feet, overalls, a jumper and a clay pipe. Yes, he had ponies to sell, but they were not broken. No, he did not know where the white man could buy any horses ready for harness.

Stiles clicked to his pair and the journey continued. During the days three or four Indians were seen and questioned, but without results. Every buck had ponies, but they were unbroken, or if broken to ride, were too green for driving.

Finally Bosco grew impatient.

"Hell, Bill! Let's pick out the likeliest ones and I'll break 'em for you in a week so a lady can drive 'em."

But Stiles declined the proposition. He would take no chances on hastily broken horses for Mr. Ambrose's party.

"Does Señor Stiles want a driver for this rich man?"

"Not you, *hombre*," was Stiles' quick retort. "Your face would scare those dudes."

Fernando smiled as if receiving a compliment.

"How about me?" suggested Bosco with a grin.

"Nor you either, nor Pop-eye, nor any of your friends, Bosco. I want to keep a good reputation with these people; Ambrose has a lot of influence."

"And the money — yes?" Fernando looked more like a wolf than ever.

"Slathers of it, more than any of you *hombres* ever saw."

"And the señoritas?"

"I suppose so or they wouldn't be trav-

eling together. What's the matter, Fernando? You look as if you'd had a thought. Be careful, you might strain that great intellect of yours."

"A thought! True, señor; even a poor Mexican must think at times."

LATE in the afternoon they reached Ironheels' holdings. The Chief was at home, a sick and helpless man. Rheumatism had him, and the old warrior was confined to two chairs.

While Stiles talked on various subjects the Indian sat motionless, his face showing neither curiosity nor interest. Finally Stiles stated the object of his visit. The Indian listened in silence; in the adjoining room the young girl moved quietly about preparing supper.

At last the chief spoke.

"Ironheels has ponies to sell, of course, but they are far away on the range. He does not think he has any that would suit the Man who Limps. Still he can see for himself—tomorrow."

"It is well! Can Stiles and his white friends stay the night with Ironheels?"

"Yes."

"You better make yourself useful, Bosco —chop some wood," Stiles said.

The cowboy passed into the kitchen and confronted Fernando standing in another doorway trying to talk to Manya-nana.

"Got an ax?" asked Bosco.

Manya-nana pointed to the barn.

"There," she answered.

He crossed the kitchen and took Fernando by the arm.

"Come and split wood; you're bothering the squaw."

The girl watched them as they crossed the yard and entered the barn. The Mexican was talking earnestly. No sounds came from the woodpile beyond the barn door, nor did the men reappear; from the other room came the murmur of her grandfather's voice, and presently the boy crept into the kitchen. She laid a hand on his shoulder and whispered something; he looked at her intently, and then as silently as he had come, slipped through the open door and took his way to the barn.

DINNER had just been eaten at the ranch, and the hands had gone to the fields. Gin was washing dishes, an almost interminable task when cooking for a dozen men, and Simon and Dick were busy with some detail work, when a tired Indian pony carrying a dirty and beady-eyed Indian boy trotted into the ranch yard. An Indian hadn't been seen along South Fork for years, and the sight was so surprising that both men went to the door. The boy dismounted and came toward them.

"One of Ironheels' grandsons!" exclaimed Simon. "What's up?" Then he said in cheery tones, "How, Little Warrior!" and shook hands.

The boy looked from one to another, his black eyes shining, dug into a pocket of his buckskin shirt and produced two objects: a folded piece of paper and a small pencil in a gun-metal case. He handed both to Dick.

"How!" he said. And then: "From a friend to a friend!"

Dick uttered an exclamation.

"It's the pencil I gave Manya-nana, Simon."

The letter was written in pencil in a round school-girlish hand; Manya-nana had gone to a Mission school for several winters, but in all her young life had never been required to write to the outer world, and this was her grave and successful trial.

Without date the penciled lines began.

To the Young Chief with the Nice Voice from Manya-nana:

Bad men are here. The Man who Limps, the Mexican with the face of a gray wolf and the black man called Bosco. Evil lies in their hearts. Little Warrior Afraid of the Thunder heard them. He will tell. The stock that writes shows Manya-nana tells the truth.

Strangers came to see the park that smokes —the chief who owns the railroad and another—his daughter and women of his tepee. They drive from Otter Forks to the park. On the way Gray Wolf and the black man will rob them. Little Warrior heard them. Manya-nana speaks truth.

DICK looked at Simon and saw the blood slowly rising in the weather-beaten face.

"The hell they will!" he cried. "Not while I've got anything to say about it. Dick, it's up to us—it's the Ambrose party, of course." He turned to the boy.

"What was the name, Little Warrior? Ambrose? Ambrose?"

The child nodded eagerly.

"Sure?"

Again the quick nod.

"Right! Now, Dick, when are these people expected in town?"

"They reached Cheyenne on Wednesday, and Miss Ambrose wrote me her father had business there that would take him a couple of days. They also expected to drive out to Fox Brothers' dude ranch and see something of the country; they wont reach Otter Forks till early next week."

"And today is Saturday. That gives us time. When was this letter written? Little Warrior, what day did you leave the Reservation?"

The boy reflected.

"Two suns," he answered.

"That was Thursday at noon. Dick, the kid has ridden a hundred and fifty miles in two days! No wonder he's dead beat. Gin!"

The Chinaman appeared, clinging to his dish towel.

"Gin! Here's a kid who needs food; rustle a dinner, quick, and lots of it! Now, son, you'll soon have all your little belly can hold. Sit down, and we'll get to the bottom of this business."

The boy slipped to the porch floor, and Indian-like, squatted on his hams; the men drew up chairs and faced him; the court of inquiry began. Little Warrior had also been to school and could speak English if he was given time, but like the conversation of many aboriginals, the essentials were indicated by pauses and quick gestures. However, by slow, repeated questions and infinite patience, Simon drew the facts from him.

Manya-nana had been alarmed at the appearance of those men at the ranch. Stiles she had always distrusted; Bosco she disliked; and the Mexican she feared. Her grandfather was a helpless cripple, and save for the boy, she was alone, the tribe being scattered all over the Reservation in their summer camps. The Mexican and Bosco had something on their minds; she was sure of this, and sent her brother to watch them and overhear their conversation if possible. Little Warrior had followed the pair to the barn, and ducking into a stall had listened with all his little savage ears. He could understand English if it was spoken slowly, and the men were deliberate.

The Mexican seemed the leader in the talk; he was urging something. The boy distinctly heard: "People like them always carry a lot of money," and "The girls are sure to have rings." Then twice the name "Ambrose," and another sentence: "Dead easy, since they have teams and not automobiles." And then Bosco's voice: "In the Pass would be the place," and something about "hold-up," and "point," and finally a broken sentence about "two more," with Bosco adding "get to town right away." Then the men had left the barn and joined Stiles, who was still talking to Ironheels. Nothing more had happened that night.

In the morning his grandfather had instructed him to collect the horses and drive the herd where Stiles would see it. He had done so, but had taken care to head half a dozen of the ponies to the Reservation boundary, and watching his chance and a signal from his grandfather, had deliberately driven these across the line. Then with Manya-nana's note and at Ironheels' command he had started for town as fast as the white mare could take him. Ironheels had told him to find the Sheriff, but Jack Gates had gone to Paradise, and no one knew when he would return. Still acting under instructions, the boy had gotten some sleep and started at daybreak to find Simon. That was all, but it was enough.

AS Little Warrior finished, Gin announced that dinner was ready for the youngster. Dick then saw an exhibition of eating that he never forgot: a bowl of heavy soup, a slab of meat that would have served an Eastern family for a full meal, beans and potatoes, three cups of coffee and a pitcher of milk, with two large sectors of pie as a finish, the whole interspersed with innumerable slices of bread and butter.

Toward the end of the repast the three men were slightly alarmed; it did not seem possible that one small stomach would hold this vast amount of food. But Little Warrior never lingered. Only when the last slice of pie had been irrigated by the last drop of milk, did he pause. Then the twinkling black eyes ceased to twinkle, a great sigh filled the room and the round head began to droop.

Gin regarded this gastronomic exhibition as a tribute to the excellence of the meal, and viewed the child as *Mr. Pickwick* must have viewed the Fat Boy. When a soul-satisfied grunt rose from the table, he could no longer restrain his enthusiasm.

"Him fine eater," he observed, a winning smile on his features. "That boy make great chief some day—if he live."

Gin added this last clause with some concern, for Little Warrior's chin had sagged. There was silence for an instant as a very comfortable snore penetrated the room.

"Aie! He sleeps—it is a good boy."

With that the cook lifted the small morsel of humanity and carried him, tenderly as a woman, to the living-room, where he laid him on a couch. For the rest of the afternoon the doings at the Bar X interested Little Warrior no more.

THERE was much to do, and it must be done quickly. "We must round those fellows up at once. Dick, your deputy's badge comes in handy, now that Gates is away. We'll organize a posse, go into town and get Bosco and this Mex the instant they set foot on the streets."

But Dick was thinking.

"Wouldn't it be better, Simon, if we watched them until the Ambroses start on this trip, follow Bosco and catch the gang red-handed? Then we'll have a clear case for the pen—not even Mr. Stiles could get them off. As it stands, it's simply the evidence of an Indian boy with no crime committed. A jury would laugh at us."

Simon saw the point at once.

"Yes," he said slowly, "that would be the surest way to put an end to these bad men—only it's sorter tough on these tourists to let them be scared by some guns and black masks, to say nothin' of the chance of a gun going off. There's women along, remember."

"You don't know Miss Ambrose."

"So! Then if she can stand it, so can the others."

"But the trouble will be to follow Bosco and the rest—or we never can find the place where they're going to pull off this hold-up."

Simon chuckled.

"Oh, yes, we can! I know now where Bosco's thinkin' of playin' the game."

"You do? How do you know?"

"You remember the boy said he heard Bosco use the words 'hold-up,' 'point' and 'pass'—well, that's it. 'Hold-up Point.'"

"'Hold-up Point!' Is there such a place?"

"There sure is. It's up on the North Fork after you turn west from the Bungalow, about three miles from the foot of Pine Pass. You know where the Bungalow is, where the folks traveling to the Park get dinner or supper. Oh, I forgot! You don't know the road, do you?"

"No," said Dick slowly. "Tell me about it."

"Well, the Bungalow was built by some Otter Forks people as a summer camp for tourists or for anybody who wants to spend a week or so in the mountains. It's the last place on the river; beyond it the road goes straight and clear to the east entrance of the Park—thirty miles of nothin'. Nobody ever uses that road save Park tourists, and at this time of the season there's dern few of them; next month's the month. Bosco is playin' in luck—or thinks he is."

"I see. And this Hold-up Point is on that lonely road?"

"It is—about fifteen miles from anywheres. The road runs around the face of a big cliff then, so there's a curve each side, and you can't see what's goin' on when you're comin' from the other direction. There's been at least three hold-ups at that point since the road was opened, and it's a cinch to make your getaway. You can beat it to any point of the compass."

"And that's the only place where a thing like this could be worked?"

"Son, it's the one place — and that's where we'll get our old friend Bosco."

DICK hesitated. To allow Wildman and his gang to hold up Mr. Ambrose, and surround them in the very act, was unquestionably the surest way of ridding the country of a menace, but suppose something should go wrong, suppose a bullet —he wished now that he hadn't suggested the plan. Simon saw his hesitancy and put a kindly hand on his shoulder.

"It's all right, son; not a hair of her head will be touched, depend on me—though I wouldn't mind seeing her old pirate of a father relieved of his roll," he added with perfect candor.

Dick straightened his shoulders.

"Very well! Then somebody will have to be in town, find out exactly when the party starts, pass the word to us, and we'll have to cache ourselves somewheres where we can watch Bosco and his friends without being seen ourselves. Simon, it's a tall job."

"Not so tall as you think. I'll have somebody staying over at the Bungalow who can start for our cache as soon as the Ambrose outfit gets there, and I'll have a couple of men in town to nose around and find out anything they can. Mebbe one

of our men could get taken on as a driver, especially as we heard Bill Stiles has charge of gettin' the teams and arranging things generally."

"Stiles! Why, he's hand in glove with these fellows."

"But not on this deal, Dick. Bosco's pulling this play alone. If Stiles suspected it, Bosco and the rest would be in the pen now. No, we're safe there. If we can't get a man on as a driver, whoever goes to the Bungalow will have to tip off whoever is driving, to be ready to throw up his hands at the Point; we don't want any hero stuff in this play; we can't afford any chances."

"We're taking a good many as it is," said Dick gloomily.

"No, we're not; it's a cinch. Everything is going to break for us, and when it's all over, old man Ambrose will be presenting you as leader of the rescuing party with a thirty-jewel watch, and handin' all the rest of us hundred-dollar bills as a mark of his esteem and gratitude. Son, it'll be a great day."

Dick smiled in self-defense.

"Very good," he acquiesced. "Now, about the men: who shall go to town?"

Simon thought a minute; it was palpable that whoever went to town should not be regarded with suspicion by the ex-foreman, for then all plans might be upset.

"I think," he said finally, "Slim Bradlee is the man for that end of it. He's new to the country; he's smart; and he's a good mixer. I might give him a letter to Stiles sayin' I couldn't use him any longer up here, that he's a good man and needs a job—somethin' like that might help. Anyway, he can easily find out when Ambrose is goin' to pull out."

"And Fatty ought to be the other man to bring us word—he rides well, and whoever has that job will have a long ride and a fast one. Mr. Ambrose may not make up his mind till the night before he starts—so I guess Fatty is due for a ride."

"No, no! Let Gin!" cried a voice.

THE cook had been a silent listener. Unheeded, almost unnoticed, he had stood by the door, his eyes growing brighter and brighter as the conversation lasted. Now they were not only shining but were fairly bulging in their sockets for eagerness.

"You, Gin?" Simon's voice was discouraging. "Why, Gin, you've never ridden twenty miles at a stretch in your life —this would kill you. Besides, Bosco knows you too well; if he saw you snoopin' around the livery-barn when Stiles gets the teams, he might smell a rat. No, Gin, we'll have to count you out on this deal."

"No, no," the Chinaman protested. "Gin can ride fifty, sixty, one hundred miles if he have to. Gin is light on a horse, you know that, Simon; besides—there is Chu-Fow at the barn! He will know when this man starts, and he will tell Gin—we gleat flends," he explained; in his excitement Gin lost the use of his *r's*.

"That's true," Simon confessed. "I'd forgotten that Chink, and he's the only one I ever saw who is fond of horses. Well, Gin, we might let you take a hand in this round-up, but we'll send Fatty along to do the ridin'."

"All 'ight, all 'ight!" The cook's eyes danced with glee.

"That's fixed, then! Three men for town, and one for the Bungalow; now, who had we better send there?"

"That's my job," said Dick quietly.

The old man laughed at his employee. "You'll have to keep your eyes open, Dick; it means a night ride over a road you don't know, and Bosco and his bunch somewhere in the neighborhood."

"It's my job," Dick repeated.

IT was so arranged. On Sunday morning Fatty Harris, Slim Bradlee and Gin rode into town to keep in touch with the movements of Bosco. On Tuesday morning Simon led a party of seven over the divide by a rough trail up Hard Scratchin', dropped on the North Fork by American Creek and turning to the south and west, made a long ride and camped in the timber near the Bungalow. Early next morning with five men, he started on a cross-country ride over the high wooded ridge and through the pine woods to strike the Park road somewhere to the west. Dick was left alone to work his way to the Bungalow.

"Remember, Dick," said Walker earnestly, "to hang around natural-like. You're a fisherman, remember; there's your pole—so if Bosco has any scout loafin' around here, you can fool him. But I don't think he has; his crowd will leave town by night, comin' up North Fork as far as Trout Creek where there's a trail leadin' across the mountains to the Park road just beyond this Hold-up Point. If

Ambrose reaches town this afternoon, Bosco will probably start tonight, so you've got plenty of time. Hang around the bungalow until the Ambrose outfit shows up; then put their drivers wise if Bradlee aint of them. Understand?"

"Yes."

"Then good luck!" And with a wave of their hands, Simon and his cowboys disappeared in the timber.

Dick fished up-stream all day, fording the river on his horse at various points and trying one pool after another. Despite the uncertainty of the next day and the anxiety he felt for Martha, he enjoyed the sport.

By five he reached the Bungalow, an attractive little building made of heavy pine logs with a shingled roof, where the townfolk often spent a week-end. Having seen his horse safe for the night, he got a room and had supper. There were only a few guests, and they were unknown to him. He spent the next morning on the river, came in for dinner, packed his war-sack and made preparations to leave at a moment's notice.

One party of school-teachers stopped for dinner and went on an hour later. No other travelers showed themselves until five o'clock. At that hour a truck rumbled in, bearing three men and an assortment of bags. The driver Dick knew by sight, an employee of the transportation company in which Simon had an interest; the second man was Slim Bradlee, the third a tall, well-built fellow in city clothes whose features were marked by a curious twist of the nose. He was a stranger, but Dick had a feeling he had seen him before. The proprietor came forward, and the man made arrangements for accommodations. Bradlee helped him with the luggage, and the stranger went into the inn.

"Everything workin' accordin' to Hoyle," was Bradlee's comment. "That Ambrose party are an hour behind us. They're in two four-horse teams; Stiles has done the thing up in style. I couldn't get a job, but the drivers are Hank Adams and another fellow just as straight. I found this truck comin' up with all their junk. Did you see them bags—enough for an army—and I worked the driver for the trip. Thought I might be useful up here."

"Good man!" said Dick heartily, honestly relieved to have a friend in need.

"Who's that man with the broken nose?"

"He's with Ambrose—just came in the truck to fix things for the night. He's a pretty good guy—knocked around a good deal and is fresh from Mexico; his name's Robinson."

"Mexico!" cried Dick. And once more he saw an open square and the palms waving in the bright sun and Da Costa's office to the left of the picture, and—

"Mexico!" he repeated. "Robinson?"

"Sure—Mexico and Robinson! Know him? He's all right, that scout is!"

"Did he come from New York with Mr. Ambrose?"

"You bet you — private car and all. Know him, Dick?"

"I know his face; that's all—but about Bosco?"

"They were around town all yesterday afternoon, four of 'em. Bosco, the Mex, a fellow whose eyes bulge out—"

"That's Davis," interrupted Dick.

"—and a fat, dirty-lookin' guy I never saw before. They was all in the Last Chance up to four o'clock; then they beat it. Bosco went first with the fat fellow, and an hour later the Mex and the other man rode out. Ambrose got in by the one-o'clock train; Stiles met him and blew the whole party to lunch—gee, Dick, them young ladies is good-looking—at the Eagle. Then they went over to the barn. After they came back, the Mex ambled over, and when he came out, Gin took a turn at findin' out things and saw his Chink friend. That's how we learned when Ambrose was to start; the Mex, of course, found out the same way. So the game has started; Bosco and his bunch are workin' over the mountains to this hold-up place; Simon, I guess, is there now; you and I are here; Fatty is comin' along behind Ambrose as a sorter near guard; and only Gin is out of action."

"Where is Gin?"

"Gone back to the ranch—said he wanted to clean house before the dead were brought in."

This sounded like the cook, and Dick grinned; he could imagine the ceremonies a delighted Chinaman might hold over Bosco's corpse.

Dick knocked the ashes from his pipe and turned to Bradlee.

"I'd better get out of this," he said, "until Mr. Ambrose goes in to supper; then I'll see the drivers. And then you and I will hit the road."

## CHAPTER XXI

BY eight o'clock they were well on the road to the Pass. The locality was new to both men, but Dick's wise old saddle-horse had been over the road before, and the black gelding Slim had hired at the Bungalow made the trip half a dozen times a summer.

The road, a sound piece of Government work, rose steadily before them, curving here and there as it followed the caprices of the tumbling river, but always climbing the rise of the divide. Dick rode on the river edge, his rifle loose in its scabbard; Bradlee, better versed in the noises and shadows of the night, kept by the timber, shooting frequent glances into the blackness and straining his ears to catch any unexpected sound.

In silence the two men had ridden into the sunset, and in silence they still rode into the night. The night was very still. A mile this side of the pass they crossed a little mountain creek rolling into the main stream, and here the cowboy decreased the speed of his horse to the veriest crawl. Somewhere along this next stretch one of Simon's men would meet them. And so it proved. A few hundred yards more, and a figure came from the shadow of the woods and stood silhouetted against the lighter background of the road. The horses shied, and then came a familiar and reassuring voice.

"That you, Dick?"

"Yes."

"Who's with you?"

"Slim Bradlee."

Buck Snyder came nearer; he broke horses for Walker and was a small, wiry youngster whose movements were quick and decided.

"Everything O. K. at the Bungalow?" he asked.

"Yes. Any signs of Wildman?"

"Nary a sign; but it's so dark back there you can't see a silver dollar."

He came and laid a hand on the neck of Slim's horse.

"Don't smoke," he advised. "We haven't seen hair or hide of anybody, but the old man is playing it safe. Jest let your horses walk very slow about half a mile; then get off and follow me. We have to take to the timber to reach the others."

In silence the horses followed their guide. Save for an occasional clash of hoof against stone and muttered comments from Buck, horses and men moved forward without noise, though every little sound seemed intensified. Finally they reached a spot where the trees to the right thinned and dwindled, and a small glade showed itself. A tiny trickle of water oozed over the bank and splashed on the road.

"There's a spring just at the edge of the timber," said Snyder, "and a game-trail goes through the woods from there. We'll follow it for a ways. You'll have to lead your horses, but it aint so bad."

This journey lasted the best part of an hour, and then he realized they had climbed the first slope and were on level ground. At the same time the trees broke away, a peak came in sight and men and horses found themselves on a grassy ridge. Where they were Dick had no idea. He had lost all sense of direction and did not know whether the Park road lay to their left, ahead or even behind them. Incidentally he was very warm and glad of a rest.

"Whereabouts are we, Buck?" asked Slim. "This country's new to me, and it was sure dark back there."

The man pointed ahead of him to where a patch of black showed against a dim sky-line.

"This ridge runs about due west. Over there it hits the timber again and below is the road. The river makes a big bend a little this side where we found that spring, and this ridge is a good cut-off. If we took the road we'd be just beyond Hold-up Point; Simon and the others are there at the edge of the timber."

"It beats me," said Dick admiringly, "how you ever found your way in the dark. I'd been lost a hundred yards after we left the road."

"Just what you've been brought up to! I guess you could lose me on a city trail."

They conversed for a little time, and then:

"Shhh!" came suddenly from Buck. "Get your pony, Slim, and muzzle him—there's our gang."

Even as he spoke, he made a quick spring to Dick's horse, caught it by the bit and forced the astonished animal to its knees. Slim did the same, and the five figures were now indistinguishable from twenty yards away.

A minute, a long minute, in which Dick felt his heart beating faster and faster, and a curious tingling sensation creeping

over his body; and then, a hundred yards away and above him, a small moving blotch of black hung for an instant against the skyline, hovered and was gone. Another and another and another—and then the skyline ruled level and unbroken as before. For several minutes the men crouched there motionless, and then Slim rose to his knees and let his horse scramble up also.

Buck had also risen and stood staring toward the summit. "I think I'll take a little look around," he said, and gave the reins of the horse to Dick. "It wont do any harm, and I may spot their fire; they're sure to build one when they strike the woods—they don't think there's a soul nearer than the Bungalow, or they'd had one fellow goin' ahead of the rest. You fellows wait here for me." He slipped away and was lost to sight.

"Great sport, isn't it?" said Slim delightedly. "I wouldn't have missed this for a hundred dollars. How do you feel, Dick—sorter funny?"

"Yes," answered Dick honestly.

"Just you wait till tomorrow when we're about to close in on 'em—that's the time. I remember once down in Sweetwater County I was with a posse after two horse-thieves. We had 'em cornered and was goin' to rush 'em, and we didn't know if they would shoot or not—I felt real funny, almost as if I was goin' to be sick at my stomach."

"And did they shoot?"

"They did, and the sheriff got plugged in the shoulder; but after the first shot I didn't feel nervous any more—but I was pretty sick after it was all over," he added simply.

PRESENTLY a figure emerged from the gloom; so silently had he come that Dick had been absolutely unaware of his approach.

"All right, fellows! They're beddin' down for the night just inside the timber. They've started a small fire and hobbled the horses in the grass. We'll work down a little bit more and slip across to our fellows; you wont catch Simon building a fire this night. When they ate supper, I'll bet it was way back in the woods where nobody could see either blaze or smoke, and it was put out hours ago. Suppose we start. I'll take your horse, Dick. I don't think he's liable to neigh, but he might, and maybe I can stop him quicker than you could."

Dick was only too glad to relinquish the responsibility, and once more the three men advanced.

When the first underbrush rose up before him, Buck halted.

"We're here or hereabouts," he announced. "Now, unless I've wandered a lot, there ought to be a big fir that's been struck by lightning not far from here—that's where we'll find Simon."

As if in answer the melancholy note of a wood-dove quivered on the summer air.

"That's him." Buck hooted like an owl. Presently a twig snapped, and steps were heard; then Simon came from the shadows.

"That you, Buck? And Dick—who's that with you?"

"Slim," was the answer.

"Hello, Slim—didn't let our friends steal a march on you?"

"They're over there about half a mile," said Buck.

"The devil they are! And the Ambrose outfit?"

"Safe and sound at the Bungalow," answered Dick. "They start from there at nine tomorrow."

Another blind struggle through trees and underbrush, and the park was reached. a grassy platform about as big as a baseball field. At its edge some figures were seen, and the men exchanged greetings. One of them went back to do sentry-duty; and Dick unsaddling his horse, took down slicker and blanket and made ready for the balance of the night.

DICK came to life to find Simon looking down at him with a kindly smile.

"After six, Dick; breakfast-time!"

When the very simple meal was ready, the man who had been on guard appeared and reported that the night had passed uneventfully. He had slipped through the forest at the first break of day and located Bosco's camp. As far as he could make out, all four men were there sleeping the sleep of the just; the horses were picketed at the bottom of the slope, but there did not seem to be any water in the immediate vicinity. Simon listened and nodded.

"They'll be moving pretty soon," he said. "There's a spring near their camp, and they'll hunt for it—Bosco must have his coffee. Now, boys, let's make up our minds what we're going to do. These people ought to be along before noon. They've got two teams, Dick tells me; and Hank Adams, who's driving Mr. Ambrose, has

been slipped the word. The second team will probably be a little distance back so as to avoid the dust. In an hour or so Bosco will have his men posted this side the cliff where the curve is pretty sharp. He knows no other parties are on the road, so the first team that comes along will be Mr. Ambrose's. As soon as that one is stopped, he'll probably have the driver come along a few rods, and while one of his men keeps a gun on these tourists, the rest of the gang will hold up the second team. It's a cinch to stop both, and then it's good-by money and jewelry.

"Now, here's my plan: There are nine of us, and I have a hunch Fatty Harris is at the Bungalow now and will come along after the second team; he wouldn't miss this for a mint. We'll divide: Buck and Slim and you, Texas, take this side of the ridge and go down till you're about opposite the cliff. Then cross over and cache yourselves in the woods the other side of the curve. As soon as the team passes, get on your horses, hit the road and come up back of the wagon—that blocks one end—understand?"

There was a chorus of assent.

"The rest of us will creep through this timber, watch Bosco, and as soon as he moves up to the cliff, we'll follow, and the instant the performance starts, we'll come down on these tin-horns. If everything goes right, not a man of 'em will get away."

WITH this understanding the party split. Buck swung on his pony and led his division over the ground Dick had covered during the night; the others under the guidance of the man who had acted as sentry stole through the woods at right angles to Buck's line of march and after an hour's slow progress passed the far side of the ridge and halted. The guide reconnoitered, and returned with the news that Bosco and his friends had apparently broken camp.

The trying hours now began. It was nearly ten o'clock, and the sun was hot. The timber was thick in places, and progress was slow. The horses had to be led, and in spots the going was bad. Down timber sometimes blocked the way; patches of soft, swampy ground hindered them; and the mosquitoes and black flies were innumerable. At last they reached the slope leading to the road, and here Simon turned sharply to the left and down-river. Twenty minutes more, and they halted again, Ole the Swede pushing on alone to locate Bosco's party.

Fifteen minutes passed that were almost unendurable to Dick. He was nervous, worried lest something go wrong, and physically uncomfortable. The sweat rolled down his forehead; branches had cut his face, and a few malevolent thorns had worked their way through his overalls. He was decidedly unhappy. Then Ole returned and announced he had caught a glimpse of Bosco's horses tethered in a clump of trees, and that the cliff was not three hundred yards away.

"Right!" said Simon. "Now we know where we are. We'll follow the bank until we find a place where we can see the road."

A place was soon found, a knob jutting out from the bank, covered with bushes and offering a good spot for both observation and concealment. The road curved below them, and two hundred yards away the cliff stood, its base fringed with alders, its sides stern and rugged, with here and there striking splashes of red sandstone showing vividly against the rock.

"They're somewhere in those alders," said Simon in his ear. "One of 'em will show himself before long."

He had scarcely spoken when one of the bushes swayed and a man came in sight, hesitated a second and then slid down the bank.

"Fernando!" whispered one of the men.

The Mexican gained the base of the cliff, slipped cautiously around it and the next instant was in sight once more running up the road and beckoning toward the bushes. Instantly the alders moved, and Bosco came out, leading his bay horse. Horse and man scrambled down the bank, to be followed by two other men and the remaining horses. They said a few hurried words to the Mexican, pulled something from their saddles and seemed to adjust something to their faces; then swinging to their saddles, they spread across the road.

"Masks," cried Simon, "regular old-fashioned hold-up! Now, boys, get ready; it's up to us."

Each man took a firm grasp of his horse's bridle, left the knob and taking the bank, slid and scrambled to the road. At the same time the sound of wheels reached them, and the heads of a four-horse team flashed in view around the cliff.

"Mount," called Simon, and in an instant they were thundering down the road.

THINGS happened in the next few minutes. Dick saw Hank Adams bring his team to a standstill with a jerk that brought the horses to their haunches, heard a woman scream, saw pistols flourished in the air and heard Bosco's hoarse command for everybody to throw up their hands quick.

The next moment Simon's deep voice rang out the same order, and Dick found himself hauling at his horse with one hand and trying to cover Bosco with a revolver. He heard a medley of savage oaths; saw Davis look stupidly at the advancing horsemen, drop his revolver and throw both hands high; saw a short fat rider do the same, heard a vile oath from the Mexican, followed by a flash and a report; saw Ole reel in his saddle, was dimly conscious that the man next him had fired, and then saw Fernando clutch wildly at his own body, sway violently and fall heavily on the road.

Another shriek from the wagon; Bosco's gun flashed—and a bee seemed to sting Dick in the neck. A report, another, and he saw the foreman drive spurs in his horse, plunge over the bank and disappear from sight. Then came a sound of splashing above the noise of the river, and the roar of guns from below. Then quiet—and at the same time he found blood slipping down his neck and saw Martha Ambrose's eyes looking into his own.

## CHAPTER XXII

WHEN the mist cleared from Dick's eyes and the fog from his brain, Dick found Martha's hand between his grimy ones (he had no idea how it got there) and heard himself saying: "You're all right—you're all right?"

And Martha was all right, though slightly pale, and so assured him. Then realization came, and he dropped the hand as if it had been a live coal, only to hear her voice, low yet firm: "Dick! It is you, isn't it? I don't know where you sprang from, but I was never so glad to see anybody in my life. And you're not badly hurt—are you, Dick?"

Truth to tell, he wasn't hurt at all. Bosco's bullet had traced a neat little crease under his ear and a little streak of blood oozed down his neck to the collar of a flannel shirt; but apart from that sign of conflict, and numerous welts and scratches on his face where boughs had struck him, he was sound in wind and limb. He tried to say something worthy of the occasion, but all he could stammer was: "Gosh! I'm glad you're all right."

Martha glanced around her. Hats, masks and revolvers littered the road. A little way off the men were sullenly submitting to having their hands tied; an oldish man with a nice face was giving orders; near the river-bank, with the morning sun pouring upon it, lay the motionless figure of a man; and even as she looked, two men covered the body with a blanket. Martha shuddered, and by her side Mary Knowles squawked like a scared robin. Then Martha rose to the moment, and did so in a truly feminine way. She spoke to her father.

"Father, you remember Mr. Mohun, of course; he seems to be one of our rescuers, but where he came from is beyond me."

Mr. Ambrose leaned forward and stared at his particularly dirty rescuer as if he couldn't trust his eyes. He was a cool-headed man, but the last few minutes had been enough to shake the composure of a mummy.

He gasped, and drew a long breath.

"Mr. Mohun! Of course I remember Mr. Mohun—but what is this—what does it all mean? Who are these men? Is that one over there hurt? I hope you're not wounded—your neck is bleeding. Was it an attempt at robbery—where are our friends?"

The arrival of the other wagon, escorted by a couple of cheering cowboys, threw some light on the situation. Robinson came on the run, a big revolver in one hand.

"All safe, Mr. Ambrose? Good! Quite an experience! Old fashioned Western hold-up. How do you feel, Miss Martha? Shaken up, eh?"

MARTHA had regained her composure and denied being shaken up; Miss Knowles squawked feebly, and Mr. Ambrose pulled himself together. He coughed, a most courteous cough, and spoke to Dick.

"I don't understand it all, Mr. Mohun, but you and your"—he gave a hasty glance at the travel-stained men—"friends have laid me under a very great obligation. Are you the leader of this rescue-party?"

As Dick disclaimed any leadership, Simon Walker came forward, and Dick made what introductions were possible.

"Glad to meet you, Mr. Ambrose, and

you, ladies. Rather a rough welcome to Wyoming, I'm afraid, but a miss is as good as a mile. We drew it rather fine, but we had to catch these fellows."

"Are they stage-robbers?" demanded the banker.

"Not professionals—jest amateurs. Dick, here, got wind of their plans and we headed them off."

"Dick? Oh! I see—Mr. Mohun!" And by now Mr. Ambrose had once more become the poised man of the world together with the grateful father. "Well, I can never thank you gentlemen enough; it looks as it might have been a very serious business without your efficient aid. You must let me thank your men—I hope none of them is injured. That man under the blanket—is he—"

"That's one of the hold-ups; he got all that was coming to him; one of my boys is shot in the arm, but it's not serious."

"I'm sorry that fellow on the bay horse got away," said Robinson, addressing Simon. "I had two shots at him as he crossed the river, and a couple of your boys fired, but we missed him clean. I hit the horse—poor beast, I hate to wound an animal."

Simon looked the speaker in the face.

"So do I," he agreed. Then: "Haven't I seen you before somewhere; I seem to know your face."

"Quite possibly; I've seen something of the West—Colorado, Arizona. Robinson is my name."

"Mebbe it was in Colorado—it'll come back to me. Yes, I'm plumb sorry Bosco got away; he was the leader of this outfit—but we'll get him later; he can't get away 'cept over some of these divides, and by tomorrow we'll have the whole country lookin' for him."

"You know him, then?" Mr. Ambrose inquired.

"Sure—he used to be my foreman up to a short time ago."

"I see! And Mr. Mohun got wind of this contemplated robbery?"

AT this moment Amerton and young Carruthers, who had been detained by Miss Lewis, came running up. A hasty glance proved to Philip that Martha was safe and sound, and then his eyes fell on Dick.

"Mohun!" he cried, and at the name Robinson looked up. "Where in thunder did you come from—you one of this posse?"

Dick acknowledged that he was; and the other, who did many things graciously when he wanted to, was most gracious in his thanks.

"All of you," said Martha then, looking from one cowboy to another, "must take supper with us tonight; I want to meet you all."

The boys had gathered round the wagon and now looked sheepishly at one another; this cordial, self-possessed girl was good to look at; she came in their category as a "peach."

"You must," she urged with a smile that each man took for himself. "You may have saved our lives for all we know, and my father and I insist on knowing you—don't we, Father?"

"Of course," said Mr. Ambrose emphatically, and there was no mistaking his earnestness.

"So we'll expect you at six."

LATE that evening Martha and Dick sat in a corner of the porch at the Bungalow. Philip Amerton was being initiated into the mysteries of "solo;" Mary Knowles had gone to bed; Miss Lewis had captured the best-looking of the cowboys and was very busy in a far corner, while Mr. Ambrose, Robinson and Simon smoked endless cigars and discussed the fallacies of free trade.

Martha rested her arms on the railing and looked through the trees to the rushing stream below.

"It seems a shame that we have to say good-by so soon," she said. "You suddenly appear and rescue us,—Father and I wont forget your party in a hurry, Dick,—and we have just time to say how-do-you-do, and then we have to go."

"But if you'll let me know when you leave Billings on your return trip," he said eagerly, "I'll make it a point to get over and meet you somewhere on the Reservation."

"To see Manya-nana, I suppose." Martha loved to tease Dick. He was a very obvious young man and took some things too seriously.

"Oh, bother Manya-nana! I want to see you.

"If you will wire me when you reach Billings, I'll drive over to the Reservation and meet you. It's really very interesting; the women do wonderful bead work, moccasins and all kinds of decorative stuff, and the braves are worth talking to, es-

pecially men like old Ironheels. But I don't know," he added, "how they'll take to your father's coming there. This bill of the Omaha has been pretty well discussed, and you can't blame them for feeling sore at the directors of the road. But no business tonight. Tell me, did you like Hastings?"

"I thought he was splendid. He has offered me a position as his private secretary in case I get tired of New York and parties and want to do something."

"Fine! Only I have a picture of you leaving New York and your friends and doing secretarial work in a Washington office."

"Am I not capable of doing it?"

"You are—but would you?" Dick's tones expressed doubt.

"Some of these days I'll show you," she retorted.

THE man was silent; he had come to know that under the girl's kindly, easy exterior there was a tough fiber. He changed the subject.

"Is this Mr. Robinson going to make the entire trip with you?"

"I don't know; he's a business friend of Father's, and I have an idea he may be looking around for something to do. Interesting man, isn't he?"

"Very!"—for Robinson had talked well and entertainingly at supper. "He's been a lot of places and seen the inside workings of politics, I fancy—you knew he'd been in Mexico, I suppose. He was there all the time Moon and Edwards and I were on that oil work."

"I heard him say so. Did you meet him there?"

"I didn't meet him, and I only learned of his presence in Mexico by a funny coincidence." And he told her of the episode at the moving-picture theater.

"That was funny—and he was going into this lawyer's office just as the film ended?"

"Yes; curious we should happen to see that very picture."

BRIGHT and early the next morning a small cavalcade of men and horses left the Bungalow. The prisoners had been turned over to the Sheriff in person, and that energetic official with two guards had already started in the big car for Otter Forks. Simon Walker and his men forded the river and descending the right bank for half a mile, took the Beaver Creek trail over the divide.

At noon they rested for an hour and gave the horses a chance to cool. The pass here was over ten thousand feet high and the air fresher. The snow had been gone from this level a scant two weeks, but early as the season was, travelers had already passed. Leading westward were the tracks of two horses, one shod, one unshod; and straight ahead another track showed, that of a single horse shod on all four feet. Simon had pointed out these three sets of prints some distance back on the trail.

"This double track," he said to Dick, "is probably Henderson the forest ranger. He's due up here about this time, and he's leadin' a pack-horse. The other, I think, is Bosco."

Bosco! Dick started. He had scarcely thought of the man since yesterday. Would there be another hunt and another tragedy?

"I'm not plumb certain," the cattleman went on, "but it looks as if it might be. He shoes his bay on all feet, and this trail is the quickest way to Manson's if he's headin' for there."

AT one o'clock the cinches were tightened once more, and the final ascent began. Turning slightly to the south, they followed the headwaters of a tiny brook known as Cañon Creek, flowing down the east side of the divide. Here the tracks of Bosco's horse disappeared. The man perhaps knew some short-cut to the north.

This caused some speculation among the men, but no efforts were made to pick up the trace. The men were hot and somewhat tired, the day was exhausting and their old foreman could be safely left to other hands. As the trail descended and as Cañon Creek, fed by a hundred springs, grew lustier, the day grew more and more oppressive. There were no individual clouds now; the whole western sweep was one dark gray save at the headwaters of each creek, where the cloud mass was blacker.

"She's a-comin'," some one volunteered.

"And a good one," said another.

"And if I aint much mistaken," said Simon, "there'll be a cloudburst up one of these cañons before the day's over. It's 'burst weather."

"And then watch out for a spout," chimed in Buck.

Dick had seen the effect of "spouts," so called on several of the lower reaches of

the tributary creeks, and he glanced around in some little apprehension. Simon noticed it.

"Not here," he said reassuringly; "we're safe as a church on these ridges. It's in the cañons and on the washes where you have to make yourself scarce. If one's a-comin' on Elk Creek Wash, a man would think twice before crossin' once. But if one does sweep down there, it'll be over before we reach the foothills. I always thought that Frenchman Baptiste was a fool to build where he did—though he is sorter protected by that last foothill."

Slowly they descended, the creek far beneath them now as the trail zigzagged, now in the timber, now out of it, but always seeking a lower level. At last they struck the sagebrush south of the Elk Creek Wash. Six o'clock had come and gone; men and horses were tired and the sultriness of this low level was almost unendurable. Straight before them a thin column of smoke mounted into the lifeless air above Baptiste's cabin, and that was the one sign of life.

They threaded their way through the brush and struck the first of the Frenchman's fences. Passing through a wire gate, they followed an ill-kept road and reaching another fence and gate, were in the clearing around the ranch-house. And here they stumbled on tragedy. Simon's horse shied violently; ten yards ahead and a little to one side lay the body of a dead horse—a big bay gelding, Bosco's.

SIMON'S face grew rigid, and then raising himself in the stirrups, he looked toward the cabin. Save for the slowly rising column of smoke the place seemed deserted.

"That horse hasn't been dead ten minutes," he said sharply. "Blood is still coming. Where is the—watch out, boys! I see what's happened; this horse was hit in the getaway; Bosco found him peterin' out, and he took the Elk Trail down—it's easier than Cañon. He turned off there at the top of the divide, spent the night in the timber and somehow got the bay down here. He's borrowed a horse from Baptiste—and he aint been gone long. Come on, everybody!"

He urged his tired pony over the rough road and headed for the cabin. Suddenly Buck, who was riding through the brush to one side, uttered an exclamation. The edge of the wash had come in sight, and there fording the stream two hundred yards away was a black horse. There was no mistaking the rider, and even as they watched, the horse climbed the farther bank and headed diagonally across the rough ground, aiming at the river road to the right.

"He's got his horse," cried Buck.

"Or took it," corrected Simon. "After him, boys, but watch your horses' legs."

They spurred through the intervening sage and reached a cut bank. Even in their excitement it was plain that Bosco could not be caught. Mounted on a fresh horse, he was forcing it across that stony ground at a speed not only dangerous but far beyond that of their own tired horses.

The light was fast fading, and already the fugitive was indistinct against the gray of that desolate place. Fatty Harris uttered an oath, and whipping his rifle from the scabbard, fired twice at the vanishing figure. The two shots whined across the wash, and the reports seemed deadened in the thick, murky air. Bosco turned in the saddle, and they could see a fist shaken in defiance—and that was the last time the man ever saw his pursuers.

A startled exclamation came from the men to the left of the line; then came a low humming like that of a gigantic top, a humming that increased until it was a roar like that of Niagara, a roar that did not fill the surrounding atmosphere but was the atmosphere itself. Dick felt the earth shake, and his own body seemed to vibrate in every nerve.

Across the cut between the foothills where Elk Creek issued hung a curtain of gray. It was alive; it pulsed and spewed forth boulders and logs and flung them forward. The whole slope of the wash across the cut had humped and shouldered itself into one great black wave, and over all was the awful roar and crunch and grinding. Dust filled the air, a choking dust that gripped the men like gas. The horses neighed frantically and trembled, and only the strong hands of the experienced men kept them from bolting. Every man threw himself from the saddle and speechless watched this indecent performance of Nature. It seemed as if the very entrails of the mountains were being littered upon the plain. The wave spread and scattered and broke. The roar reached an intensity that was indescribable, lessened, lessened still more and died away in one last rumble. A few dying echoes, a few faint rumbles of the last rolling stones,

the wail of the outraged stream, and then high above the passing of the turmoil the agonized scream of a horse. And then silence.

WHEN it was all over and life came to the earth again, Dick found himself clinging to the bridle of his shaking horse. Around him were the figures of his friends, their faces pale under the dirt and sweat, but each man mechanically soothing a frightened pony.

The choking dust had gone; the air was cooler, and to the west the light of the setting sun was slipping over the mountains. He drew a long breath and stared at Simon. The old man was rigid, his face tense and drawn.

"Boys," he said quietly, "it's all over—let's do what's left to do."

He swung into the saddle, crept over the cut bank and started across the wash. The others followed, and Dick became aware of the power that lies in a cloudburst. The face of the wash was changed. Where ten minutes earlier had rested good-sized rocks, logs imbedded in the gravel of years, and tough patches of brush, now level patches of sand stared at them, clean and even as if a gigantic plane had passed that way. And other places where deposits of sand and pebbles had been were now heaped high with huge boulders, tree-trunks torn from a living soil, and old dead timber riven from the stream's bed far up its cañon. The Elk was finding a new channel to the river; its old course no longer existed, and even as they forded it, they saw little tongues of muddy water creeping over sand and shingle and edging between boulders, seeking the line of least resistance in a passage to the river below.

In dead silence the men searched, and presently they came across a horrible black patch smeared with red, and a little farther on another, smaller, less distinctly shaped—Bosco!

Dick clung to the horn of his saddle and was violently sick; a couple of the younger cowboys uttered funny little whimpers, and others took off their hats in absolute silence. Simon Walker raised his gnarled hands high above his head and swore.

Then duty claimed them, and over what was left of that smaller black patch they heaped rocks and sand and heavy timber; there was no reason for a grave.

In silence again they turned the horses and refording the creek, made their way to Baptiste's cabin. And then they knew how Bosco had borrowed the black horse. Little Baptiste, knowing nothing of what had happened across the divide, had evidently suspected something from the appearance of the horseless, desperate man. Perhaps he had been frightened; perhaps he had protested; perhaps he had refused the loan of his one saddle-horse: but Baptiste would never protest or refuse again.

Poor little Frenchman, he bears no part in this story; but he was a good man, and his name is held in respect along the Otter to this day.

## CHAPTER XXIII

ON a morning in early September five men sat on the porch of the Eagle Hotel and with feet on rail watched the fag end of the tourist traffic wander aimlessly along the streets. Four of these feet belonged to Jim Edwards and Edward Mohun. As Dick had expected, this pair of philosophers had arrived unheralded and were now only waiting for Simon's wagon to bear them up-river.

Beyond a visit to the ranch, their plans were vague. The fifth man was Robinson, now established in town in some capacity connected with the Setting Sun Realty Company. Simon and Dick liked the man. He was intelligent and minded his own business, and beyond the fact that in some unknown way he represented capital akin to the Ambrose and Omaha interests, everything was to his credit.

Edwards and the Englishman had known him in Mexico, where their interests had never clashed, so a feeling of amity surrounded the group. The conversation this morning gravitated towards oil.

"Have you heard," Robinson asked Mohun, "of any recent developments in that Orozco pool? After you men had to give it up, I looked into it. It was good, but I couldn't find the money."

"Not a thing. We had to make a quick exit, as you know, and since then I've washed my hands of Mexico."

"You couldn't do anything with it after our friends here had to leave?" Simon's tones were frankly curious.

"I could do everything except the most important thing—raise the money. After Lower California became quiet and that Mexican land-pirate—what's his name—the fellow who raided you—"

"Manuel," said Jim Edwards quickly.

"Manuel! After he was superseded by some other greaser, I went to see that lawyer you saw, Da Costa. I've known him for years, and between us we got the scheme in pretty good shape. The Orozco family stand in with the government now, and we were guaranteed protection—but not a soul would touch it. I wanted Mr. Ambrose to supply the money, but he turned me down—I think he still bears you a grudge, Moon, for that Crawford deal; anyway, he was very leary on Mexico—and then you and Mr. Mohun had exhausted the New York market. Ward Brothers weren't enthusiastic, and the smaller operators follow the big ones."

"Don't I know?" said Dick disgustedly. "Didn't I wear out pairs of shoes seeing people in New York? Moon and I saw everybody—and life those days was just one turn-down after another—I hate to think about it."

"I don't," Robinson said promptly. "I like to know the grease is there, for some of these days Mexico will become sane, and then those on the inside will make a killing, and if I miss it—it will be my own fault."

"Did you men ever think," Dick put in, "what a Godsend an oil-pool would be to some steamship company, now that they are building so many of these oil-burning ships? Why, it would mean hundreds of thousands of dollars saved annually for a company to own their own supply of fuel. I read something about these oil-engines in a magazine lately, and I was surprised how much is saved by using oil instead of coal. Do you know, I believe there's something in that; why in the world didn't we think of it while we were killing ourselves in New York?"

The Englishman shook his head. "Two years ago oil-burning engines in ships hadn't been proved; nobody had gone into them thoroughly—that's why we didn't think of it."

"BUT today they are installing oil-engines in ocean liners. That means the coastal boats will use them, and the South American lines—why, there's no end to the possibilities of high-quality oil."

"Better see your friend Ambrose," suggested Simon. "He owns samples of pretty near everything; maybe he has a couple of steamboat lines tucked away somewhere."

Robinson took this seriously. "I don't think the old man's interested in ships," he said. "If he is, I never heard of it."

"Better watch him, Robinson," advised Jim, "or he'll steal a march on you, and our oil-field will be gone."

"If Henry M. Ambrose took advantage of the work I did on those pools and used all the information I gathered without putting me in on a big scheme he promoted with Da Costa—the fur would fly. I hardly think he'd do a trick like that; he's always been very fair with me."

"Wouldn't trust him," said Simon shortly. "A man who is director of a railroad tries to get a bill like 10050 through Washington—would steal sheep."

To this Robinson did not reply. He seldom talked of the Omaha or its methods, and appeared to have little in common with Mr. Stiles. He changed the subject to the fate of the two men captured in the hold-up. "They got five years, I hear; pretty speedy justice you have in Wyoming, Mr. Walker. Still, I'm glad the young ladies weren't called as witnesses; they're nice girls, and giving testimony in a criminal trial isn't the most pleasant thing in the world."

He rose and flung away his cigar.

"Due at the office now to sell some land; when are you men going up-river?"

"Tomorrow."

"Then I'll see you before you go." He nodded good-by and crossed the street.

Next morning the rancher drove his guests to the Bar X. Dick had traversed the road so many times he knew every rut and stone along it; to the visitors Rocky Mountain scenery was so familiar that the valley of the Otter did not bring forth gushing sentences of enthusiasm.

Dick preferred the silent appreciation to the outburst of the dude. He was tired of the country. He was ashamed of himself for this feeling, but was forced to admit its truth. Even before Martha had come this sensation of boredom had existed, though dormant; now it had taken possession of him and he could not stem it. It was a good life—but was it the life for which he was best fitted? Was it to continue for year after year? Was he compelled to spend the rest of his life in this narrow valley, working for wages until he had learned enough of the work to file upon a homestead of his own? To sow and reap, to buy, breed and sell cattle and horses, to watch these valuable investments year in and year out through the treacheries of the

winter and the monotony of the summer—was that to be his future life? God forbid!

Well, it was up to him; he would leave Wyoming, go back to New York and begin afresh. Possibly Ashley would take him again in some capacity, and the city called. But would his going be unfair to Simon Walker? Would it be an act of ingratitude toward a man who had been a second father? No; Simon would understand. But was there no possible way to make a sudden competency in Wyoming?

Oil, land-speculation, power-sites, irrigation projects—he had a choice of many possibilities, and certainly in none. Dick sighed, and came back to life as Jim nudged him in the ribs.

"Want to go oil-prospecting again?" asked Mr. Edwards.

Dick shook away the blue devils and found himself in a more human state of mind.

"Sure," he assented. "When and where?"

"Moon and I thought we might take a look at some of these basins in the mountains; oil might be found in this country—why not? So Mr. Walker says he'll give us an outfit after the haying's over, and you can guide us."

MR. AMBROSE sat in his New York office contemplating a door that had just closed behind the burly form of Mr. Hervey Luce and turning over in his mind a business venture which promised big returns. Passing reference has been made of Mr. Luce, general solicitor and very potent factor in the affairs of the Southern & West Indies Railroad system. Suffice it here that he was a big man mentally and had a grasp on success that was the envy of many.

In his long connection with the Southern, Mr. Luce had become allied with many men and many diversified interests. He was a far-seeing man who realized the importance of interlocking directorates and pooled interests, and in the days before the Interstate Commerce Commission became a power in the land, the subsidiary companies of the Southern owned a hundred varied industries, few of which were railroads, but all of which paid tribute in the end to the parent road.

One of these offshoots was the Southern Cross Steamship Company, a profitable line plying between Baltimore and Buenos Aires. Two new additions had been made to the fleet, and both had oil-burning engines. These vessels had proved most satisfactory, but the directors of the line were tired of paying high prices for fuel. It was deemed best therefore to have inquiries made as to whether some oil-pool of lasting quantity was on the market. If one could be found, the Southern Cross S. S. Company might be willing to lease or buy outright.

The high-salaried engineers of the System, being woefully ignorant of oil, called in outside specialists, equally high priced, and the temperate and tropic zones of the Western hemisphere were searched for oil-pools that might be bought. There were no proven oil-fields for sale. Mr. Luce, to whom all things came in due course, was apprised of the situation. He knew something of Mexico, and months before, his underground channels had supplied the information that an agent of Ambrose & Company was interested in some developments in Lower California. There followed several interviews between the general solicitor and the banker. Mr. Ambrose told everything he knew about the Orozco fields. Robinson's statements had been verified by that big man of Mexico City with whom the banker had an offensive and defensive alliance, and Señor Da Costa was ready to do business with anybody at any time.

Mr. Luce bowed solemnly and thanked his friend for the information. In a little while he verified it through his own sources, and shortly after Mr. Ambrose had definitely refused to go into the promotion again on Robinson's recommendation, Mr. Luce and the banker had reached an understanding. The Southern System, Mr. Luce and the two gentlemen who frequently followed his lead, and Mr. Ambrose, would enter on a lease with the Orozco interests, and once more Camp Desolation would teem with life. The Mexican Government would supply a guard, and Mr. Ambrose's friend, the big man on the inside, wrung a guarantee from the Government that any damage inflicted by marauders would be paid for by work or cash.

It was an easy transaction and when Mr. Ambrose left for the West, the details had been arranged. Now in September everything had been settled; the engineers of the Southern were en route for the ground, and the banker had signed the various leases and a check for his share of the first in-

stallment of the money that was needed.

So far so good; it was a straight business venture, open and aboveboard, and attended with as little bribery as was humanly possible in Mexico. But Mr. Ambrose had deliberately eliminated Robinson. Every scrap of information, every little detail concerning the field and the lease Dick had originally arranged with Da Costa, had been furnished the banker by Robinson.

THUS matters stood on the warm fall morning when Mr. Luce closed the door. The banker's thoughts that morning were pleasant ones. His affairs were in good shape save for a slight uneasiness in Omaha common, caused by the uncertainty of the fate of 10050, and this Mexican venture promised glowing returns. And yet—the banker was simply aware that something was wrong in his own house.

This autumn Mr. Ambrose, even in the press of his business, noticed his daughter was taking a more decided interest in affairs of the day, and particularly in certain of her father's affairs.

One night in October the crash came. Philip Amerton came to dinner, and as the men sat over cigars and coffee, a special-delivery letter was brought by the hall-man. With a word of apology the banker opened the envelope, read the few lines and to the surprise of his daughter cursed audibly. In all her knowledge of him Martha had never seen her father lose control of himself in this way. Even Philip showed surprise. With another exclamation of anger Mr. Ambrose tossed the letter to the younger man. It was only a few lines from the chief of the Omaha's lobby at Washington stating that the Committee on Public Lands had referred H. R. 10050 to the Board of Indian Commissioners.

Amerton whistled a bar from Chopin's "Funeral March," shrugged his shoulders and murmured "Lo, the poor Indian!" Martha, not understanding the meaning of the scene, stared blankly from one to another, and Mr. Ambrose cursed the House of Representatives, the Committee on Public Lands and the Omaha lobby impartially. The girl's color rose, and her heart beat faster as she heard her father's words. Mr. Ambrose damned the socialistic spirit of the age and the tendency of the Government to meddle with the affairs of corporations; he complained bitterly of the inability of private citizens to make money by business-like methods, and his voice rose to high heaven in a wild protest against the high-handed ways of an autocratic administration.

WHEN he had subsided somewhat, Amerton's voice broke in. "But we're very far from being beaten, Mr. Ambrose. Our bill will be considered by these Indian Commissioners, and as there is no question of the legality of our old grants, the whole thing will boil down to the advisability of the exchange. And surely with all the improvements the Omaha contemplates in that country, the Commissioners wont be swayed by sentiment."

"But they will!" shrieked the banker. "That's exactly what I'm afraid of—sentiment! The Commissioners aren't a court; they're just a set of sentimental citizens who get no salary, don't understand the law and go by tradition. Tradition—what has that got to do with the progress of the Omaha? But I tell you this, Philip, sentiment can never block progress in the long run, and 10050 is progress. I'll have our bill a law if I have to buy every man on that Commission—"

"Father!" Martha's voice rang out. "Father; don't let me hear you say a thing like that. I know you don't mean it—but it hurts!"

"Mean it! Of course I mean it—I shall fight fire with fire. I'll show these hysterical reformers like your friend Senator Hastings and these hypocritical old farmers like that man Walker what it means to stand in the way of the road. I'll—"

"Father!" Her voice was low. "Father! You're excited now and don't know what you're saying. Senator Hastings isn't hysterical, and Mr. Walker isn't a hypocrite—is he, Philip? They are honest men, and whatever they fight, they will fight honestly."

But Mr. Ambrose brought his hand down on the table with a shock that caused the glasses to dance and the candle-flames to quiver.

"Leave the room, Martha!"

"No, Father, I will not leave the room until you are my real father once more. Think, Father! You talk of buying—buying some men! Do you think you can buy honesty? Has every man his price? Is that your philosophy? Is there no such thing as honor?"

For a second father and daughter stared at each other, and neither one flinched.

Philip Amerton laid a hand on Martha's shoulder.

"Steady!" he said. And then: "Come, come! We're getting upset over nothing. It's really too hot to get excited. Mr. Ambrose, I can beat you at billiards. Martha, allow me." And he stood by the door.

Martha looked at him long and curiously, and slowly her eyes fell.

Then she took one farewell look at her father and passed steadily through the door. The curtains fell behind her, and Amerton faced the father.

"I have known you all my life," he said quietly, "but I never saw you play the fool until tonight."

## CHAPTER XXIV

MARTHA went to her room and locking the door behind her, sat down by an open window. The narrow avenue below her was deserted, and even the sullen roar of the night life to the south did not reach her. She laid her head upon her arms, and with elbows on the sill cried very softly.

And then a thought struck her: if she left the house and faced the world by herself, if she showed her horror of his conduct by such a drastic action, would not that bring him to his senses? After all, might she not be happier away from these four walls—might she not find peace and contentment away from this house? Other girls had done it successfully—why not she? Surely she could find something to do, some position that would occupy her days and give her some little monthly salary.

She ran over in her mind her financial position: nine hundred a year from her mother's estate was all she could count on, but it would keep her from starving, and if she could earn fifty or sixty dollars a month, she could live simply somewhere else. And she had in the bank—she snapped on the light and looked at her checkbook—nearly two hundred dollars left of her quarterly income and the allowance her father gave her every month. Oh, why had she bought so many clothes and things for that Western trip? The West! Instantly she thought of Dick and then Senator Hastings—and the Senator had promised her a position. Of course it had been a joke, but—

THE Indian summer had come to the valley of the Otter. The high mountains were powdered with the early snows, but in the valley the mellow warmth lay over all. Peace and calm brooded over the mountain land. Yet in the midst of this peace a small group of men were making ready for war.

H. R. 10050 was to come before the Board of Indian Commissioners; the first Monday in November had been appointed for the hearing and those men of Wyoming interested in this final fight against the Omaha were preparing for the trip to Washington. Simon was going, of course, together with Major Butler, Dick and several other men representing other sections of the country. The Agent of the Reservation had been summoned, and with him were to go Chief Ironheels and two more of the old men of the tribe—the Crows were to have fair representation.

In Washington Senator Hastings was in command; in Wyoming Simon Walker was the standard-bearer.

It was Saturday afternoon, and Robinson was expected. Simon had grown to like the man, and he was a welcome guest. It was with some interest then that Fatty Harris looked up from the woodpile and scanned the road across the river.

"Old Crooked Beak's late," he observed to Dick. "Wonder where he is?" Then as an afterthought: "Say, Dick, what's become of those two other guys who were here—Jim and the Englishman?"

"I think they're somewhere over in Lost Basin," Mohun answered. "Jim thought oil might possibly be found there; something about the looks of the water near the timber struck him—don't know what it was. Hello! There comes a rider down the grade. It's not Robinson—why, it's Jim, on old Buck. What's doing? Hope Mohun isn't hurt."

Ten minutes later Jim Edwards rode in, unsaddled the buckskin and turned him loose, then nodded at Simon and Dick, who had gone to meet him.

"What's up?" asked Walker. "Where's your partner?"

Jim winked—a speaking action.

"Can we sit down somewheres? I've got news for you."

They went in the living-room. Edwards never allowed himself to be hurried; so he rolled a cigarette before speaking. Then:

"Boys, I think we've struck it rich."

"Oil?" demanded Simon doubtfully.

"Oil!"

"In Lost Basin?" cried Dick.

"In Lost Basin! She's there, all right; Moon and me have been monkeying around that water at the north end for several days, and now we're sure. It's just a question as to how we're going to reach the stuff, and if it's good quality. We think it is, but of course we can't be sure. Moon's gone to town to see about gettin' hold of the land."

SIMON and Dick looked at each other; was this to be a bonanza or another Camp Desolation? The same thought crossed their minds at the same time. But Edwards was quick witted.

"Don't shoot a man for doin' his best; under United States law a man is considered innocent till he's proved guilty. Boys, she's there!"

Dick threw up his hands.

"Jim, I never wanted money as much as I do today—now, how much do you want out of us?"

Edwards grinned and threw his cigarette-stump into the fire.

"Wait until Moon gets back from town and we can figure out how much we'll need to start. He's goin' to see if he can rent a drill; we've got to get started before the snow comes."

"There oughtn't to be any trouble renting machinery," Simon volunteered. "There's a lot of pools that have petered out in that last camp, and the owners will take almost anything for the junk."

"Moon was countin' on that. Now, how about that Lost Basin land, Simon? Government, isn't it?"

"Yes, and not on the Forest Reserve."

"I'm glad of that—makes it easier for all of us."

Simon chuckled, and threw a log on the fire.

"So you're lettin' us in on the deal?"

"Sure," Jim answered simply. "If it hadn't been for your kindness in lendin' us horses and outfittin' us with grub, we never would have seen this basin. Of course you're in, you and Dick."

EDWARDS had finished his third cup of coffee and the recital of the details of his prospecting adventures when the rattle of wheels was heard in the yard.

"Mr. Robinson!" announced Gin from the window.

"Robinson!" Jim echoed. "Moon and I were thinkin' of asking him to come in; we need all the money we can raise, and he knows a lot about oil. Besides, he's a pretty good fellow, and I'd rather have him with us than against us. What do you men say?"

"No objections," said Simon.

"Nor here," Dick added. "I hardly think he'll try to sell us out to our old friend Ambrose."

They went outside and found Robinson coming from the barn. He carried a bag and a small parcel; the latter he handed to Simon.

"Thought you might like to have your mail a couple of days ahead of time," he explained. "They gave it to me at the post office."

"Thanks. —Gin, put Mr. Robinson's bag in the spare room. —How are you? Haven't seen you for some time."

Robinson looked at him. "I'm mad, damn' mad."

"What about?"

The new arrival parried with a question: "Do you remember a morning in town about a month ago? We were all sitting on the porch of the Eagle, talking oil. And Mohun had been reading something about these oil-engines for steamships?"

"Certainly, I remember it well," Dick answered.

"And one of you—I think it was you, Walker—remarked that our mutual friend Henry M. Ambrose might gobble up that Orozco pool if he was interested in steamship lines. And I said that H. M. wasn't interested in boats.

"And you further said, Walker, that you wouldn't trust a man like Ambrose, mixed up in this Omaha bill as he is, to take care of me in any scheme he went into with the Orozco oil, despite the fact I did a lot of work for him there in Mexico. You remember?"

"Sure! What's happened?"

"Lots! Ambrose and old Harvey Luce and the Southern Cross Steamship Company have leased the Orozco pools, formed a sort of holding company for the Southern System and have started just where Jim here, and Dick, and Ned Moon left off. And I'm left out."

SIMON uttered a long whistle; Dick gave an exclamation of surprise; and Jim Edwards cursed as only a prospector can.

"Knew something like that would happen!" cried the last. "Wouldn't that kill you?"

"How did you hear about it?" asked Simon.

"I saw the notice of the incorporation in a New York paper I got last night, and by the same mail I got a letter from a friend of mine in Mexico City telling me of the deal. He got it straight from Da Costa."

"And Ambrose hasn't written you anything about it? Maybe he'll give you some kind of commission after all."

"From him? Not much! I did get a letter from him by the same mail as all this pleasant news, but it was a little reminder that the Setting Sun Realty Company was expected to make some money pretty quickly. No, I wont hear from H. M. Ambrose, but he's going to hear from me —and soon!" Robinson suddenly snapped his fingers. "That for this Omaha bill!"

The ranchman laid down his pipe. "What do you mean by that, Robinson?"

Robinson hesitated, blew his nose and nervously crossed his legs. "I was going to tell you, anyway," he said finally. "It's not the thing to do, to wash your own family linen in public—but I think it's up to me now—and perhaps my old father will sleep quieter in his grave when he knows."

SIMON WALKER'S eyes fairly sparkled as he looked at the other, and suddenly there swept over Dick a shadowy premonition of what was coming; Jim Edwards stared blankly from one to the other.

"You men know just as much about the Omaha's old grants as I do; you've been fighting this bill, and you're familiar with all the circumstances, and you know the reading of those grants—the lack of the words *'equal value'?"*

Again Simon nodded.

"Of course, Senator Hastings has looked all that up; of course, he's been wondering why the Omaha grant should read that very way when all the other railroad grants read another; that's true, isn't it?"

"Yes," said Simon.

"And doubtless he has suspected something—that when the original charter was transcribed from the bill as passed by the House to the official records, these words were omitted in the transcription?"

"That did cross his mind, Robinson."

"And he suspected one of the clerks had been—crooked."

"Not that exactly," said Dick gently. "We only thought an error might have been made."

"An error—yes, an error on purpose! Gentlemen, it's a sad thing and a hard thing to say, but my poor old father made that—that—error. I can make no excuses for him, but we are all men, and we have all known what it is to be poor—perhaps bitterly poor. My father was an overworked, underpaid clerk in Washington. He earned eighteen hundred dollars a year and had a wife and six children to support, and in those days a Government clerk could be dismissed at will—he was at the mercy of the President. It was before the days of the Civil Service reform."

He paused again, and the room was very still; the one sound was the bubbling of Simon's pipe.

"You will remember, Walker, how Cleveland dismissed clerks right and left, either for purposes of economy or to make room for his own appointments. Well, my father dreaded that, and he was poor, shamefully poor—and temptation came. The Omaha bill had just been passed and was to be put on the records. Father had charge of it. The head of the road's lobby—I never learned his name—came to father and offered him five thousand dollars to omit those words *'and equal value.'* It was so easy,—a period after the preceding words and the thing was done,—and who was to say a clerical error had not occurred?"

HE sprang to his feet and paced up and down before the fireplace, striking the palm of one hand with the fist of the other. His hearers made no comment; it was a sordid, pitiful story of an event that had taken place nearly two generations before and yet would influence the lives and actions of thousands who were then unborn.

"I've been away from home for years and have never heard of any opportunity that demanded the production of my father's confession—but now the Omaha is trying to put across another dirty piece of business, made possible by my father's weakness. And H. M. Ambrose is typical of those men who took advantage of a poor man's temptation years ago; his conduct toward me is typical of his whole

business conduct." Once more he stopped abruptly and looked appealingly at the others. Simon rose, and laid a kindly hand on his shoulder.

"That's all right," he said soothingly. "We understand. You've acted like a man, Robinson, and we certainly wont use that letter unless we're forced to. —Eh, Dick?"

The younger man was emphatic; his sense of fair play was aroused. "Of course we wont," he cried. "We'll have to tell Senator Hastings about it, but not another soul. I'm sorry, Robinson, awfully sorry about the whole business, but you have done the square thing. And I don't think we'll have to use this letter. Hastings feels sure that sentiment has been so strongly aroused against the bill, and the Indians especially have so much justice on their side, that the Board of Commissioners wont listen to the Omaha. He thinks the bill will be disapproved. So cheer up, Robinson!"

The other stretched out his hand and each man took it in turn. Then Robinson sank into a chair and fumbled with a cigarette-paper.

"There," he said finally, "that's off my mind at last—and a hell of a thing it was. And now—I'll have to look around for a job; no more H. M. Ambrose as a boss."

"I guess there wont be much trouble in that," Simon said. "You can sell land under my ditch if you want to, or better still, you can come in with the rest of us on a venture that has just cropped up—Jim and Moon have struck oil."

Robinson was at once intensely interested, and wanted to hear the whole story.

"The devil they have! Where?"

Simon told him, and then and there, as the shadows of the autumn afternoon crept over the ranch, the Lost Basin Oil Company was born. But Dick took little part in the conversation, for Gin had sorted the mail, and a letter in a well-known handwriting confronted the young man. It bore a Washington postmark. He opened it eagerly and with some curiosity; was Martha visiting friends at the capital?

She was not; on the contrary, she was trying to earn her own living as a secretary to Senator Hastings. She had become very tired of New York, and an opportunity offering, had taken this position in the Senator's office. And didn't Dick think it was fine? She was quite crazy over the work.

Twice he read the few lines; and he knew what had actually happened as well as if Martha had told him.

## CHAPTER XXV

THE scene was a private parlor in a Washington hotel; the time the first week in November, and the cast of characters that group of men known to finance as "the Omaha crowd." It included Mr. Jennison, Mr. Ambrose, Philip Amerton and two others of the directorate; two Congressmen on the payroll of the Omaha and one United States Senator who happened to be a brother-in-law of Mr. Jennison and who took orders from that great and good man. Mr. Olcott of counsel for the road, two junior attorneys and the head of the road's lobby in the capital were also present.

The hearing before the Indian Commission was scheduled for the morrow and the combined intellects of those present were focused on the coming struggle. These men were hopeful; despite public sentiment which was aroused, and hints from high places that it were best to withdraw H. R. 10050, Mr. Jennison and his associates were confident of victory. Amerton was the one man who had doubts. He was younger than the others and he had the pessimism of his age and training. Mr. Ambrose, who at first had prophesied dire results when the bill was referred to the Indian Commissioners, had perked up a great deal and now believed in its final triumph.

SMALL matters determined, Mr. Olcott gave a modest cough and announced that he wished to detain his friends a few minutes longer.

"I was found by Senator Hastings last night," he began. "The Senator hunted me up at my hotel and made me a proposition, followed by a statement, both of which are so extraordinary I deem it best to repeat them to you gentlemen. Briefly, the Senator proposed that the Omaha withdraw the bill once and for all and make no further efforts to exchange the lands it now holds under the old grants. The Reservation Lands are to remain 'in perpetuo' with the Indians, while those to the south are always to be the property of the State or Government to do with as they see fit. In return for this extraordinary

compliance on our part, the Senator pledges that he, representing the people of Wyoming, will use every endeavor to help and further the Omaha in this connecting line to Cheyenne. He will see to it that a right-of-way is granted, without charge wherever possible, and that every help will be given by the State in the new undertaking."

Mr. Olcott looked around him to observe the result of his remarks. He was gratified indeed; every man in the room was looking at him as if he could not believe his ears. Mr. Jennison's face was almost apoplectic, Mr. Ambrose sat open-mouthed with astonishment; Philip Amerton was the picture of blank bewilderment.

"Well, well, well!" repeated Mr. Jennison. "Wonders will never cease. But, Olcott—what's it all mean?"

"And what," put in Philip, "was the statement? You said there were both a proposition and a statement; we've heard the first—what is the second?"

MR. OLCOTT tapped the table with a gold pencil.

"The statement is little less than a threat. Senator Hastings claims to have some evidence which he insists will produce such an effect on the Commission, if he is forced to produce it, — those were his words,—that the bill will be dismissed at once. And again he urged me, gentlemen, to withdraw 10050 before it is too late; he reiterated that he is loath to produce this—evidence."

"Evidence against the Omaha!" snapped Mr. Ambrose. "The man talks as if the road were on trial for murder; what can he mean?"

Mr. Olcott regarded the questioner very sharply.

"There might be evidence to show our old charter and grants were improperly granted."

"Improperly granted!" roared Mr. Jennison, now thoroughly roused. "Why, the original bill was as clear as noonday; it was presented to Congress in usual form and passed by both Houses without amendment and little debate—I remember it distinctly."

The attorney continued his pencil tattoo.

"Yes, but there is this unusual wording in the grant—we have discussed it several times. Hastings and Hamilton, who will present the case, may be resting their strength on that. They may claim the wording is improper, and lay stress on it."

Mr. Jennison grunted audibly, and Philip Amerton interposed.

"You gentlemen may remember," he said, "that when our Board first took cognizance of this land-exchange, this very point of the wording in the grant cropped up. I myself called attention to the possibility that some inquisitive person might remark on the omission of certain customary and vital words on the official record. And what I feared has happened; Mr. Olcott sees it—don't you?"

Mr. Olcott bowed gravely.

"You are quite sure, Mr. Jennison, that nothing exists which might explain Senator Hastings' attitude? Any documentary evidence of any kind or description—an agreement, perhaps some old letter from some member of the Board of those days, or a copy of instructions—anything at all?"

"There may be a million letters for all I know," Jennison answered, "but I'm sure there are not. I cannot conceive of any of my predecessors being so criminally foolish as to make a memo. of any transaction that might be criticized. Whether anything unconventional was done when the Omaha bill was originally passed, I do not know—but I'm certain no record of it was left, if such a thing was done."

"Then let's call the Senator's bluff!" urged Ambrose. "Our hands and consciences are clean; why should we hesitate? If Hastings has any evidence prejudicial to the interests of the road, why hasn't he produced it already? We have no reason to fear his attacks—and our charter speaks for itself."

AS this opinion seemed unanimous among the grave-faced men around the table, the informal meeting disbanded, and Mr. Ambrose and Amerton sought their own quarters. Once in their rooms, Philip turned to the other.

"Do you think a personal interview with the Senator would be desirable? I'm rather inclined to think this 'evidence' of his may be more serious than Olcott fancies."

"What good can we do by seeing him?"

"Martha!" replied Amerton simply.

"Martha!"

"Certainly! I'm convinced that her presence in Hastings' office has something to do with this 'personal reason' he harps

on. I know he admires her, and it is just possible that sympathy with her as your daughter, and you a director of the Omaha, makes him reluctant to produce his proofs, whatever they are, until he has exhausted every other method."

The banker colored, and walking to the window, stared down the broad avenue below.

"But Martha cannot possibly know what Hastings is holding back."

"I don't suppose she does, but if Hastings sees you in his office talking to your daughter and acting the repentant father, he is very apt to drop you a friendly word of warning, an inkling of what he knows, and we can act accordingly. Also, Mr. Ambrose,"—Philip's voice took on a new tone,—"it would be just as well for you to see Martha. This silly business has gone far enough; kiss and make up, and take her back to New York where she belongs."

The banker walked up and down the room.

"After the way she has acted!" he cried. "An ungrateful girl with no conception of what she owes her father. No sir—not unless she asks my pardon very humbly and shows some signs of coming to her senses."

"She'll never do the first," said Philip grimly. "She feels very strongly about your financial life, and she has very decided ideas. Come—let's go and see the Senator and—Martha!"

"I wish to God she'd marry you," blurted Mr. Ambrose.

"I wish she would. But in the language of the drama—there is another!"

"What!"

"Oh, yes! Young Mohun!"

Mr. Ambrose's hands dropped to his sides in helpless astonishment. "What!" he cried again. "That whippersnapper! Philip, you're crazy."

"Far from it! I'm sane as I can be, and I'm morally sure of it. I saw her eyes when she said good-by to him on that Indian Reservation—that's enough!"

"Good Lord! If I thought that, I'd—"

"Oh, no! You wouldn't do any such thing! She's your daughter, and if happiness for her lies with Mohun, the one thing to do is to make the best of it—and you'll do it."

"But it's unheard of. He's a beggar!"

"He may have money before long—he and his friends have struck oil out there."

"Oil—where? How do you know it?"

"Some place near Walker's ranch. Our friend Stiles wrote me—I got his letter yesterday. It's true; that fellow Mohun found it — the Englishman, you know. They're all in it: Walker, Mohun, that rough diamond Edwards and some others. Stiles writes it's the biggest strike yet, and that Otter Forks has gone crazy."

Mr. Ambrose threw up his hands and again invoked the Deity. Finally he got control of himself.

"This young man, this Mohun—is he in town?"

"I haven't seen him, but I fancy he is; they are all interested in this fight, you know."

Then Mr. Ambrose surrendered. "Let's find them," he said.

SENATOR HASTINGS had his personal headquarters in the offices of Hamilton, Delabey and Govane, the well-known corporation lawyers, and from here he dispensed seeds, pamphlets on the cutworm and loco weed to such of his constituents as appealed to him on these absorbing subjects. He had three communicating offices, in the first of which sat Martha in charge of the letter-files and such personal correspondence as was not intrusted to the Senator's private secretary. Her duties were light, the work interesting and her association with her employer of the most pleasant description. Martha probably earned her salary, but her labors were not arduous.

Martha sat before her desk, unmindful of the approaching crisis in her affairs, happy that she was independent, that Dick had arrived in Washington and that she would see him—happy that he was in a fair way to become prosperous, for he had written her of the find in Lost Basin. But she was desperately unhappy that her father was in the capital and so far had made no effort to see her. She sighed, looked for a minute wistfully toward the dome of the Capitol and then busied herself with a letter from some gentleman of Wind River who deemed himself aggrieved by the Forest Service.

Steps sounded by her, and looking up, she confronted her father and Philip Amerton. A little tinge of color rested in Ambrose's cheeks as he looked at his daughter, and despite all he could do, the fingers that clasped his walking-stick trembled ever so slightly in his heavy grasp.

"Well, Martha," he said, "you are well?"

She rose, a picture of self-respecting American womanhood in her well-fitting skirt, simple shirtwaist and the paper cuffs over the wrists.

"Yes, Father! And you?"

He bowed. "I am always fortunate in my health," he answered. For a moment or two no word was said, but Philip, looking earnestly at the girl, felt his heart beating faster. She turned to him and frankly smiled.

"No need to ask how you are, Philip; your looks speak for themselves. Is that something new in waistcoats?"

He laughed and shook hands with her.

"Martha," her father interposed, "we wish to see Senator Hastings if he is at leisure. And then—then I wish to have a little talk with you—if your duties," he added with some bitterness, "allow conversation with a visitor."

"I think," she answered steadily, "I can find the time. As for Senator Hastings—I will see. Please sit down."

SHE passed through the adjoining room to Hastings' private office and soon returned.

"In just a minute, Father, as soon as Mr. Hamilton comes out."

Mr. Hamilton appeared shortly, and in silence Mr. Ambrose and Philip sought their opponent.

"Sit down, gentlemen," he said courteously. "What can I do for you?"

"Last night," Mr. Ambrose began, "you had a talk with Mr. Olcott of the Omaha, of which, as you know, Mr. Amerton and myself are directors. Mr. Olcott reported this conversation to us; it was so remarkable in its trend that those of us who were present thought Mr. Olcott must have misunderstood your meaning; may we ask that you repeat its substance?"

Odo Hastings had some difficulty to repress a smile, but he kept himself in hand.

"This is slightly irregular," he answered pleasantly, "as you gentlemen must know; Mr. Olcott is counsel for the Omaha system, and as such is entitled to all courtesy. However, I have no objection to repeating to you what I said to him; I urge you gentlemen as directors of the road to withdraw this bill from the Commissioners; it is a futile effort, as you ought to know if you have closely followed the course of events. Let the matter drop; let your system be content with its present holdings and not try to get an exchange of extension of lands."

"May I ask, Senator, what inspires this rather cool request?"

"You can ask, Mr. Ambrose; but allow me to inform you that that is my business and that of my constituents."

The banker flushed, and tapped the floor with his stick.

"You can hardly expect the Omaha to relinquish a piece of legislation on your mere request, Senator Hastings."

"I told Mr. Olcott," continued Hastings, ignoring the other's remark, "that if the Omaha saw fit to withdraw this 10050, I, as an interested party in this matter, would use my influence, such as it is, to make the way easy for the road's contemplated line to Cheyenne. Oh, I know nothing official has been advertised, but a child would see that such an undertaking must eventually be proposed. I make this suggestion in no sense as a compensation or a bargain; I make it solely in the sense of fair play and in recognition of what the Omaha has already done to help the State. I cannot promise, of course, to give you a free right-of-way; that would be beyond my authority; but I can help you, and I will—if you abandon this present plan."

Hastings raised a hand.

"Hold on, Mr. Amerton; I never make threats. I simply told your counsel I was in possession of certain evidence that would put the Omaha in such bad odor, should I lay it before the Commissioners, that this legislation would be quashed at once by sheer public opinion. But I do not wish to use this evidence; for certain reasons of my own and those associated with me,—you can call them sentimental if you wish,—I will go to any length to avoid throwing mud on a railroad which with all its faults has helped my State and its neighbors. But"—and Hastings brought his forefinger to a level with the banker's chest—*"this 10050 must be killed."*

MR. AMBROSE rose in ruffled dignity.

"I regard such a statement as yours as a direct insult to myself and fellow-directors. I wish you good day."

But Hastings was equally dignified.

"One moment! You assume too much; do you suppose, Mr. Ambrose, if this evidence concerned the present Board of the

Omaha, I would lower myself to compromise with you? You flatter yourself. If I possessed proofs against your board as constituted, nothing under heaven, not even the consideration I have for your daughter, would prevent me from using every legitimate means to crush you. But this matter has nothing to do with the present; it concerns itself with the past."

"Indeed!" Mr. Ambrose's accent was magnificent. "And I cannot see what the past has to do with the present. —Philip, we are detaining the Senator."

Amerton gazed curiously at the banker as if to say, "Can such things exist and consider they have brains?" Then he spoke very quietly.

"Just a minute, Mr. Ambrose! The Senator is trying to be fair, I am sure, and though this entire conversation is highly irregular, it may be for the best in the end. —You, sir,"—he turned to Hastings, —"have made a very serious statement; let us say for the minute you are convinced of its truth; you qualify this accusation by admitting it has nothing to do with the present directorate of the Omaha, and you temper it by saying frankly you do not wish to prove its truth in open court, owing to certain private or sentimental reasons."

Odo Hastings returned the younger man's steady look with one equally as firm.

"Yes."

"And we for our part have absolutely nothing to fear—that you acknowledge; we have nothing to be ashamed of in our efforts for certain legislation, and we have every incentive to gain our ends if the law gives them to us. Very well; we support this 10050 with all the means in our power; you oppose us, and yet, holding this mysterious sword over our heads, you deliberately ask us to accept your statements and moving blindly in the dark abandon all our plans. That the board will never do; we would be fools to do so; but as you have manifested a desire to be friendly, the board will also be friendly and meet you halfway. We do not ask for a full disclosure of this evidence you claim to possess, but we do ask for its nature. If you will give me, as a member of the board, an inkling of what you wish to keep hidden, I will promise you on my part that the board will seriously consider it, and if it is of such a nature, and I am convinced of it, that dead and gone names may be smirched, then the board may withdraw this bill. That is fair, and I can say no more."

"YOU have the courage of youth, Mr. Amerton," said Hastings. "And though my colleague Mr. Hamilton would be shocked at my giving away my hand, perhaps— I shall not lay the evidence before you, Mr. Amerton; that would be exceeding my responsibility; but I do wish to see this matter settled without scandal, and I shall suggest to you— Suppose we put it in the form of a hypothetical question—you understand what that legal term means?"

Amerton nodded.

"Suppose that many years ago—when you, Mr. Ambrose, were in the very prime of young manhood, and I was a child, and you, Mr. Amerton, were a mere baby—a body of able, intelligent and far-seeing men formed themselves into a corporation —let us say a huge trolley-company having rights-of-way through various States. Suppose that in several of these States there existed great stretches of Government land lying idle and uncultivated, and that the Government, recognizing the value of the work the trolley-company was undertaking, and that it was entitled to some recompense for its work and responsibility, gave freely and willingly to this company certain subsidies of land along a contemplated right-of-way. You follow me?"

"Perfectly."

"But supposing that the company was not satisfied, even with these many tracts of land, that it coveted more or better lands for some time in the future; and suppose that through the formal reading of the original grants, an opportunity presented itself by which clever lawyers might obtain new and more valuable lands in exchange for the old. For such things have happened, Mr. Amerton, in due process of law; the omission of a comma or the insertion of a period have changed the context of many papers. You know that. Well, to continue!

"Let us suppose that in this case all that was required was the omission of a comma, or the elision of a couple of words in the old grant,—something like that,—and the company saw the opportunity. The grant would of course be put on record here in Washington, and some clerk would have charge of the transcription.

"And suppose some emissary of the

company found that clerk—a poor, struggling fellow, laden down with debt, burdened with a large family, struggling to keep his head above water and always in fear he might lose his position—for remember, gentlemen, all this might have happened many years ago when the Civil Service was not what it is today. You can imagine the situation, can you not? The poverty-stricken clerk not endowed with much moral backbone, the opportunity and the rich company, unscrupulous and looking to the future! Do I make this possible situation plain?"

"Go on," said Mr. Ambrose hoarsely.

"The rest is easy to imagine. The clerk yields to the temptation; the money changes hands; and the comma is inserted or the words elided, or whatever it was, in the transcription of the record. But remember this was many years ago, and all parties to it are doubtless dead.

"And now suppose that after many years, after this company had become very rich and powerful, the opportunity foreseen so many years before arises. The company still owns its original tracts of land in a certain State, but the settlers have not come there, and the lands are valueless. But an important discovery, say of gold, is made near the right-of-way of the trolley-company and these old parcels of land. The company instantly sees that now is the time to take advantage of the insertion of the comma, or whatever it was, in their grants on record; the clerk has faithfully done what he had been bribed to do, and an exchange of valueless lands for valuable lands is possible. But it must of course be done by law. Oh, the company always does things legally! So a bill is introduced in Congress authorizing an exchange. Curiously enough, it arouses strong opposition; perhaps the company has not been very generous in the past to its patrons; perhaps it has been guilty of sharp financial practices; anyway, the opposition is determined, and a strong fight is promised. But the company stands on its legal rights as its charter provides and the grants on record show, and there exists a possibility that Congress or whatever jurisdiction the matter comes under may be forced to uphold these legal rights.

"So far, so good; but the company overlooks something. Perhaps the officers and directors in this present day know nothing about that poor clerk of a past generation; I hope they do know nothing, I trust with all my heart they know nothing—for although that clerk has been dead these twenty years, he still speaks from his grave by means of a letter to his son."

HASTINGS' voice died away. The room was very still now. The Senator looked at his visitors. Mr. Ambrose sat by the center-table, his elbow resting on it, his chin in the palm of his hand. Philip slouched in his chair, his legs extended, his eyes fixed on the picture-molding along the wall. Neither man moved as the last words were spoken. The Senator rolled a cigarette, a habit of his Western years. He lighted it, threw the match away and turned once more to Amerton.

"So here's your hypothetical question, Mr. Amerton. Supposing all these things true—would it be policy just now for this trolley-company to push this bill of theirs? Wouldn't it be better policy to withdraw it and accept in turn the best wishes and help of the people of this imaginary State in other lines of endeavor?"

Philip straightened himself in his chair, shot a glance at Mr. Ambrose and answered incisively. "It would all depend, I think, upon the character of this dead clerk's son."

"And curiously enough," returned Hastings, "this son was for a number of years in the employ of one of the present-day directors of this company. Curious how things come out, isn't it?"

Mr. Ambrose raised his head.

"The son was in the employ of one of the directors?" he repeated.

"Yes."

Mr. Ambrose squared his shoulders.

"Supposing that all of our facts are as stated," he said deliberately, "I think it would be policy for this company to have the bill withdrawn. What do you think, Philip?"

"Indubitably," replied Philip.

The Senator had risen also, a pleasant smile upon his face.

"I hoped you would see it that way," he said cheerfully, "and I'm sure things will work out nicely. I am very glad you came to see me. By the way, Mr. Ambrose, you saw your daughter in the outer office. I'm happy to tell you that she is doing good work for me and is a decided help—and I shall miss her if she leaves me."

Mr. Ambrose bowed. "Would it be

trespassing on your kindness if I were to talk to her a few minutes?" he asked.

"Far from it. I will ask her to step in here. You will excuse me, I know. I have a delegation of some of our Wyoming friends waiting for me in the outer office now." He looked at his watch. "Yes, they should be here."

He pressed a button, and Martha came in. Her face was flushed, her eyes bright.

"Miss Ambrose," said the Senator, "you and your father deserve a few minutes together; make yourselves at home here. I have to go out for a little while. Are those Wyoming gentlemen in the office?"

"Yes, Senator."

"Good! I'll see them."

He went out, closing the door behind him.

PHILIP followed, but turned as he put one hand on the knob. He raised the other above his head as if in benediction. "Peace be with you!" he said smilingly.

Martha took a step toward him.

"Are you going, Philip—wont you say good-by?"

He took the outstretched hand and held it.

"I don't know what has happened," she said, "but I hope everything is all right—is everything all right, Philip?"

"From one standpoint, yes; from another, no!"

"I am sorry that there are two standpoints. Philip, may I ask you something?"

"Say on."

"Are you—are you going to continue this—this fight over the poor Indians?"

He lowered his head in mock surrender.

"My dear, your father and I have capitulated with all the honors of war—flags flying and drums beating, but we have capitulated. The triumph is yours."

MARTHA turned and went to her father. She placed both hands on his shoulders and looked up at him. He kissed her.

"My daughter!" he said, and once more there was an odd catch in his voice. "I have been very lonely; you must come back, and I—I will try to—to make you happier, Martha."

She kissed him in return.

"That is all I ask for, Father, and I know we can be happy."

They stood in silence for some minutes, and then he released her from his embrace.

"Philip or I will call for you this evening, Martha, and we will dine at my hotel; there we can talk better."

"Yes, Father." She twisted the lapel of his coat in her strong young fingers. "Father, Dick Mohun is in Washington; he is in the office now. Could it—would you mind asking him to dinner?"

He stroked her hair.

"Yes, Martha, I'll ask him."

He kissed her again and passed through the door. In the outer office he found people he knew—Simon Walker in earnest conversation with the Senator, Robinson, another oldish man he remembered meeting at Otter Forks, and Dick.

"I am glad to see you, gentlemen," he said, "and especially my preservers."

He laid a hand on Dick's shoulder.

"I hope, Mr. Mohun, you will give my daughter and myself the pleasure of your company at dinner."

Dick's face spoke for itself. "Of course I will—I shall be delighted."

"Good! Be at the Willard at seven.—Gentlemen, good afternoon!" Henry M. Ambrose left the office.

"The old pirate!" said Robinson admiringly. "He's hard to down, isn't he?"

"He sure is," was Simon's comment. "Now where did Dick go?"

FOR Dick had sprung for the inner office, and once more the door closed. They confronted each other across the table which only a few minutes ago had separated such bitter enemies.

"Martha," he cried, with just a little tremble in his voice. "I have to tell you everything has gone well. Your father has asked me to dinner; the fight is over; and I have made a lot of money in oil—and—"

He came round the table with both hands stretched forth.

"Martha!" he cried again.

She too stepped forward with hands extended, and with that look in her eyes which some lucky men see once in a lifetime. Very bravely and simply she put her hands in his, and very bravely and simply she looked at him.

"The last time, sir, I had gloves on; and now—dear me, Dick—I'm wearing cuffs."

But cuffs or no cuffs, what difference did it make to Dick?

THE END.

# Free Lances in Diplomacy

## Getting the Output

By Clarence Herbert New

TOM MANNING came to New York from one of the up-State towns when he was a boy of fifteen—ran away from a father who took a strap to him once too often at the suggestion of a stony-hearted stepmother. After drifting from one thing to another, always at good wages, the boy became a mill-employee at the age of twenty and had interested himself in ward-politics to such an extent that he was sometimes admitted to conferences of the smaller bosses. Also, during the five years, he had drifted into rather close friendship with a likable man several years older—a contractor and civil engineer by the name of McClintock who was not supposed to be in politics himself but who was admittedly more farsighted in that line of activity than most of the bosses.

It happened one evening, when Tom was twenty-three or -four, that the question of nominating a certain man for Congress in the —th District came up for discussion in a small room back of McGroarty's saloon in East Houston Street. Two aldermen vouched for the nominee's "regularity" in politics, quoting figures to prove that he would carry the district by at least twenty thousand. The big boss in that part of the town was inclined to agree—and figured the majority almost as high, though he admitted there would be some opposition. Two smaller bosses were a bit more skeptical; and one of them, turning to young Manning, who had deferentially confined himself to a listening part, asked:

"Say, Tom, what was it you was spillin' about this here party last week? Wa'n't you sayin' he couldn't win nohow?"

"Yep, I said that. Hold on a minute, Alderman—lemme tell you about it! I aint settin' myself up to know more about politics in that district than you fellers that's been at the game a good deal longer. But there's a friend of mine who's had the right dope on the way things was comin' out more times in the last five years than anyone else I know. How he heard about any chance of Gleason's bein' nominated I can't figger out—because it's been kept pretty close under our hats down here. But he says to me last week, he says: 'Tommy, if any of your crowd gits talkin' Gleason, tell 'em there's nothin' to it! The Republicans'll snow him under!' "

"Hmph! Who *is* this friend o' yourn that's shootin' off his mouth so smart? Hey?"

"Well, Alderman, I kinda guess he wouldn't like me to say. He aint in politics, aint runnin' for no office or job. Just kinda got the habit of sittin' on the paddock fence, once in a while, an' pickin' the winners—to amuse himself. Tell you what I'll do! Mebbe I'll see him tomorrow or next day, an' I'll ask him why Gleason

can't make it, if you like. Then I'll tell you what he says. An' I'll bet ten dollars you'll say he's right before I git through!"

NEXT morning Tom sat waiting at the next table when McClintock came into his favorite chop-house at half-past seven —and was invited to join the contractor in a breakfast at his own table in the corner, where they could see anyone entering the room in time to switch their talk if necessary.

"What's up, Tom? Politics? All right! Get it off your chest while the bacon and eggs are cooking; some one else might drop in. Hold on a second! I saw Connolly and O'Rourke going down Houston Street last evening in Fogarty's car; very likely it dropped them at McGroarty's beanery. In that case there may have been some talk about nominating Gleason. Connolly and O'Rourke know that he'd be a phonograph for them in Congress, an' they figure on trading some of his patronage where it'll do 'em a pile of good. It is Gleason, isn't it?"

"Well, yes. They claim twenty thousand majority, easy!"

"All right! Now, listen here! Gleason's made a pile of money since 1914—profiteering. He and his wife are climbers. They sold their old house in Brooklyn and moved over into the middle of a richer crowd in the —th District, where Connolly's figurin' on his pulling most of the silk-stocking vote, because the pair of them have been on nearly all the war-committees, pullin' every wire they could to make themselves popular socially. The boss thinks there's class to the Gleasons that'll play right into his game, but he's kidding himself without knowing the underlying facts. Gleason was born in Berlin—mother was German. He married a Brady—whose brother is one of the worst I. W. W. and Bolshevist agents we've got.

"The Secret Service has mighty good circumstantial evidence that several of the recent fires and bomb-outrages in our industrial plants were actually planned with Brady in the Gleasons' Brooklyn house—and Gleason was handling several hundred thousands more than he had at that time, presumably German money. Well? That enough? Or shall I give you more?"

"Oh, if Connolly believes your dope, that settles it—and he'll dig until he turns up some evidence to prove it! Where do you get all this inside stuff, Mac?"

"Well, I do contracting for the Government and get to know most of the influential politicians that way—also a good many boys in the newspaper game. They think I aint out for any office myself—too busy with my own affairs to bother with it! So one man gives me an inside yarn here, another one there. I don't let on that I even hear the whole of it—but I've got a corking good memory. Say, Tom—that reminds me! You're working in that same mill yet, aren't you? Getting just the union scale for unskilled labor in that line of business? I've been wondering why you don't take a tumble an' fix yourself to make better money?"

"If the strike comes off—as it will—we're going to get thirty-three per cent more!"

"Thirty-two dollars a week instead of twenty-four, hey? Before the whole country gets too sore, you may even jack it up to forty or fifty a week! But you're going at it the wrong way, the dangerous way, that never got a man anywhere in the long run. Extra money that you get by striking, you can't keep in your pocket—or the bank! You just blow it about as fast as it comes. You get it too easy, spend it too easy—don't work full time. Sooner or later there's bound to be a drop in wages, and you'll find yourself with the wrong kind of habits to meet it comfortably—or to save anything.

"What I meant was, why in thunder don't you make yourself worth more! Suppose you go up to Cooper Union three evenings a week and study mechanical drawing? You've got a natural taste for it. After that I can fix it so's you can get a short course in mechanical engineering without paying a cent until you can afford to return the loan. If you turn out a really good mechanical engineer, a constructing one, a hundred dollars a week is only the beginning. An' that's your line, Tom! You can go pretty near as far as you like, if you've got the sand to do a little honest work for it! Needn't interfere with your politics, either. Come on, now! Be a sport! What do you say?"

"Three evenings a week? Couldn't play much pool with the gang, at that rate."

"Not so much as you do now. And you'd be a damned sight better off if you didn't! More money in your pocket, more self-respect and a lot more influence, even though you may doubt it now."

"How about the dames an' the movies?

Then I'm chasin' about the Ward two or three nights outa the week—"

"Well, you don't need to cut that out, do you? Work some of the skirts into that combination—hitch up business and pleasure together. The dames have a vote now; it's worth your while to cultivate 'em. And when Connolly tumbles to what you're up to, he'll figure you're more valuable in ward work. Connolly's no fool! He'll fall for the night-study idea too. Do you suppose Mike Connolly ever got where he is in politics without working for it? Betcher life he didn't! Well, how about it? Going to let me think you've really got a little sand? Or are you keeping right on with the piking game? The unions can only shove you along so far—and they're running dangerously against public opinion right now. But if you learn to depend on yourself in fighting your way up, you can make ten times the money they'll ever get you!"

Ideas, as a rule, grew slowly in Tom's brain; yet because of that germination they had plenty of tenacity when they matured. McClintock had forcibly pulled to the front a vague dissatisfaction in the young fellow's thoughts, a dormant ambition which needed only a little prodding. There had been a girl—there was even then a girl—who had seemed not altogether satisfied with his prospects.

"Say, Mac, are you dead sure you're right about me—that I got the ability an' all that?"

"As sure as I was of my own ability when I took a course in engineering over at Stevens! If you had less of it, I might suggest one of the correspondence-schools—but you can go a lot deeper than that!"

"All right—I'm game! That's a promise, Mac! Tell me where I go, what I do an' when I begin."

ABOUT the time when Manning was completing his intensive engineering course by practical experience in the factory where he worked, one of his shop-teachers persuaded him to apply for a job as repair foreman in a Pennsylvania plant which manufactured low-priced motorcars and trucks. The works were more or less isolated in a narrow valley where a stream had been damned to provide water-power, and where additional electric-power was carried over the hills from turbine generators in a smaller valley. Near the plant was a village of perhaps fifteen hundred people, the majority of whom were factory employees—and there seemed to be very little penetration or interference from the outside world. As a matter of fact, however, a spur of the railway gave access to Philadelphia in an hour and a half. With the high wages of 1920 the cost of transportation was not yet prohibitive—and numbers of the men spent occasional Saturday nights in the city. Even the women ran down sometimes for shopping. Putting the situation another way, the plant and its employees actually were not isolated at all, and yet almost anything might happen in that secluded valley without leaking out into the metropolitan newspapers as general news.

The week after Manning had taken over his new job—at better pay than the union scale—a very well dressed man of striking appearance walked into one of the German clubs in New York and glanced about the reading-room on the main floor. There were a number of men seated in big comfortable chairs—some with newspapers, others in groups of two or three, smoking and discussing various topics. A prosperous-looking banker looked up and waved his hand as the other man came into the room. Presently the five moved over to chairs in a distant corner between a rear and a side window. From where they sat, nothing said in a moderate tone of voice could have been understood by readers at the table in the center of the big room. As the group frequently came together in the same way just before dinner, presumably for a discussion of the day's business, none of their fellow-members intruded upon them. Three of the men had been engaged in business in the Wall Street district for thirty years or more. A fourth was that same Gleason who had failed to get the Congressional nomination from the —th District some time before. Others who were in the habit of joining the group from time to time had every appearance of the same respectability and identification with American business affairs—but there were two of these casual visitors to whom a shade of additional deference was paid. The man who had just come in was one of them. When the five were smoking comfortably in their corner, a low-voiced question was asked:

"What do you make of this Kapp affair running wild in Berlin, Herr Graf?"

"It was frightfully bungled — and six months too soon! The Herr Professor outlined some such demonstration to me in Charlottenburg,—as a feeler, and to deceive the Entente,—but he had no idea of trying it until Ebert had the Reds more thoroughly in hand. It is possible, of course, that we may be in for a period of extreme radicalism, as was the case after the French Revolution; but I believe our organization too strong, too well systematized, to be defeated more than temporarily. Consider! We have hundreds of million in cash where the Reds can't touch a *pfennig* of them—millions in the American, Scandinavian and South American banks, deposited under names which in no way reveal their actual ownership. In our organization are the manufacturing and commercial brains of Germany. No government, even of the Bolshevists, can get along without us. Divide up the factories, the shipping, the foreign trade as you will, on the soviet principle, and you must still have men who know how to run them successfully. Eventually we must regain and hold control of the country, from sheer economic necessity. You can't beat it by any theory of human devising!"

"Would you discontinue our propaganda in other countries for the present?"

"But why, Gleason—*why?* We have the money. We have millions of men in this and other countries to do the work—German born! The further we proceed with our disintegration in each country, the riper it becomes for German commercial conquest, for actual German domination in the future! Nothing could make the Bolshevists believe that we are not the power behind them, backing them at every turn! But when the world tires of Bolshevism, when the inevitable revulsion from that sort of thing comes, it leaves us in control even of the Bolshevists themselves. They turn to us to save them from the consequences of their own actions."

"You think it possible to overturn the Government, here?"

"Not to such an extent as in Russia—or in any such way. There you have eighty per cent of illiteracy—in America less than ten per cent. But I believe it entirely possible, by working through the laboring and lower classes, to bring about a socialized, paternal, communistic government here, which will cut production down to a third of its former volume, rendering rewards in business-enterprise so trifling that all incentive to any great progress will disappear. *All of which increases the market and demand for German goods!* What makes our task the easier, here, is that American labor has not the will to work for the sake of production and accomplishment. All of the recent demands have included shorter hours. I confidently expect to see a legalized six-hour day in the United States before long. On the other hand, our German working-class has just expressed a willingness to work ten hours a day for a period of years. Placing the working population of Germany and Austria at twenty-five millions, that gives us two hundred and fifty million working-hours per day. Figuring the United States workers, all classes, at not over forty millions, a six-hour day would give them but two hundred and forty million hours—a clear advantage for Germany of ten million hours per working-day. Directed according to German system, in the German way, that is an overwhelming advantage at the very start. And when you take all classes of labor in the United States, they will not average more than six hours of actual work per day at this moment—yearly average."

"Think there is a possibility of establishing soviet management, here and there, among American manufacturing plants, Herr Graf?"

"More than a possibility, Schliedermann. I expect to bring about the seizure of several large plants by their employees, and the running of them on a soviet basis! In that sort of work, Nenowski and Brady are the best tools we have in the States. Brady was an I. W. W. until we showed him and Gleason a bigger game, more likely to work. He still retains his I. W. W. membership and backing, so he can get among the workingmen everywhere. But he also has education enough to make a good impression in a New York drawing-room—which is why the American Government has never been able to lay hands on him. Menowski is a Pole who had Lenine's confidence in Russia and believes that our organization is the most powerful backer the Bolshevists have in this country. He's an extremist, of course—wants to kill every man he fancies may be in our way; but so far, we've held him in by pointing out that a string of provable murders would stir up feeling enough to get all the conservative labor element

against us. He has positive genius for organizing the employees of any plant, because he looks, acts and talks like an American. Came here when he was but five. At present he and three of our other men are in the employ of the Yarroway Motors Company down at Tillawagamuck, Pennsylvania. It's a good place to attempt a soviet experiment, because of its isolation. At first he didn't make any headway at all; the management seem to have been on pretty good terms with their men—but Menowski has already stirred up some dissatisfaction, and the company appears to be running behind on its sales."

"Then it is your opinion, Herr Graf, that we must go right on with our work here in America, regardless of what may be the conditions at home?"

Von Prutnow drew himself up in his chair and shot at the banker a piercing look which effectually stopped all disposition to question or argue. "It iss *orders,* Schliedermann—from Prinz Rodolf and the organization in Charlottenburg! We do not question! We obey! There iss over five hundred millions of the Fatherland money in American banks, placed there to be used for a definite purpose! It iss not for us to ask shall we go on spending it for the same purpose as before! The Herr Professor-Prinz iss in command—he iss most farsighted. When more money iss needed, he will provide it. We obey the orders of the Junta as always. That iss all!"

DURING this conversation, another member of the club had been sitting with a dinner-guest at the end of the long reading-table nearest the group in the corner. From where they sat, the conversation was scarcely more than a murmur, with an occasional word cropping out—and the two apparently paid no attention to it whatever. As they took chairs, however, the guest had made a remark about the deafness which he feared was coming upon him and described his visit to a noted specialist that afternoon, and took from his pocket a compact and inconspicuous audiphone, which he adjusted.

"Made me promise to hitch on this contraption whenever I talk with anybody! Said it would relieve the strain upon the auditory nerves, whatever they may be. Reckon I'll have to practice resting my elbow on a table or chair-arm and leaning my head on my hand. Then nobody'll notice anything, because my hand covers the little receiver like this—see?"

They chattered together until the group in the corner had left the room—then themselves went in to dinner. But the man with the audiphone was probably the only one in the building not of German birth or parentage—and he had managed to overhear bits of a conversation which proved some of his suspicions certainties.

TWO or three months later Manning came over to New York one Saturday morning and dropped in at the offices of the Romeyn Construction Company, where in McClintock's absence he asked to see the latter's private secretary, Miss Farquhar. When he mentioned his name, she consulted a card-index in the private office beyond—obtaining in five minutes Tom's exact status in McClintock's estimation and friendship. It seemed to warrant her complying with his request to locate McClintock, if possible, and make an appointment for that evening. In fifteen minutes more she had her employer on the phone and handed it over to Manning—who explained that matters had come up in the Pennsylvania plant which made him want to get a little conservative advice from the more experienced Dave, who promptly agreed to dine with him at an uptown hotel that evening. As soon as they had finished dinner, however, McClintock suggested their taking a bus up to his Riverside Drive apartment, where they could talk in perfect safety. Manning started in rather impulsively:

"Say, Mac—I dunno where I'm at, over there in Tillawagamuck, an' they don't any of the rest of them, either! But lemme give you the situation in a little more understandable way. Manager seems entirely satisfied with my work—kinda likes me, I reckon, because he told me to go ahead an' figure out an improvement on some of the machinery, agreeing to let me patent it an' charge a royalty. Near as I can see, the men all like him—an' the rest of the officers too. Nothing chesty about any one of 'em; they come right into the shops and talk with us, man to man. They're paying the top scale for the different classes of labor. Union locals seem friendly. No complaints or friction until lately—after four new men were taken on, near as I can dope it out. Not a great amount of friction yet, though there's a good deal of talk about

shorter hours. But the thing that's got me guessing is that we aint making expenses down there, near as I can figure. Yarroway is plumb worried—so is Darnley, the manager. Just by accident I happened to overhear a remark between them—that if they could break even on the money they've put in, they wouldn't mind selling out any day. Now, if they really aint making expenses, there's something wrong somewhere! Because we're turning out as good cars and trucks as can be made for the price; they do the work without growling, and they last! The two crack salesmen came out to the plant last week, an' I asked 'em why they didn't shove up the price a little. They said we were getting top money for that grade of car right now—sales would drop off fifty per cent if we boosted it without making some radical improvement that a salesman could show without argument. Of course, if we have any trouble with the men under such conditions, why, it's just about the last straw!"

"Hmph! That's a little different line of talk than you used to spill me when you were in that South Brooklyn plant!"

WELL, I believed them, like most all workmen do, that what the bosses said about costs an' overhead was all bunk, just to screw us down on our pay. But I've learned to build machines since then—thanks to you, old sport—an' I can see there's a helluva lot of argument on the bosses' side—if they're square, like our bunch. A good many bosses are not, but I'll listen to both sides now where I wouldn't before, an' if they're lying, I'm wise on enough of the real dope to catch 'em at it. Do you know, Mac, I've heard of specialists who go round doctorin' up sick businesses an' gettin' better understanding between the men an' the bosses. Well—if there really is such an animile, there's a job for him out there at Tillawagamuck. If Yarroway an' Darnley are right about the plant losin' money—well, what's the answer?"

"There might be several. They may find the trouble and start in to plug it. The obvious thing is to cut down expenses—anywhere, everywhere. And that leads to less production or lower wages and not quite as good material—both of which mean trouble right from the jump. Or Yarroway can shut down the plant indefinitely, either for sale or overhaul, throwing eight or nine hundred people out of work. Which helps to spread Bolshevism in this country just about as much as any single influence could spread it. Unfortunately conditions everywhere are such that many a company is in exactly the same fix. A lot of the plants are making big money, paying big wages—bosses and employees flinging it away on any sort of extravagance just as though such conditions were going to last indefinitely. And the men in the plants which are losing money don't believe the facts for one holy minute! They see the other fellows making barrels in the same line of business—can't see any reason at all for their company not making it; think their bosses are trying to grind them down just to hog an extra profit for themselves. Here and there some human dynamo jumps in and reorganizes the sick company until it pays again—the sort of man you call a business specialist, only he really isn't that, because his taking hold is usually a case of the right man accidentally happening along at just the right minute. . . . Tommy, your proposition out there has kinda got me thinking! Did you ever hear of the Ironville Experiment, or the man responsible for it?"

"Why—y-e-s. Some English lord or duke, wasn't he? And that experiment of his didn't do the workingmen a lot of good, either—as I remember it. Plant busted up and shut down, didn't it?"

"Precisely! After he had let the employees run it themselves for six months, plumb into the hole, and then offered to take it back and run it on the old basis. They'd have taken his offer if it hadn't been for a fool labor delegate who had bluffed them into making him their leader. He refused—absolutely. The company simply built another plant fifty miles away and left them with the mortgaged buildings and machinery in Ironville—a plant and a business which they themselves had ruined and were too short-sighted to have put on its feet again! The whole industrial world thought the lesson plain enough for any man to see—but some don't. Now, what I was thinking is this: There aint a squarer or juster man in the United States than Trevor; I've known him for twenty years. He has a lot of money invested in American industries, and was born in Boston—so he understands the business conditions over here a good deal better than many of our own countrymen.

If Yarroway and Darnley cared to sell him an interest in the business, with the privilege of taking over the active management —and you could induce Trevor to accept such a proposition, I'm betting that he'd straighten out your tangle down there and put you on a paying basis. But if he did consider taking you up, you'd have to remember one thing pretty carefully—and that is to avoid all mention of his title. If you addressed him just as Mr. Trevor, or any other name he assumed in that locality, he'd probably run very little risk with you. But every German agent and Bolshevist in the country is out to kill him if they get a chance—because he has blocked their work in so many cases.

"H-m-m! Do you s'pose our gang down there would stand for his taking over the management? They'll figure right from the start that it's a move on Yarroway's part to cut 'em down, somehow! They'll never in the world believe he'd be fair to both sides!"

"If they listen to him for an hour or two, they will—all except whatever Bolshevist and I. W. W.'s you may have on your payroll; they'll be against him right from the jump, because they'll know he wont stand for 'em."

"Aint it pretty hard to get a talk with a big man like that?"

"Unless he has some definite engagement, I think he might be induced to meet you in this apartment tomorrow evening —sometime between dinner and eleven. What do you say? Think you'd like to go over your proposition with him?"

"Wouldn't I have to see Yarroway and Darnley first—see if they even cared to consider it?"

"No. His Lordship is too big a man! If you do succeed in getting him interested, I don't think there'll be much trouble about Yarroway; he's heard of Lord Trevor, and he'll probably feel so darned good over such a proposition that he'd want to fall on your neck if he knew where the idea started. Your play, however, is to keep entirely in the background. From what you tell me, I shouldn't wonder if Yarroway is discounting notes in Philadelphia for his payrolls, right now."

THE more Manning thought over McClintock's suggestion, the more it seemed worth considering. Of course, he was in New York without his employers' knowledge and meddling in company affairs that were presumably none of his business. But if that meddling—without the slightest authorization—proved successful in getting the concern into a healthier condition all round, his instrumentality needn't be known to anybody except Trevor. So McClintock called a certain number on the phone, repeated three words which didn't appear to make sense at all, and was told to ring up a certain other house. When this was done, he mentioned a number with six figures in it—and presently heard a voice which he thought he recognized. He wouldn't get down to the object of his call, however, until the owner of the voice said: "All right, Dave! Colonel Bill was your party, wasn't he?"

Those were the only names mentioned. Anyone listening in on the wire would have made nothing definite of the conversation save an appointment—somewhere, with somebody—for Wednesday evening. But at nine o'clock the *next* evening, a man who gave his name as Roberts came to the Riverside apartment, asked to see Mr. McClintock, and was promptly taken up in the elevator to that gentleman's suite.

After a two-hour talk, during which young Manning went more specifically into details concerning the situation at Tillawagamuck, His Lordship agreed to assume management of the plant for a few months if agreeable to the present owners. But his principal reason for this decision went deeper than the interest Manning had aroused in the proposition. Lord Trevor and the influential politician Dave McClintock—who owed his start to the Earl's advice twenty years before—had secretly joined forces in an active campaign to stamp out the menace of Bolshevism in the United States and insure a presidential election, that year, which would put the country on a sounder basis during the reconstruction period succeeding the war. And His Lordship understood, from the moment he received the telephone message, that Dave McClintock had had some weighty political reason for wishing him interested in the Yarroway Motors Company just at that time. After young Manning had left for his Philadelphia train, Dave explained.

"One of the Chief's best Secret Service men got into a German club here as a guest, a few months ago, and overheard enough to identify positively the four principal

agents of the Charlottenburg Junta in this country. He got a good deal of inside information concerning the underlying conditions in Germany and what they are persistently carrying out here—also the fact that one of their most dangerous tools is at present on the Yarroway payroll with three confederates—their intention being to seize the plant and establish some kind of a soviet in that little secluded valley at the first opportune moment. All that figures up as about the most valuable data we've received in several months. The situation down at Tillawagamuck appealed to me as a good chance to demonstrate the possibility of better working-conditions between employees and their bosses. If it works out as I think you can make it, we can exert powerful influence by publishing every detail of the case all over the country—and incidentally put those four Bolshevists where they wont do any more harm. Of course, there might be an element of personal risk for you—but there's hardly a possibility of your being recognized, and it probably wont amount to more danger than any officer of that company runs."

IN a week or two Silas Yarroway was asked by the president of his Philadelphia bank if he cared to sell a third interest in his business to an English peer who had several millions invested in American industries and had been very successful in directing the policy of their management. The manufacturer said he'd like a day or two for consideration—but the offer, if it really came to that, was too much of a life-saving proposition to refuse, as he knew when it was made. He talked it over with Darnley as a matter of form, knowing that his vice-president and manager would also consider it very much to their advantage. In less than a week negotiations were completed—upon an understanding that His Lordship, though unable to spend much time at the plant, would dictate the policy of its management and depend upon Darnley to carry it out.

The acquiring of this interest was so well covered up that the only newspaper references to it were brief paragraphs stating that the Yarroway Motors Company had secured additional capital by the transfer of a minority interest to a certain John B. Sayles of New York, whose ideas in management would be tried out in the plant. These paragraphs were noticed by several of the employees and commented upon with more or less distrust—anything savoring of trying out new ideas being considered inimical to labor interests in all probability. In the case of Menowski and his fellow-Bolshevists—who were on the payroll under less suspicious names—they scented fresh opposition to their work and redoubled their efforts to arouse class-feeling against the new partner, Sayles, before he appeared in the Tillawagamuck valley.

When Earl Trevor did put in an appearance, however,—as the managing director, Sayles,—there was something in his manner and air of knowing exactly what he was about that won a grudging liking from most of the employees at once. He came into the shops in a well-cut suit of tweeds which appeared to be worn for comfort rather than style—and there was no indication that he was afraid of getting them soiled. He also wore gloves—an old pair, with evidence of use. And when he pulled one off to sketch bits of machine-parts on scraps of wrapping-paper, in illustration of what he was saying, they noticed that his hands showed more than one callous spot—where callouses naturally ought to be.

In a preliminary inspection of the shops with Darnley he was introduced to and shook hands with thirty or more of the employees,—who wondered a little at the strength of his grip,—and suggested that a room at one end of the largest building, used for scrap storage, be cleared out, cleaned and fitted up as a conference- and reading-room for the employees. In two days, the place was cleaned and painted, equipped with various periodicals, and with maps which covered not only the selling territory but the rest of the world as well. An hour after the last whistle blew, the door into the shop was to be locked—but an outside door from the yard was to be left open until eleven o'clock for anyone who cared to come in for a smoke or to read the periodicals. During the day the outer door was locked and the inner one open—it being no part of Trevor's scheme to encourage a loafing-place on the premises in working-hours.

After he had been quietly going through the shops by himself for ten days, asking questions of various employees and foremen, getting their ideas as to various stages of the work necessary to produce

the completed cars and trucks and proving by his questions that he understood gasoline motors of all types better than any man in the plant, he issued a request for two men from each department to meet him that afternoon in the new reading-room, with Yarroway and Darnley. To the foremen of their departments, he gave confidential directions that neither Thompson (Menowski) nor his confederates (who had been identified by a Secret Service man from Washington) were to be among the representatives sent in.

"I have excellent reasons for not wanting those four men present at the conference. But I want a delegate from each of the four locals with which our men are affiliated. The men will be identified by Mr. Darnley as they come in the door—nobody but those invited will be permitted inside. It's just a man-to-man talk between the management of this company, its employees and the unions of which they are members. We don't want outsiders who have no business there—and we'll put 'em out if they come!"

TREVOR, as the pseudo Mr. Sayles, anticipated trouble as soon as the four Bolshevist-German agents found that they were barred from the conference—because he knew they would manage to be selected as representatives from their departments. But it had been stipulated that all nominees should be approved by their respective foremen, and as the Bolshevists were the only ones rejected, no objections were raised by anyone but themselves. They succeeded in getting off a good deal of trouble-breeding talk, however, and would have found some means of listening at doors or windows if that move had not been anticipated and guarded against. So they went straight to the union locals and spent the afternoon brewing trouble.

When the men gathered in the comfortable reading-room, they found President Yarroway and Manager Darnley making themselves entirely at home in one corner, with their chairs tipped back against the wall. On the long table were pipes of various sorts, the several different brands of tobacco used by the men, good cigars, cigarettes and matches. A blue haze was beginning to stratify up toward the ceiling—and Mr. Sayles, with a blackened briar in his mouth, was strolling about, hands in pockets, chatting with the men he knew best as they came in. When the doorkeeper had checked up his list and closed the door, Sayles pounded on the table for attention—standing at one end of it, where most of those in the room were in front of him.

"Men, we've called you in here for a conference as to what is necessary to put this business on a paying basis. Before I go any further, I'll say that although the business is losing money just now, as the books will show if you care to look them over, we have no intention of making any cuts in wages. And we mean to keep right on running the plant as long as it is possible to do so. Nothing for you to worry about on either one of those questions.

"In order to get at what is really the matter with this business, I have managed to obtain exact data concerning the Felderman Automobile Company over in Tambyville, Ohio—because their plant happens to be the same size as this and all of their working conditions so nearly like ours that we couldn't get a closer comparison if we tried. Three of you men have worked in that plant, if I'm not mistaken—and can correct me if I make any mistakes about it. They have a total floor-area of eighty-nine thousand square feet, in three buildings; we have ninety-one thousand, in four buildings. They employ eight hundred and ninety-six people; we have nine hundred and fifteen. They run part water-power—part turbine-generated current. So do we. They pay exactly the same market price for steel, fittings and supplies as we do, and their freight-rates wont vary more than two cents, one way or the other. Sometimes they have the luck to buy job-lots at bargain prices; so do we. On the last six months' business their books show a net profit of sixteen and a quarter per cent. Ours show an average loss of four per cent for the same period.

"You'll notice that I've chalked up both sets of figures on that sheet of wrapping-paper tacked to the wall. I wish you'd study 'em for a minute or so and see if any of you can put your fingers on a reason why we lose and they gain—under apparently identical conditions. Smoke up, men—and tell me what you make of it! You know their labor is costing them exactly the same scale as ours. You can't question the figures, because no company keeps books for any reason except to know exactly how they stand from month to month—and ours are open to you any

time you care to look, or for any reputable accountant you want to have go over them."

AFTER a moment or two of silence there was an undercurrent of discussion. One or two men thought the bosses might be paying themselves too big salaries—but Yarroway and Darnley stated what they had been drawing, which was a thousand a year less than the officers of the other company. They also pointed out that they were entitled to an interest-dividend on their stock in the company—not a penny of which had they received for over eighteen months. Putting it more clearly, the money they had saved during the past fifteen years and invested in the company was not paying them a cent at present, and it was very doubtful if they could get the original amount back if they sold out their interests. There were several other theories tentatively suggested by the men—such as not high enough selling-price for the cars and trucks, using a little too expensive material and the like. To all of this Sayles had a conclusive answer that was perfectly obvious to them when he explained it. After ten or fifteen minutes, he said:

"As far as we've been able to figure out, there is just one definite reason why they're making money and we are not. None of you seem to have hit upon it. Under precisely the same conditions that we have here, the Felderman people are turning out eighty-one cars and trucks every working day — four hundred and eighty-six each week in the year, with exactly the same labor and cost of operation. When I looked their plant over, there didn't seem to be any more overtime than we have here, but there was no getting away from the fact that there was better team-work all through the shops."

"Then you figure, Mr. Sayles, that this plant has got to turn out at least eighty completed trucks an' cars a day to make enough to keep it goin'? Say—seventy-six or -seven, to break even?"

"That's the situation, exactly—with present cost of labor and material. When all of the expense-items go up a notch or two, and the other companies making our grade of car all boost the selling-price, we can jack ours up too—but not one minute before!"

"Well, but—s'pose we can't turn out eighty cars a day? What happens then?"

"S'pose you'd saved a couple of thousand and put it into a mortgage on some house—and the tenant hadn't paid you any interest for eighteen months? What would you do?"

"Guess I'd foreclose—and take the house!"

"If you had money besides the two thousand, it might pay you to do that, in the long run. But if you were depending on that interest to help out your living-expenses,—the two thousand being all your savings, — foreclosing wouldn't get you any cash. You'd have a house on your hands which might stand empty for some time—taxes and repairs eating into you. Say that two thousand was your whole nest-egg and you needed to have it working for you—what would you do?"

"Huh! Sell the damn mortgage—quick as I could! Put the money into somethin' that was payin' regular!"

"Well, that's the position Yarroway and Darnley and I are in. Practically all the money they've got is tied up in this business—all they've saved in fifteen or twenty years. And it not only isn't paying them a cent, but it's doubtful if they could get it all back again."

"I see what you're drivin' at, Mr. Sayles! The plant has plumb got to put out those eighty cars or shut down, 'fore long?"

"Just exactly that! If we go on losing for another two or three months, we wont be able to get the money for your pay-rolls. We're borrowing some of it even now. It's up to you men to say whether the plant keeps on running or not. If it runs, we've got to get the output—and you have an even stronger interest in getting it than we have. If we close down and sell out, we'll probably get something back out of the wreck—but you'll be out of your jobs and must move to some other place when you get the next ones."

"How was you figurin' we're goin' to get that output, Mr. Sayles?"

"We think that's entirely up to you men —in every department. When you once thoroughly understand that it's as much for your interest as ours, you'll get the output. It's simply a matter of better team-work all round, men!"

"But say—even if we do turn out eighty cars a day, workin' like blazes to do it, we aint gettin' any more pay!"

"No—but you're sure of keeping the plant running and keeping your jobs—

which you are pretty sure to lose if you don't! Hold on a minute, now! I've got something else to say on that point. We'll take eighty cars a day as the normal output to produce an operating profit. For every gain you make on that, we'll pay you a bonus of the same percentage on your wages—that is, if you increase the output ten per cent, your pay-envelopes will have ten per cent more cash in them each week, for each department in the plant that shows the gain. In that way we'll soon find out which departments are running behind, and why. They wont get the bonus—but if it seems to be the fault of inadequate equipment, we'll put that in at once so as to give the men an equal show with the others. If this plan works out successfully, we may be able to increase the bonus—but it must be understood that the interest on the company's stock and the salaries of the management must be paid before we can increase the bonus. Those are obligations which come right after your payrolls.

"Were you figurin' on makin' any changes or new regulations., Mr. Sayles?"

"Yes—but every one of them will be as much for your advantage as ours. In the first place, we can't get effective team-work here if there are men among you who don't understand the United States language. It means loss of time explaining orders to them through others of you who can talk their lingo, and friction because of inevitable misunderstandings. So there are going to be no men on the payroll who don't understand English without argument. Next, this is going to be an American plant—for American workingmen. No others will be kept here. If a man has taken out his first papers before he got his job with us, we'll accept that as evidence that he is getting American ideas and should make a good citizen. But the man who comes to this country to better himself, because he can live ten times as well here as he could at home, and then doesn't care enough about American ideas to become a citizen—we simply can't afford to have him in this plant! His point of view is totally opposed to ours, and he's a trouble-maker right from the start. When he changes his mind and has been a citizen a few years, we'll consider taking him on—not before. This is the particular reason why we asked you delegates from the locals to come here this afternoon. If you can see anything objectionable or unreasonable in these restrictions, I wish you'd give us your reasons—now."

The four union representatives conferred among themselves a moment or two. "We see your point, Mr. Sayles," one of them announced then, "and it sounds kinda reasonable, too. But if some foreigner happens to be a member of our union, in good standing, he'd probably have a right to call a strike if you fired him without any other reason. We aint never had a question like this come up before."

"It amounts to just this: no man who isn't a Bolshevist or an I. W. W. will kick very much against that regulation. In fact, it is made expressly to keep them out of this plant, as far as possible. We want our men to be sure of steady employment here at good pay as long as they feel like staying with us. We want them to feel that they are working for themselves just as much as for the company—working under harmonious conditions that will enable them to produce a profitable output. If your locals can't agree with us on this point, it simply means shutting down the plant, selling out for what we can get, throwing nine hundred men out of employment—just for the sake of letting the Bolshevists get a strangle-hold on your unions. It seems to me that if you will talk this over among yourselves for a few weeks, look at the question from both sides, you wont let a lot of murderous foreigners get control of your unions in any such way as that. Because if you do, it means the gradual closing-down of every business in the United States, the throwing of every workingman in the country out of employment!"

The company men had been discussing the question among themselves, the general opinion being that the restrictions were corking good ones, for the men's interest. "Does that cover all the changes you had in mind, Mr. Sayles?" one asked presently.

"Very nearly. I've one more suggestion which I think will be to your advantage. At the start, this week, I'm going to do the weeding out of the foreigners and illiterates, myself. There probably aren't more than a dozen or so of them altogether, but wherever I find them, they've got to go—got to get clear out of this valley. After that has been cleaned up, we're going to put the policing of the whole plant

in the hands of you men. You understand, now, from all these facts I've been giving you, that any man who loafs on the job, watches the clock, does his work in a careless, slipshod way, is cutting into your individual pay-envelopes! One or two men in each department may keep a hundred or more from getting their bonus for increased output. You see that, don't you?"

"Betcher life we do! If a man drops a hammer or a rivet, careless-like, he may smash a machine that'll take a week to repair!"

"That's the idea, exactly! Of course some accidents are bound to happen. Some men will be careless at times because they're tired out, or have been having trouble at home, or are not in good physical condition. In cases like that they've got to be considered, jollied along until they feel better and get on the job again. No decent man is going to lay down intentionally when he knows he's cutting the extra pay of every other man in the shop. But the shiftless ones will do that—and not give a damn! Those are the ones we expect you to smoke out and fire—yourselves. We'll leave that entirely up to you. And we'll consider your recommendations for new men as fast as we need them. Guess that's about all. Either Darnley or I will drop in here every few evenings to talk over anything which may occur to you. Or you can send for us during the noon-hour if anything special comes up—eat your lunch in here while we talk. Play fair with us, and we'll play fair with you!"

SO far Tom Manning and Lord Trevor were the only ones in Tillawagamuck who knew Thompson (Menowski) and his confederates for what they were. They looked for more or less trouble as soon as the Bolshevists talked with the men and got at the substance of the conference. For that reason Tom hunted them up as soon as the various delegates went back to work and stuck around in the group listening to their tirades. One of them was fairly rabid:

"Ahrr—ye might have known 'twas somethin' crooked the bosses was tryin' to put over—when they wouldn't l'ave me an' me pals go to tha meetin'! Why, ye bloody fools, can't ye see how they pulled the wool over ye? Makin' ye work a damn' sight harder for 'em an' gettin' nawthin' out of it f'r yerselves!"

"We keep the plant goin', don't we? Keep your jobs without any cut in the scale—when the Comp'ny's losin' money!"

"Ahrr—sure! That's what *they* say—losin' money! An' ye fall f'r it like a lot o' yaps! Say, lookee here, you! If we take over the whole plant an' run it with our own soviet, we don't have to pay none o' that int'rest on their stock, do we? Nor any o' their fancy salaries? Keep all that f'r ourselves an' divide it up, don't we?"

"That's kinda like livin' in a man's house an' sayin' ye'll pay no rent, aint it? Yarroway was a workin'man like us, fifteen years ago—an' every cent he saved he's put into this plant! Seems like he ought to have the int'rest on his money!"

"Ahrr—he's a damn' capitalist *now*, aint he? Grindin' ye down—makin' slaves of ye, workin' harder without no more pay! Yah! Ye make me sick!"

NOW, young Manning had by no means forgotten his political experience in New York. With the knowledge thus gained, he sensed at once the strength of Menowski's influence and was careful not to oppose anything he said—it being his policy to stall along as a sympathizer with the man's ideas and gain his confidence, which he had done to an even greater extent than he supposed. The Bolshevists actually thought him one of themselves, and a pretty clever worker besides. Upon the evening after the conference, he managed to get a few minutes' talk with Lord Trevor with the excuse of wanting instructions about proposed new machinery.

"Unless we can find some way of shutting those men up, sir, they're going to gum your plan so it can't work! How about the Secret Service? Couldn't they quietly arrest these guys an' cart 'em off to Leavenworth or Atlanta?"

"That's what I suggested when the operative came down here to point them out—but he says there's absolutely nothing to hold them on and secure a conviction. Arrest them—yes—on a charge of talking treason against the Government. But convict them, without any definite criminal act—no! They'd be out on bail and back here within a week! If they seized the plant, of course we'd have cause for criminal action, but if we wait that long, somebody's going to be killed, and it will strengthen the Bolshevist campaign all over the country—raise it partly to the dignity of civil war! No, Tom. We've got to

handle this ourselves, and do it in a much more effective way than that. I like the men in this plant! Most of them are free Americans who do their own thinking. Now, if Menowski and his bullies go just a shade too far, talk a little too plainly of what they're trying to do here, it would kill them deader than Judas with the workingmen in this country, wouldn't it?"

"H-m-m—I guess it would. Yes, not much doubt of it! But they're altogether too foxy a bunch to pull anything like that!"

"Unless we sort of stirred them up a bit. Eh? I say, Tom! Suppose you were to find a bottle of first-class hooch, somewhere, and hide it in your room—then get those four up there for a conference just before they aim to address some big meeting of the men? I hear they're figuring on one tomorrow night, in the hall over the fire-engine house. S'pose they'd drink any of the stuff?"

"Would a shop-girl powder her nose?"

"Very good! I'd no doubts upon that point myself. Well, I'll give you two bottles of the best stuff you ever tasted—and this little box of pills, which dissolve in less than five seconds. Open both bottles at the same time and put them on the table in your room, with the glasses—but mark one of the bottles so that you drink nothing out of it yourself, and drop eight or ten of these pills in it before they pour any drinks. If they go from your room to that meeting, I reckon we needn't worry much about them."

Manning hesitated — eyeing the pills rather doubtfully.

"This aint any poisoning stunt, is it, sir? I'll dope 'em in one holy minute, or I'll kill any one of 'em in self-defense, but—"

"Get a little chunk of meat, Tom, and punch a couple of the pills down into it. Then give it to the first dog you meet up with and see what happens. That'll satisfy you that they're harmless. This drug is an East Indian by-product of opium. In small doses like this, it loosens the tongue until a person blabs just about everything he knows—turns himself inside out, mentally, then sleeps like a log twenty-four hours or more. If he has heart-disease, it might make that kill him, but it's ordinarily harmless."

Manning called himself a fool to distrust for one moment a man in Trevor's social position; but just to know exactly what he was doing, he did try the stuff on a dog—which in a few minutes grew frantically playful and nearly barked his head off. There was no indication whatever of sickness or pain.

Getting the four Bolshevist agents up to his room in the boarding-house for a conference before the meeting was easier than he anticipated — after the cautious hint about whisky. And when pulling out the corks, it was a simple matter to slip ten of the pills into a bottle with the label slightly torn at one corner. After an hour's talk they were noticeably garrulous—reckless in what they were saying. Later when Menowski stepped forward on the platform in the big hall to address the meeting, some instinct of caution made him start in with more or less moderation, but a few little bursts of applause swept all of it away. He thought he had the men with him to the limit at last, and he stated with unmistakable clearness just what they meant to do to the United States Government—specifically what they meant to do with the Yarroway Motors Company plant, and the force of five hundred armed men they could bring into the valley at two hours' notice. The other men followed Menowski with even plainer talk.

Unobserved by them, three stenographers in the hall were taking down a verbatim report of every word spoken, and when the storm of angry protest swept the speakers off the platform, out of the building and finally mobbed them out of Tillawagamuck altogether, several of the workingmen quite willingly gave interviews to the reporters in which they vehemently stated that American labor didn't stand for any such Bolshevist program one minute! They further stated, most emphatically, that Tillawagamuck was going to show the world something in the way of motorcar production before many weeks. What is more, they did just that thing. And today Tillawagamuck is one of the most prosperous and contented communities in these United States.

**These tales of "Free Lances in Diplomacy" have a singularly close application to present-day unrest in business and politics. Another timely story by Mr. New will appear in The July Blue Book.**

# Exploits of an Honest Grafter

## The Best Act Of All

By William O. Grenolds

FROM the rather dingy window of Honest John Barker's little office, the whole activity of the Mighty Maxwell's winter-quarter activities lay in view: the red glow of the forges where sweating workmen heated flanges and angle-irons for the strengthening of the great wagons; the busy painters touching up the filigree and carved woodwork of the tableau-wagons for the parades of a summer far away; the stake-shavers where the "staubs" that would hold the tent in place when the bluebird sang again, were being pointed and fitted with their iron head-bands; the carpenters, the mechanics, the artisans—all moved before him in a constant succession of effort, fighting against time, against the coming of spring, when all their work must be done.

Honest John Barker, standing there by his dingy window, could see everything, even to the elephant-ring out in the winter-quarters yard, now deep in snow, where Shorty would begin to work and train the "bulls" with the first touch of spring. That is, Honest John could have seen it if he had been looking—but he wasn't. His interest lay in something else besides the smell of turpentine and the rasp of the carpenter's saw. Honest John Barker, fixer, stockholder and envoy confidential of the Mighty Maxwell Three Ring Circus, was plainly at odds with the world. His usually immaculate appearance bore something of an air of neglect: a long pencil-smudge blazed undisturbed upon his nose, and a bit of lint had remained unnoticed on his coat sleeve for fifteen minutes, which represented the time that had elapsed since Honest John had walked from the costume-room into his tiny office, there to read the special-delivery letter which his temporary secretary, Kid Lewis, had handed him.

Honest John still held the letter as he stared, unseeing, out the little window, while his secretary—in the summertime the "banner-squarer" of Advance Car No. 2—waited with a variable degree of patience for a cessation of the grumbling remarks of the circus-fixer. At last his waiting ceased. Honest John, twirling the lion's claw which hung from his watch-chain, turned and began to pace the small space of the office, much after the fashion of the animals in the menagerie-house.

"Take a letter," he ordered. "Harris and Brown, Booking Agents, 42d Street and Broadway, New York. Sirs: Your special delivery received. All I can say is that the way you have handled my business has been rotten, plain, downright rotten, and I—" Then he stopped. "Nope," came after a long pause and much pacing; "tear that up."

"Yes sir." Kid Lewis obediently scratched out the marks on his note-pad and looked up with childish innocence. "Anything else?"

"No. Let 'em go. They don't even deserve an answer from me. I'm through. I'm never going to give those birds another bit of business as long as I live. I—"

"Hasn't anything gone wrong, has there?" Innocence gleamed brighter than ever in the Kid's eyes. Honest John whirled.

"Wrong? I should say there has. We've lost another act!"

"Honest?"

"Do I look like I was kidding?"

"No sir; but that makes so many that it just seems like somebody aint playing fair, somehow. You've done all your booking through Harris and Brown, too."

Honest John slumped into a chair and winced nervously while the trip-hammer in the machine-shop turned a pink-hot hunk of steel into a wagonbeam. Then he wearily extended a hand. "Let me see the Harris and Brown file."

For a few moments, the fixer thumbed the letters which the Kid had handed him, reading them slowly and grumbling betimes. At last he turned and scribbled on a sheet of paper.

"TWENTY acts! And I've been gypped out of every one of 'em! I wouldn't care, Kid, if it'd been done in free and open competition; but it wasn't. I meet up with all these acts in the summertime, pussyfoot around the various shows without letting anybody know what I'm doing, find out what every act gets and what'd make 'em happy on a contract for next year, then tell them to see Harris and Brown the minute they hit New York. And then what happens? This is the twentieth letter I've gotten from those birds telling me they're sorry to inform me that after apparently making all the arrangements with the act and being just on the verge of signing up with them, somebody else steps in and takes them away for more money. You can't beat that, any way you look at it!"

"You can't even tie it," agreed the Kid, fingering the keys of his typewriter. Honest John went on.

"And the thing that really gets my goat is that Jake Hardin's grabbed off every one of those acts for the Hippodrome Shows. Listen, Kid!" He whirled and pointed his finger. "Know what that means, don't you? Hardin's figuring on playing us opposition next summer—you can see that sticking out all over. He knew that he had to have the best acts or he couldn't get away with it. So, from what I can see, he's framed it with this Harris and Brown bunch to stall these actors along and give them my price—then take them off to one side and put the bug in their ear that they ought to see Hardin before they sign up. Of course they hike over to Hardin. Show an actor more money and he's wilder'n a dog after a bone. Either that, or Hardin had a line on them and sent them around to the Harris and Brown offices to see what I was offering, just to make his higher bid all the stronger with 'em. And I've played the boob! I've let him go along and hire all the acts that I was planning on for next season, and now I'm up a tree!"

The Kid scratched his head.

"They've copped off all the good ones too."

"Every favorite that's been playing the feature acts with the shows around this country for the last ten years! I'd picked out the best there was and I thought I'd done a good job. I guess I did—for Jake Hardin."

Again Honest John grunted as he slammed the file on his desk. Then he rose and once more looked out the window.

"But there's one consolation: I didn't put everything in Harris and Brown's hands. I've—" He turned. "Kid," he asked, "how'd you like to take a little trip?"

"Where?"

"To Chicago. I can't do anything with agents handling my business, and one thing's a cinch—the act I'm going after isn't going to fall into anybody else's hands without me making an awful fuss about it."

"Is it a good one?" The interest in Kid Lewis' voice was fervid, yet frescoed with innocence. Honest John grinned.

"THEY may sting me, but they can't put me out," he chuckled. "I didn't get all those letters without getting wise that something was going wrong. But I couldn't stop it—the acts had their instructions to see the agents without seeing me. But there was one that I didn't make that agreement with and"—Honest John winked—"it just happens to be the best act of all. Want to go along?"

"Tonight?"

"You said it."

"I'm after my grip right now!" The Kid rose, seized his hat and coat and departed for his room. But on the way, he stopped for a moment at a telegraph substation; and the message he wrote was addressed to one Jake Hardin, owner of

the Great Hippodrome Shows. Then he hurried to his packing, to return an hour later to the winter quarters of the Mighty Maxwell.

"I'm ready," he panted.

Thirty-six hours later they were in Chicago, and in attendance in the anteroom of the largest suite of Chicago's biggest and proudest hotel, while a cold-faced Italian valet eyed them calmly and inquired whether they were there by appointment. Honest John twirled his lion's claw.

"No, we're not," he confessed at last. "But I don't think that'll make any difference. The Signor and I are conducting a little business together and I told him that I might drop in on him any day."

The valet shrugged his shoulders.

"The Signor does not see everyone."

"I don't want him to see everyone. I'm Honest John Barker of the Mighty Maxwell Circus and I've come here to see him about a contract we've been hashing over. Tell him—"

"Does the Signor know you?"

"Does he know me?" Honest John gritted his teeth. "Haven't I been telling you for the last five minutes that I came here to talk to him about a contract? Say, listen,"—he edged close—"you haven't been listening to any strange voices, have you?"

Again came that shrug of the shoulders, and the studied English. "I am only a valet, not a spiritualist."

Honest John's hands extended, then dropped at his sides.

"LISTEN, son," he said quietly. "I'm not going to waste much time with you. Either I see the Signor right now, or I'll go out and send him a telegram, telling him why I couldn't come in. And believe me—if he ever gets that, look out!"

The valet blinked. He bowed.

"You will excuse me," he begged as he started toward the door, "but I have to be so careful. The Signor is so very particular."

"I understand that all right; but don't worry. Go in and give him my name."

The valet disappeared. Kid Lewis got the stare out of his eyes just in time. Honest John had turned to him.

"Rather looks like I'll have to kowtow and butt my head against the floor when I go to see this bird," he whispered. "Can you beat this temperament stuff? The minute a circus-kinker believes he's got the world by the tail he begins putting on a lot of stall stuff about temperament and all that junk. But"—and he twirled his lion's claw—"this bird's worth it."

"A real wop, is he?"

"Wop my eye! His real name's Ed Saunders and he comes from Peoria. Fooled around with a few of the shows over here and never seemed to amount to much. Then he got a bright idea and went to Italy. After that—" he gave a nod toward the big suite—"you can see what happened. I'm willing to play him for win, place and show, and what's more, I'll pay his price. I—"

"THE Signor will see you." It was the valet standing in the door leading to a great living-room. Into it they went, the tall, well-groomed fixer and the short, keen-eyed Kid Lewis, to stand a moment looking about them, their eyes centering at last upon a heavy, rich plush curtain which bore upon it in silver letters:

Signor Marlo Petrono
The World's Greatest!

Kid Lewis leaned toward his employer.

"Greatest *what?*" he whispered. The valet was fading toward the Signor's room.

"A lot of things," came the quiet answer. "He's got a bull act that's a wonder."

"Elephants, huh?" Elephants are "bulls" in the circus world. But Honest John shook his head.

"No, a regular bull act—picked it up around Madrid or some of those places. But that's just the beginning. This bird can do more things to a circus-bill than you can shake a stick at. But, "—he eyed his secretary and smiled,—" I aint trusting anybody until I get him signed up. I've had enough bad luck already."

Then he stepped forward, for the door had opened, and a small man with a goatee and a tiny mustache was coming forward.

"Hello, John!" he exclaimed.

"Hello, Ed—I guess you're still Ed, aren't you?"

"To my friends." Then he saw the Kid. "Is it all right?"

"The Kid? Yeh, he's my secretary. I've trusted him with pretty nearly everything else; I guess I can trust him with this. Mr. Saunders, meet Kid Lewis. Kid, this is what is generally known as the Great Signor Marlo Petrono, fresh from the—what is that lingo, Ed?"

The great Signor laughed heartily.

"Late of the Circo Royale, Paris, the Circo Rome, the Circo Naples, the Circo Grande in Nice, and player by appointment at Le Casino Grande, Monte Carlo. How's that sound? Oughtn't to go bad on a twenty-four sheet, ought it, John?"

"I'll say not!" Honest John was beaming. "Well, how about it? Does it go on mine?"

"That depends on you."

"Not by a jug-ful. It's your say. What's the damage?"

Ed Saunders, otherwise the Great Signor Marlo Petrono, smiled.

"Well, I don't come cheap."

"I know that."

"And I want my bonus."

"You deserve one."

"Maybe so," replied the Great Signor, cocking his head, "but frankly, John, I don't know whether you can pay it or not."

"How much?" Honest John Barker became suddenly serious, and returned to the twirling of his lion's claw. "I'll do anything within reason. I've got to have headliners, Ed. What's the bad news?"

"Ten thousand."

"For what?"

"For nothing, before I sign the contract —or rather, the minute I put my name on it." He too had lost the joking vein. "It isn't any kidding matter with me, John. I've got to look out for Number One; you know that. I can get the money if I go after it, and maybe I can get a lot more than what I'm asking. I don't know—" He laughed again. "I'm only a poor boy from Italy, trying to get along; but the show that hires me will have to pay ten thousand dollars as a bonus when I sign the contract and twenty-five thousand a year divided into weekly payments. That's my way of looking at it—and I really think I'm giving you the best of it on those terms; that is, if you want me."

HONEST JOHN BARKER rubbed his palms together, then resumed toying with his lion's claw. He cleared his throat.

"That's a lot of money, Ed."

"I know it."

"Just about three times what I ever paid for an act."

"I could guess that too."

"And I'm only the official adjuster. I don't own the whole show; the Old Man's got something to say about it. Listen: we're supposed to be friends, aren't we?"

"I've always thought we were."

"Then on the strength of that friendship, I'm going to ask you to do something —that maybe you wont want to do." He reached into a pocket, drew forth a roll of bills and laid them on the table. There's a thousand dollars. If I fluke in this deal, it's yours. I've got to see the Old Man. I can't do anything without his word and I'm afraid to trust it to the telephone or telegraph. I want you to take that money and make me a promise."

The Great Signor grinned. "I never refused money in my life, John. What's the racket?"

"JUST this. I want a week to accept your terms. I'm not asking you, understand, to hold to those terms. If somebody should come along and offer you a million dollars a minute, I'd have to let you go. I'm not even taking an option on you. I'm just asking you this one favor as man to man and friend to friend: I don't know whether I can play the game through or not; but I want the best chance I can get at it. If the circus bunch, and particularly one man, know what you are and who you are, they'll be after you, and they'll make anything I can do look sick. I want you to take down that three-sheet velvet thing you've got on the wall there, promise not to talk to anybody about yourself and refuse to tell anybody what your acts are or anything about them."

The Signor hedged. "Fine. But suppose somebody came along who'd seen me on the other side?"

"I'd have to stand hitched. I can't stop acquaintance or mind-reading."

"And suppose somebody made me an offer without asking any questions?"

Honest John licked his lips.

"I'd have to stand that too, Ed. I don't want to ask anything of you that isn't right and isn't just. And if I can't make you the right sort of an offer, I'm out of it—you've got my thousand to do as you please with, and good luck go with you. Only I've had a lot of bad luck with my acts, it seems, and I'm getting a little tired of getting somebody all framed up, and then having the other fellow hear about them and go take them away from me. Nobody knows you're here?"

"I told you in my answer to your cable that they wouldn't. I generally keep my promises, John."

"I know it; but I just wanted to be sure. Listen: if you'd been up against the stuff I have in the last few weeks, you'd mistrust your grandmother! I've been gypped out of twenty acts, and that's almost enough. Does the deal go?"

IN answer, Ed Saunders walked to the wall, stepped upon a chair and unhooked the great plush curtain from its hangings. Then he came back to the table and pocketed the thousand dollars.

"As far as I'm concerned, John, I'm Signor Petrono the Garlic King until I hear from you. Is that fair enough?"

"Perfectly."

They shook hands. Ten minutes later, back in his room at a near-by hotel, Honest John sank into an easy-chair and gave a long sigh of relief.

"By golly," he beamed as he looked toward his secretary, "there's one act that's safe, anyway. Say, listen: call downstairs and tell 'em to send me up the evening papers, will you?"

"We'd be an hour waiting for 'em." The Kid was reaching for his hat. "I'll go get 'em myself."

"All right." Honest John leaned back in his chair and stretched his legs. "I'm tired. Get the Pullman reservations and the tickets back home while you're down there, will you? Have 'em charged to the room. We've got to sleep on a shelf again tonight, if I'm going to ever get started arguing with the Old Man. Twenty-five thousand dollars a year and a ten-thousand bonus calls for a lot of action with him."

The Kid grinned. "You said something," he agreed. "Be back in a minute."

But that minute was stretched long enough for the Kid to hurry to a telephone-booth the minute he reached the lobby, to jiggle the receiver hurriedly and then call a number. A moment later—

"HELLO! Blackmore? Gimme Mr. Hardin. Think he's registered there." A wait. Then: "Jake? The Kid talking. Got in on the ground floor. Heard the whole deal. The geek's staying in a suite as big as a racetrack at the Baltingham. Registered under the name of Marlo Petrono. Huh? Yeh, I was there when he talked to him this afternoon. Wants ten-thou bonus when he signs the contract and twenty-five thou a year. Think Barker's going to fall. You can get him for a raise of one thou. And listen, stall that you know all about him. Get me? Put this down: Circo Royale, Paris, with his trained bulls,—no, regular bulls, not elephants,—Circo Rome, Circo Naples, appointment extraordinary at Casino Grande, Monte Carlo. There's some others, but I've forgotten them. Anyway, that'll be enough. Barker's got him tied up so that he's promised not to tell anything about himself. Get me? So don't ask any questions; just make the offer. Got to beat it. Only got a minute. S'long." Out of the telephone-booth and to the news-stand; then to the porter and the cashier. A ride in the elevator, and the Kid, more innocent than ever, strolled into Honest John's room, tapped the shoulder of the nodding man in the big chair and leaned forward.

"HERE are your papers. I got the Pullmans all right. Had to do a lot of stalling to work it, but I got lowers. The train's pretty crowded. Was I gone long?"

"I don't know; were you?" Honest John rubbed his eyes. "Guess we'd better be ordering something to eat in the room here and then get ready to beat it. We haven't got any too much time."

All of which resulted in another rushing, hurrying night, a day and a night again. Back in the dingy little office at winter quarters, Honest John Barker, hustling in from the chill outside, grinned happily at the waiting Kid and motioned him to his typewriter.

"Easier'n I thought!" he exclaimed happily. "Take a telegram. 'Signor Marlo Petrono, Baltingham Hotel, Chicago, Ill. Very happy to tell you we can meet your terms of ten-thousand bonus on signing of contract and twenty-five thousand a year. Will leave for Chicago on your acknowledgment of this wire. John Barker.' "

Honest John reached for the messenger signal on the wall, only to turn back nervously. "Guess I'd better send it myself. Rush it off on the machine and I'll jump in the bus and take it down to the main office."

He seized the telegram and hurried out. In a half-hour he was back, humming to himself as he worked at his desk, whistling now and then, happy, genial, not seeming to notice even his pet aversion, the trip-hammer. Noon came and went. In mid-

afternoon a messenger entered. Honest John slit open the envelope and swore.

"Can you beat that?" he snorted as he shoved the message before the Kid's eyes. Am I seeing things, or is that the straight dope? Read it to me; I'm getting nutty or something."

The Kid read:

> John Barker
> Mighty Maxwell Circus
> Amityville, Tex.
> Sorry. Can't accept. Have received offer of eleven thousand bonus from Hippodrome Shows and twenty-six a year. Do you want to raise? Will hold off until you say no. Best wishes.
>
> PETRONO

Honest John jumped from his desk and ran into the machine-shop to head off the lagging messenger-boy and bring him back. Then he turned to the Kid.

"Take a telegram to Petrono. Say: 'Will make it twelve and twenty-seven. Rush answer.' Sign it 'John.' "

THE typewriter clicked while Honest John paced the tiny room. Then, with a sudden dive he pushed the sheet of yellow paper into the messenger's hand, and a dollar with it.

"Speed that," he ordered, "and tell 'em send it a fast day-message. Now hurry! *Pronto!*"

The messenger *prontoed* away. Three hours later, through a deserted machine-shop, he made his way to the place where still a light glowed, and where waited the Kid and Honest John. Again John swore, for the massage read:

> Sorry. Hippodrome offers fourteen and twenty-eight. I was superstitious on thirteen. Shall I say yes?"

Once more Honest John turned toward the dictation of a telegram, for a raise in the offer. Once more the Kid's fingers pecked at the typewriter, and once more the messenger-boy went away, bearing a piece of paper, instructions and a tip. Then Honest John pulled a cigar from a vest pocket, examined it carefully, and lighting the tip, puffed slowly and thoughtfully for a moment.

"Kid," he said at last, "there isn't anything more we can do tonight. It's up to tomorrow to tell the tale. That telegram can't get to Chicago before midnight, and there's no chance for an answer until morning. It's me for the hay."

The Kid put on his most angelic appearance.

"I hope that answer's what you're looking for."

Honest John puffed soberly.

"So do I. But there's no use thinking about that now. See you here at nine. G'night."

"G'night," echoed the Kid, and they went homeward.

Next morning the vigil was on again. Very early the messenger arrived, to shove forward his book and stand waiting while Honest John tore open the envelope, and while the Kid came closer to learn the news. A long gasp trembled on the fixer's lips.

"Finished!" came at last. The Kid blinked.

"Did he accept?"

"Accept!" Honest John looked up with wide, round eyes. "Does this sound like acceptance? Listen:

" 'Hippodrome Shows have jumped your price greatly in final offer, giving me twenty thousand bonus and straight salary one thousand a week entire season of thirty-six weeks. This is better than I expected and would not try to gyp a friend for more. Better let me take contract and not make me another offer. Best regards. Saunders.' "

The Kid smiled ever so slightly behind his employer's back.

"Well, you've got to give it to him for not trying to trim you," he said ingratiatingly. Honest John tapped his pencil on the desk, and the messenger-boy rolled a cigarette.

"Take a telegram," came at last. "Just wire him: 'Accept.' "

The message was written and borne away. Other work began. Noon came. The Kid went to luncheon, but Honest John remained in his little office, still at his desk. The Kid returned. Honest John hardly had changed position. An hour—two—three; then came a knock at the door. It was the messenger-boy, wearing a grin.

"I brought a couple this time," came his greeting as he thrust forth his timebook for the signature. Honest John looked up queerly.

"No answer, Sonny—I know that without reading 'em."

The boy departed. The Kid came forward with the telegrams, but Honest John's upraised hand halted him.

"You read 'em. I haven't got the heart."

A rustling of paper; then the Kid's voice sounded, husky with surprise.

"This sounds funny!"

"What?"

"THIS telegram. It's from the Signor: 'Closed contract with Hardin of Hippodrome Shows and everything lovely. You're sure entitled to all you get. That thousand a week looks good enough for me. Ten million thanks for the chance you put in my way. Your friend for life, Ed Saunders.'"

Honest John eyed the Kid with a little sparkle in his eye.

"What's funny about that? Read the other one."

The Kid's hand trembled slightly as he slit open the envelope.

"It's a money notice. Somebody's sent you money—"

"Twenty-one thousand bucks, if you want to know the amount. The one thousand I put up and the twenty that Jake Hardin forked over as a bonus." Slowly Honest John grinned, and then, still eyeing the Kid, dumb with surprise, reached into a pocket and brought forth a roll of currency from which he stripped a hundred-dollar bill. "Here, Kid."

"Wha—what's that for?"

"Oh, just in recognition of good work." Kid Lewis gulped.

"I'm—I'm mighty glad if my work's been satisfactory, Mr. Barker. I—"

"Satisfactory to the limit," came enthusiastically from Honest John. "Nothing could be more so. Only—your ideas and mine may be different. You see, Kid, about the first time you tipped Jake Hardin off to what I was doing, I got wise. And you haven't done a thing since that wasn't all planned and laid out for you."

"What—what—"

"Never mind stammering. I'm not going to have you pinched or even worried. Here,"—he jammed another hundred-dollar bill into the bewildered Kid's hands,—"take that too. You deserve it. You've helped me a lot. Every act you tipped Jake Hardin to take away from me was one I wanted him to get—because all the time I had the real stuff for next season up my sleeve, a whole bill of European features that would knock your eye out, and the more halfway-good acts I shoved on Jake Hardin, the fuller I knew I'd get him. And I finally managed to put in the dressing with chestnut filling and cranberry sauce. I aint pulled anything in a long time that made me happier than seeing Ed Saunders get a good job. He deserves one." Again came forth a hundred-dollar bill to travel into the hands of Kid Lewis, who still stood gasping with astonishment. "And the best of it is, Kid, I didn't have to break my custom to put it over. I'm Honest John, the man who never told a lie and—"

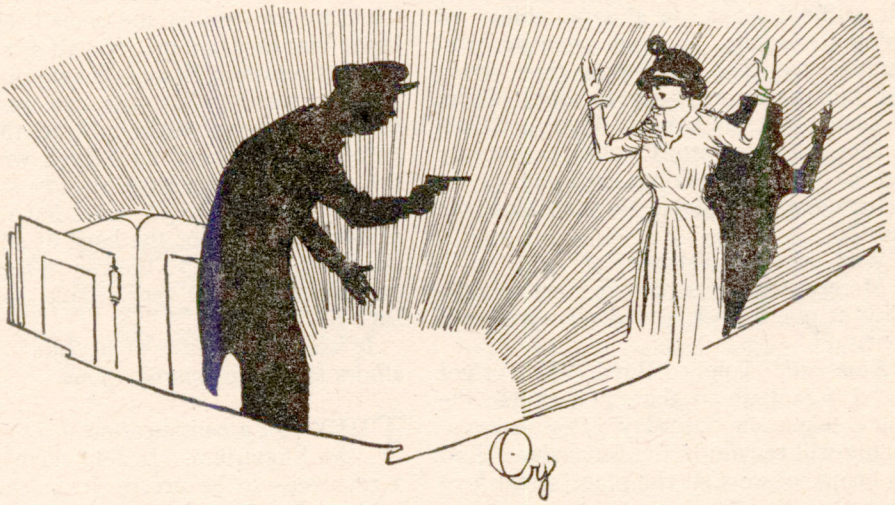
"Yeh!" The Kid suddenly awakened. "How about that junk you handed me about the Great Signor and his trained bulls and—"

"WRONG! Absolutely wrong. You just jumped at conclusions. All I said was that he had the best bull act in the world—and he's sure got it. Bull, Kid, bull—and nothing but bull. That's what got the twenty-thou bonus. Listen, when a man who's been working around the European circuses at a hundred francs or liars or whatever you call 'em a week as a juggler, contortionist and all-'round performer can bull a hard-fisted bird like Jake Hardin out of a twenty-thousand-buck bonus and a thou a week without even telling him what his act is, be-lieve me, he has got *some* bull act! Yep, Kid," said Honest John, stretching comfortably, "some bull. The Great Signor is just about the best in his line, and if he followed my instructions, he's got an ironclad contract. You wanted him—and you got him. I got the bonus to help cut down the biggest salary list I ever had in my life, and he gets the thou a week. That's fair enough, isn't it? So, Kid, keep those three-century bills I slipped you. You may need 'em. It's a long time till spring and I'm thinking you wont be popular with Jake Hardin when he finds out the Signor's specialties. Yep, keep 'em. But don't show up around here again—or I'll break your face!"

**Another story of Honest John Barker, fixer unusual for the Mighty Maxwell Circus, will appear in an early issue of THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE.**

# The Profiteer Plunderers

## The False Trail



By W. Douglas Newton

"THIS wont be a burglary but an act of justice," said Cyprian Xystus.

"But aren't all our burglaries that?" asked Thecla, his sister.

"Of course they are," interposed Boyd Muir, the musician. "We only plunder profiteers—that is, the undeserving rich. How can this one be different?"

"It is more justice than ever, my children," said the charming young man.

"You mean that this draper fellow, Took, is a trifle worse than the usual run of profitmongers?" asked Boyd.

"Don't stop at *trifle,*" answered Cyprian. "Took doesn't. He goes the whole hog in money-grabbing. He filches not only from his customers but also from his employees."

"Bad wages?" suggested Boyd Muir.

"Sweaters' wages," said Cyprian.

Thecla's exquisite face glowed with indignation as she chimed in: "Yes; and sweated food too. I was in his precious Emporium two days ago spying out the lay of the land for us, and the girl serving me fainted. I was glad she fainted, because, since I know something about nursing, I attended her and was able to go into the non-public portion of the Emporium and to find out what we wanted. But I also learned that the reason the girl collapsed was that she hadn't had enough to eat—"

"And didn't earn enough to supplement starvation rations and keep herself decent at the same time," added Cyprian. "Our unpleasant friend Took is of the nauseous kind that gets his profit both ways—from high charges and little wages. To relieve a fellow like that of a few thousands is really doing a good turn to humanity!"

"Rather," agreed Boyd. "But a few thousands—do you expect to get that from a drapery store, even if it is the biggest in an industrial town like Blappinghampton?"

"We expect and will get those few thousands," replied Cyprian. "Your wits are up above the world in the heavens of music; otherwise you would have noticed that brother Took and his Universal Emporium is the absolute IT of Blappinghampton. Nobody else counts. This is so because he's crushed out all opposition. He's a monopolist as well as a brute. And he hasn't simply collared all the 'rag' trade here—he has a sort of monopoly of all the kindred trades for the district. Do you realize that he has ten or twelve very fat and prosperous departments in his bloated business? Each brings in a very tidy sum."

"Oh, I haven't been altogether blind during our week's stay in this insufferable place," answered the musician with a touch of irony because he imagined he'd caught the gay and daring young Cyprian out. "I'll willingly concede the possibility of several thousands. But not even you will convince me that he leaves them lying about for us or anybody to loot. There are such things as banks. Even a citizen of Blappinghampton, I take it, has the sense to pay in his takings each day."

"Including Saturday's, do you think, my infant?"

"Well, why not Saturday's?"

"Merely because all banks close on Saturday at one o'clock and don't open until Monday."

"*Kamerad!*" laughed Boyd. "You've got me. I forgot about that. Of course the money taken on Saturday afternoon and evening will remain in the Emporium. And this being so, we visit the place somewhere about that time."

"Yes, tomorrow just when Saturday verges into Sunday. In case you aren't aware, I can also tell you that Saturday afternoon is friend Took's fat time of the week. He does a roaring trade. Huge masses of minted coin roll in at the week-end. An excellent thing for us."

"He keeps it all in a safe, I suppose?"

"Thecla, give him a medal for bright thinking," retorted the cheery Cyprian. "You are right, my child. It all goes in a safe, but not a very difficult safe. The chief difficulty is the fact that friend Took sleeps over it in the room above. That fact, he imagines, makes up for the deficiencies of the safe. He believes that he will be able to overhear anybody moving in the office below. He acts as his own watchman for the office."

"Are there other watchmen in the Emporium?"

"One," answered Cyprian; "a friend of mine. We have met over glasses of Government ale at the place at which he takes his pick-me-up before going on duty. Tomorrow he wont be a watchman so much as a deep sleeper. His Government ale will be more potent than anyone would imagine Government ale could be. I'll see to that. The rest will be easy; for Thecla, by reason of many purchases at the Emporium and of course that fainting shop-girl, has the geography of the place at her finger-tips. It should be a restful and easy job, but we'll have to be quiet."

"What's the plan for this easy job?"

"We pay our bill in this hotel and leave Blappinghampton by car and for good at three-thirty tomorrow afternoon. We drive as far as we like toward London. Then we turn round and come back. You know that deserted quarry half a mile from the last house in Blappinghampton, on the London road? The car can be hidden there. Then we walk back to the town, enter the Emporium by a back window in the stable yard we have already surveyed, do our little robbery,—we'll have to take a valise with us for the bags of silver and the notes,—return to the car in the quarry and so home. All very simple, my child, isn't it?"

It was on the face of it; but in human affairs there are complications.

THEY met a complication in the office of the Emporium. It held them up with a revolver—to be precise it, or rather he, held up Thecla with a revolver.

Thecla, who knew the way about the great Emporium, was the first to enter the room containing the safe. It was a crowded little room, stacked with drapers' boxes, which obstructed the way in getting at the safe. There were two ways of going round them from the door. Thecla turned left, and the young men were about to follow her, when Cyprian grabbed Boyd by the arm and jerked him back behind the stack of boxes.

From inside the room near the safe had come a hoarse whisper: "Put up your hands at once, do you hear?" And then after a pause: "Don't you make any noise! I'm desperate, Miss!"

There was an awful silence, a thick, breathless silence. Then Cyprian's fingers tugged at Boyd's sleeve, and under that impulse both moved noiselessly round to the right of the stacked boxes.

In the ghostly glimmer of a shaded candle-light they saw an extraordinary scene, and being in the dark and behind the principal actor, they could take it all in without fear of being observed.

Thecla's beautiful face beneath the black mask showed not the slightest sign of agitation as she stood there with her hands raised. Before her was a slight young man holding a revolver directed rather shakily at her breast. Behind the slight man was the safe. The remarkable thing was the safe—its door was open and its contents had been scattered on the floor, al-

though the bags of money and the wads of notes were stacked to one side. The safe, in fact, was in process of being plundered. The man with the revolver was a burglar. But such a burglar!

As the two young men looked at him, each chuckled inwardly. Not merely his quivering revolver, held in such a way as to render it almost impossible for him to hit anybody immediately in front of him, made them smile, but the man himself was humorous as a burglar. He was a slight, almost pitiable figure. He had a pleasant face with a good head but a weak, almost cringing, mouth and no particular chin. His frame was undernourished and reedy. His entire appearance made them think of a draper's assistant, not the good healthy specimen but one of the downtrodden sort.

He stood there before the safe which he had obviously plundered, staring at the masked girl, his wavering weapon indicating to the watchers that he hadn't the slight idea what he was to do next.

Thecla had sized him up at once, and whispered: "Well, what are you going to do? I can't keep my hands up forever."

"Don't make a noise," said the man with a bleat of a whisper; "I'm desperate."

"I'm not going to make a noise," answered Thecla calmly. "You know as well as I do that I daren't. But I can't keep my hands up—and you've got me covered with a revolver anyhow. And I haven't a weapon in my hands."

"All right. Let your hands down. But be careful, I'm desperate. An'—an' I don't want t' hurt a woman."

He said this in a way that made the young men realize that he was a very decent little fellow. But nothing more seemed to happen. He stood with his waggling revolver staring at Thecla and wondering what he ought to do.

Then Thecla asked tersely, "Well, what happens now?"

"I dunno," answered the man. "I dunno what t' do."

Cyprian made three silent strides forward. "The situation seems to have gotten beyond you, my lad," he said in a fierce whisper. "I think I'd better take command. Up with your hands—no tricks."

THE man looked as though he were going to shout in fear, but he realized what that would mean. With a strangled sob, he swung around and found Cyprian's automatic at his head. As he raised his hands Boyd relieved him of his revolver. Boyd then touched his arms and whispered: "All right, you can put 'em down now. You can't hurt, only remember *we* can."

As he stood staring at the three masked figures, his face was tragic; his breath came in sobs that were part anguish, part terror.

"You're not much of a burglar," Cyprian whispered to him.

"I aint a burglar at all," stuttered the man. "I did it because—because I'm desperate. An' I'm only taking what's fair to me."

"Who the deuce are you?" asked Cyprian.

The man kept silent until Thecla, who had been examining him, said: "It's one of Took's hands. I saw him in one of the departments."

The man answered sullenly: "I was. I was manager of the furniture department, but I am—I left the Emporium today."

"Ah, and you wanted to take a little souvenir, a little bonus, perhaps, with you?"

"It's only what's fair," answered the man with a show of fire. "I'm taking what, if right is right, ought to be my own."

"Just explain," demanded Cyprian. As the man showed signs of sullenness, he added: "It may prove helpful to you in this matter."

"Well," began the other with suppressed passion in his whispered voice, "didn't Took do the dirty on me? I was the leading furniture dealer in this town; had a good business, because I had ideas. Took came along an' smashed me. He came years ago an' warned me; told me I had better come in with him as his manager, or stay in my own shop an' be smashed. I thought I could stay. Though I've ideas, I haven't got the fighting mind—an' then I was little an' Took was big. So he smashed me. He did it deliberate, because he wanted to collar all the trade. When he had done me in, he offered me a job, because I had ideas and knew the furniture business inside out. It was a mean job at a mean wage, but what could I do? I took it, an' because I've got it in me, I made the furniture department of Took's. It brings in thousands. It's all my doing, an' I get a beggar's wage."

"An' then, I suppose, when he'd got all he wanted out of you he fired you?" asked Cyprian, as this seemed to explain the present situation.

"No," replied the man sturdily. "I've kept back a lot of ideas. He still knows I'm worth my while. He didn't fire me." The man stopped.

"Better tell us all," insisted Cyprian, noting that the fellow wanted to keep something back; "it may be to your advantage."

"Anyhow, I don't see that it matters—now," continued the man miserably, realizing the plight he was in. "Well, he didn't sack me; I went on my own. A friend of mine is in Canada. He says there's a big chance for furniture. I think he's right. You see, he has the managing spirit, what I haven't, an' that with my ideas. . . . ."

"I understand. And you wanted a little capital to start in Canada. It's no good starting a business without capital—hence this."

The man stared at Cyprian. "Yes," he admitted sullenly. "You must have something to start on—an' that brute owes me something. It isn't stealing."

"No doubt you're right, but the law has a queer view. How the deuce did you expect to get away?"

"My boat sails at ten o'clock tomorrow morning," confessed the man. "I will—I would have been out of the country before they got onto me."

"YOU fool," scoffed Cyprian, "haven't you heard of wireless and cables? They'll be able to get in touch with and examine everyone on every ship on the sea and at the ports. And when they found you with wads of notes and bags of loose silver, you'd be nabbed." The man gaped at him. "You're a rotten burglar," finished Cyprian with a grin. "I don't suppose you've even thought of drawing a false track across your trail. Well, you'd better leave this to us. We'll make a better job of it for you."

"For *me!*" gasped the man; indeed all the others gasped at Cyprian's sudden, chivalrous whim. "You mean you're going to help me? You mean you're going to let me get to Canada with money an' without old Took suspecting? You're burglars, an' yet you're going to help me?"

"We are," whispered Cyprian. "But then, you see, we aren't ordinary burglars. There's a touch of old Robin Hood in our blood. Now for Heaven's sake, don't argue or talk. You were going to take—how much? Two thousand pounds? I thought so; only amateur burglars take a little when they might as well go to prison for the lot."

As he spoke, he parceled out the notes and money-bags; the sum each bag contained was written on a slip of paper pinned on the bag, so that the amount was quickly counted.

"THERE'S eight thousand three hundred pounds here," said Cyprian, after the counting was done. "Take two thousand five hundred. Don't talk. Don't do anything except get out. Yes; I mean it. Get out quietly. Go on board ship; go to Canada—and good luck. Only keep your mouth shut. If you hear anything strange about this burglary, well, keep your mouth shut. That's all. Go."

As the young man departed, Cyprian looked at his wrist-watch.

The others waited in silence in the little room, the candle burning low. Above they could hear the affluent snores of Tooks the profiteer. After a very long time Cyprian looked at his wrist-watch again. Then he stood up.

"Fifty minutes. That fellow has all the start he wants. He's probably cycling—you saw his trouser-clips—out to Standsted Junction to catch the Liverpool train. He should be there by now, and a train is due in about twenty minutes. It's time for us to be going. Thecla, vamoose to the car." When she left the Emporium she had stuffed about her person practically all the notes left over from those given to the furniture dealer. The silver in its bags had been packed into the valise. This had been carried down to the window at the back of the store, through which the three had entered.

The two waited for fifteen minutes after Thecla had gone. Then Cyprian stood up and grinned at Boyd under his mask.

"The band is now going to play," he said. He caught hold of a chair and turned it over onto the floor with a crash.

Boyd's heart almost stopped beating. In an uncanny silence they stood in the dark room listening, braced and tense ready to meet any danger which the fall of the chair might bring upon them.

The snoring above their heads ceased. They heard a gentle creaking—the bed—

they held their breaths. What would friend Took do? Was he the frantic sort or . . . .

Silence, then the sudden, unmistakable click of a door-handle being turned softly in the room above. Silence again.

Cyprian winked at Boyd. Old Took was not of the frantic sort; he was of the silent, stealthy guild. Cyprian winked again and vanished.

Four minutes of silence. Then the little room blazed with electric light—blazed so abruptly, so unexpectedly, that Boyd, crouching at the safe, jerked round in panic against his will. A grim man in pajamas, with a very grim revolver confronted him.

And the grim man snarled: "Got you, you brute. I've got you red handed. Don't you move." He himself moved several paces forward to get round the pile of packing-cases into the room. As he did so a figure, as silent as a ghost and as lithe as a panther, was upon him. The pistol arm was jerked up from behind and something not according to plan happened: the pistol went off with a deafening explosion—a tremendous explosion that not only filled the whole of the Emporium but seemed to fill the whole of the town of Blappinghampton; an explosion that must wake the world and set all men on their track. Took was disarmed, but he'd sounded the alarm!

CYPRIAN acted with lightning thought. He released the draper and deliberately stepped back so that the man could get his feet again, and fight.

He wanted him to fight.

The draper fought. He fancied his position was desperate with two masked burglars against him. He flung himself at Cyprian, who was nearest. That was what Cyprian wanted. He stood back and slipped a blow with all the craft of a brilliant boxer; then his own right fist snapped in, hooking Took to the jaw with a blow exquisitely timed and placed, and Took went down for something more than the knock-out count.

That was a better way of dealing with the fellow than by trying to tie him up; it saved time. Almost as soon as the blow was struck, the two were running through the Emporium at top speed. There was, it seemed, an unusually long pause between the time of the shot and the first sound of hubbub in the streets outside and in the building itself. They had scarcely gained the air before they encountered people running even to the stable yards at the back part of the Emporium from which the pair were escaping. Boyd again felt a thrill. They were strange men carrying a valise, and they had been caught by the crowd as they came from the rear of the Emporium. People must suspect them instantly.

BUT Cyprian was equal to the occasion. He actually stopped the first of the crowd and called out: "Where is it? Where is it? We heard a shot. Thought it was in these stables, but there's nothing here."

As more men came up and stopped running, a voice said plainly: "I told you so, Bill. You heard what the gentleman said; it aint round this side. It was round at the front, just like I told you."

"It sounded to me like a suicide shot," said another voice. "A single shot, like. My belief is old Took done 'imself in."

"How can we get in?" cried Cyprian. "We can't stand here. We must do something. Perhaps he's bleeding to death."

"The private entrance is round at the front," came from a score of voices. And at Cyprian's loud "That's it. Come on then," there was the rush of a now considerable crowd round to this entrance. Everybody vied with everybody to get there first, and Cyprian and Boyd showed no jealousy. They did not mind other people beating them to the scene of the excitement; in fact, they lagged steadily behind and at a convenient turning, faded from the crowd. Nobody noticed them. The journey to the motor in the quarry and the ride to their Kensington house were taken in calm comfort.

THE next day the three sat and enjoyed life as set out in the newspapers. The item of the papers they relished most was headed:

BIG ROBBERY AT BLAPPINGHAMPTON
GREAT HAUL FROM DRAPER
LEADING TRADESMAN ROBBED AND ASSAULTED BY A GANG

The papers gave a very highly colored account of the episode. They said that at least two thieves had been concerned in the theft, and probably more. Mr. Took, who had been assaulted by two men, had

made this certain. The police had clues. Two men carrying a valise were seen coming away from the Emporium. The crowd, as Cyprian pointed out, had realized the oddness of the circumstance too late. The crowd had noticed that the two strange men had followed round to the front of the Emporium, and then had vanished.

Cyprian read the news, and chuckled.

"That effectively covers up brother Furniture-man's trail," he said, "and I think we did it rather cleverly."

"We did it rather dangerously, too, don't you think?" remarked Boyd.

"It had to be dangerous if it was to be effective," replied Cyprian.

"Old Took had to see two of us in order to be convinced it was a gang and not a single person—like the furniture-man."

"Wouldn't he have been convinced otherwise?"

"No; he and the police would have had open minds—that means, they'd suspect anybody and everybody. They'd have made inquiries all round. They might have picked up the clue of the furniture-man as, say, a late traveler at Standsted Junction; or they might have gone through the list of Took's employees and found that he had left the day before and connected him up merely because he was as likely as anybody else."

"Why shouldn't they suspect him now?"

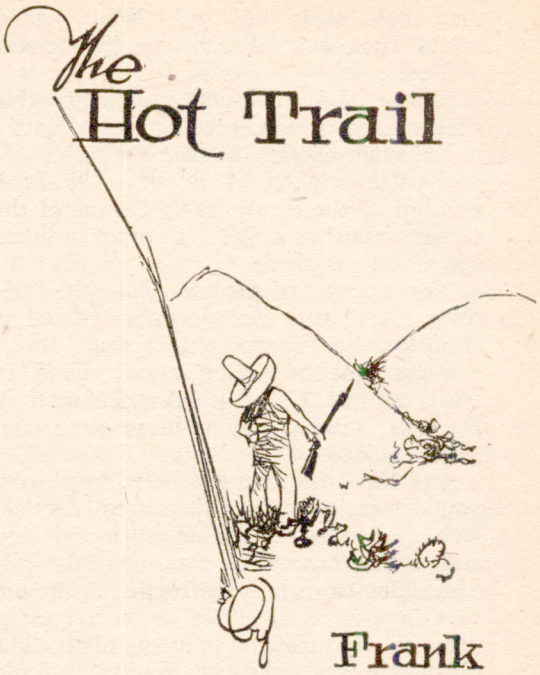
"Because they've got their minds fixed on two or more burglars. They are thinking about gangs, not about single men. Gangs, moreover, generally gravitate toward London, and our direction was Londonward, not toward Standsted, which is way behind the Emporium in direction. They've got it into their minds that the thieves are to be looked for in London. Finally, and this is the most important, Took saw us, saw all but our faces, of course, and I think you'll agree, my infant, that we are emphatically not like the furniture-man in build. If there is ever a suggestion of the finger of furniture in this, Took will scoff at it. No; I guess we've drawn a pretty useful screen between furniture and suspicion—"

"And what about us and suspicion?" Boyd asked.

"Oh, virtue always has to run the risk, even when it is burglarious, or an act of justice," smiled Cyprian.

**Another captivating story of the philanthropic "Profiteer Plunderers" will appear in an early issue of THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE.**

# The Hot Trail

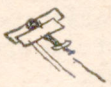


## Frank

UNLESS you have ridden a motorcycle, you can hardly appreciate the skill and cleverness displayed by Corporal Fred Kelley as he piloted his two-wheeler over the scratch on the landscape that was designated as a "road" on the maps. It seemed to him that for the past ten miles he had been bucking a continuous slag-pile. In sheer desperation he had stood up on the footboards of the motorcycle and "opened her up." The machine bounced along at a thirty-mile clip, sometimes in the alleged road and sometimes in the adjoining brush, but its rider managed somehow to keep it headed in the general direction he was traveling.

Now, as he neared the Mexican border, the road had changed slightly. Instead of rocks and ruts he had deep sand which necessitated that he keep going if he did not want to lose his traction and bury the rear wheel to the hub. From time to time he cast a suspicious eye into Mexican territory, but for the most part he kept his eyes on the tire-wide thread of sand between the sage that marked the road. A similar thread paralleled the one he was riding; in the center and on either side stretched the waste of cactus and sage.

He had covered perhaps eight miles of the sand when the motor began missing. He opened the throttle several times, but



**A MOTORCYCLIST and an airman get entangled with Mexican bandits with the result that a really tabasco time is had by all.**

## Richardson Pierce

the only answer was the increased exhaust of the forward "lung;" the cylinder remained silent. He stopped, attempted to place the machine on the stand and gave it up in disgust when the stand settled into the shifting sand. With his gloved hands he tore several bits of sagebrush and spread them beneath the stand. This time it did not sink down.

"Damn such a hole!" he growled as he opened up the tool-box and selected a wrench. A moment later he had the hot plug in his hands. As he expected, it was sooty. There was but one thing to do: clean it, and continue on his journey. With a healthy curse at the heat of the plug and the heat of the country, he set about the unpleasant task.

FROM his place of concealment on the Mexican side of the line José Remedez had watched the motorcyclist. Several times he had raised his rifle and had taken a careful aim, but each time a feeling that others might be near had caused him to lower it. He was reasonably certain that the motorcycle-rider had a companion in the vicinity, as they had a habit of traveling in pairs. He scanned the desert in every direction. Then, satisfied that the American was alone, José raised his rifle, took a quick but careful aim and fired.

The American leaped into the air as if powerful springs had unexpectedly been released beneath his feet, but when he fell he seemed to crumple. Then—silence. For several minutes José did not move. When he did, it was with extreme caution.

Some time later he reached Kelley's side, poked him with his toe and then searched the pockets. He found some real money,—American, of course,—and some personal belongings including a photograph of a pretty girl, a wrist-watch and a heavy-service automatic. These he appropriated. Next he studied the machine, as if considering whether or not there was anything of value he could take. Apparently there was nothing. From the distance of ten feet he put two bullets into the crank-case, and with a wicked-looking knife he slit both tires.

Having done all possible damage and collected everything of value to himself, José returned to his horse and rode away. Five miles across the line his gang of fellow-bandits were encamped; and twenty miles beyond that was a box cañon into which they could readily escape and hold their own against twice their own numbers.

Corporal Washburn, dispatch-rider attached to the same company as Corporal Kelley, had started out with him, but a bit of rock hit his rear tire at the proper angle —and it did things.

After both men had expressed their opinion of the country in loud tones well garnished with profanity, Kelley had gone on alone, as per orders. Washburn had some difficulty in fixing the puncture. He carried a spare tube, but the outer casing was what bothered him most. It was fully three-quarters of an hour later when he kicked over his motor and followed Kelley.

"I never will overtake him now," he complained. "That bird can ride; it's all I can do to hold my own when he's around to set the pace over the bad stuff."

His methods and remarks for the next ensuing miles were not unlike those of Kelley's, and his riding, though far above the average, was not up to Kelley's. Twice he took what is known among the motorcycle fraternity as a "sacker"—that is, he skidded and proceeded to smooth off a considerable stretch of the landscape with his back and shoulders.

An hour after Remedez had disappeared, after shooting and robbing Kelley, Washburn reached the wrecked motorcycle. He brought his machine to a hurried stop,

dropped it into the brush and glanced quickly about. Of Kelley there was not the slightest trace. Next his eye caught sight of the bloodstained sand.

"Now what the—" he began. Then he noticed the slashed tires and the oil dripping from the crank-case.

For all he might know, the murderers of his bunky might still be lurking in the vicinity. This did not worry Washburn, however, and he proceeded to examine minutely the surrounding brush with an eye that missed not the slightest detail. Then he mounted his machine and rode as he had never ridden before. Repeatedly his machine leaped into the air as he hit a rough spot; sometimes the rider landed in the saddle, but more often he landed on the tank; time and again his very speed was all that kept him from falling.

WASHBURN roared past a sentry at the post and came to a stop with a shriek of the brake. His rear tire was flat,—had been for the last mile,—and the rim was dented in several places. Without ceremony he dashed into the commanding officer's presence, and in a few snappy sentences told his story.

"There's not the slightest sign of Kelley," he concluded. "There was lots of blood in the sand, and footprints of a horse and man. These led toward the border. Before he went, whoever he was, he wrecked Kelley's charm." He referred to the motorcycle. "That's all, sir."

Then things began to happen. An orderly began calling on the telephone; Washburn was ordered to obtain another motorcycle and something to eat, and to be prepared to lead the way to the spot.

Among the first of the airmen to report was Lieutenant Jack Kelley, late of the A. E. F. He had arrived at the post two weeks before, and had made no secret of the fact that his request for duty at this point was to be near his kid brother, Corporal Kelley of the dispatch-service.

The Corporal had enlisted in this service because he loved to ride motorcycles, and for the same reason the Lieutenant had entered the air-service — because it appealed to him. The Corporal had seen six months' service in France; Lieutenant "Jack" had made things rather hot for a number of German airmen in the year he was overseas.

Ordinarily the Lieutenant was a mighty pleasant-looking fellow, but as he listened to Washburn's report, his face hardened and his manner was that of the fighter who knows not defeat and who will offer battle regardless of odds.

HE asked a number of questions that an airman would naturally ask who intended to play a part in the pursuit, and then he was off once more for the C. O.'s quarters. He entered just in time to hear the C. O. make a few comments on conditions along the border.

"Thank God it *is* a hot trail!" he concluded. "We'll cross the border and clean 'em up!

"Those hell-hounds captured a pair of Americans and held them for ransom, and got away with it. If they haven't killed Kelley outright, they doubtless figure on doing the same trick this time. News travels fast down there—especially news of the sort where they put something over on Uncle Sam." This was from the second in command, who expressed himself in vehement tones.

Both officers glanced up as Lieutenant Kelley entered, and flashed him a look of sympathetic understanding.

He addressed his remarks to the C. O.: "Of course, you know it is my kid brother, sir. If your plan of action will permit it, sir, I'd like to play my part of the pursuit on my own."

For a moment the superior officer hesitated. Then he glanced keenly at the airman. "Go to it!" he said shortly. "And I wont tell you to take care of yourself."

"Thank you, sir!" The Lieutenant saluted and took his departure.

The airman was off on the run. He barked a number of orders at his helpers and proceeded to examine the machine himself. It was of a new type single-seater being tried out by the Government, and it mounted a pair of machine-guns.

A few minutes later the Lieutenant was off. They watched him take off, listened until the drone of the motor was no longer heard, then gazed at each other with knowing grins.

"Did you notice the way he fondled those machine-guns?" commented one mechanic.

"Unless the rest of this outfit gets a move on, he'll have the whole mess settled before they get started," returned another, with a grin.

That was what the airman determined

to do if possible. He realized it was a Government affair from start to finish, but to him it was more than that—it was a family affair. And with the hot-trail theory, which permitted him to cross the border without very much chance of starting international complications, Kelley felt himself unhampered.

He flew low to the ground and located the landmarks described by Washburn, even getting a view of the motorcycle in the road below. Then he headed directly southward. Thence he followed a zigzag course, studying every inch of the country for a distance of some thirty miles. It had been two hours since the outrage had been committed, and a group of horsemen who knew the country could easily cover quite a distance in this time.

Though he searched carefully and remained until his fuel was all but gone, not a single human being or animal did he discover. As he returned, a group of men and horses announced the start of the ground expedition. They had one advantage over him: they could, with their Indian trailers, follow the exact trail.

"No luck!" he reported on his return. "Not a sign! I think it is that Remedez gang. He's a smooth devil, and probably laid low, knowing a 'plane would likely take a look at things. He'll do his traveling at night. Once he gets into the box cañon, it'll be good night, for he can hold an army off. I might drop a few bombs onto him, but that wouldn't do much good. I've been told a natural cave is his hiding-place. With the gang scattered, I'd have little chance of hitting much; besides, I might hit the kid. I'll be off again in the morning."

The Lieutenant walked off to kill the long hours before he again could take up the pursuit. The complete disappearance of his brother, coupled with the fact that he was doubtless badly wounded, if not killed, was most trying, but it was putting a fine fighting edge on the man.

IT was still dark, though a faint glow in the east announced the approach of day, when Lieutenant Kelley's mechanics wheeled out his crack little plane.

The Lieutenant set a direct course for the box cañon, and was hovering over it at daybreak. It was an indentation in the mountains, nearly a quarter-mile long and probably an eighth-mile wide, surrounded by abrupt walls; and so far as Kelley could see, there was absolutely no means of entry. It was known, however, that there was a narrow passageway through the walls, barely wide enough to permit a man and horse to enter.

For fifteen minutes Kelley circled about without success—not a sign of life appeared below. Then he turned back and once more began a patient search of the landscape. A scant mile from the cañon's walls he caught sight of a party of horsemen. From an altitude of nearly three thousand feet he put the machine into a nose dive until he was perhaps five or six hundred feet from the ground, whence he went into a tight spiral and hovered over the horsemen. Several times he circled, while he examined every man; but the uniformed man he expected to see was not there. There were signs of nervousness among the group below, and several of the men started to scatter.

Kelley was about to seek elsewhere when he caught sight of another and smaller group within a short distance of the cañon walls. It was but a matter of seconds for him to overtake this group. There were four horses and as many men in the little party. One man rode in the rear, and three rode side by side. All were galloping at top speed. The men on either side of the one who rode in the center were lashing the center horse as well as their own mounts.

The airman dropped to within two hundred feet of the ground and circled twice. As he hoped and expected, the man in the center was uniformed. Around his head was tied a white rag that stood out sharply from the general brown and tan of the men and horses.

KELLEY'S fingers itched to send a burst into the group, but it was impossible to do so without hitting the prisoner. The bandits apparently realized that safety lay in keeping close to their captive, for though they never slackened their pace, they did close in slightly, particularly the individual in the rear.

Presently the captive waved his arm.

"He's alive, thank God!" cried Kelley aloud. "I see their plan of action now. The larger group constitutes a sort of rear guard to prevent a rescue!"

He laughed quietly and headed toward them. Twice he circled about them before his position was satisfactory; then he opened up with a short burst.

Instantly the bandits were seized with panic. Some of the braver ones opened up on the nervy airman with revolvers and rifles, but others fled to the nearest shelter. At the first burst, one pitched head foremost from his saddle, while his horse galloped wildly across the desert.

Another circle and another burst from the flank, which claimed a second bandit, took all the fight out of the group. Lashing their horses with the fury of fear, they scattered. Kelley hotly pursued the different groups until the individuals were widely separated, and then soared aloft.

"Picked off two of 'em, and several others grabbed themselves like they were not feeling any too good. But, hang it all, this isn't getting the kid back. For two cents I'd land and scrap it out!"

But even in the heat of battle, Kelley had better sense than to land in that particular locality; even from above, it was rough in appearance. With the main band broken up for the time being, he turned again toward the smaller force, but it had vanished—apparently the solid wall had swallowed up men and horses.

Now that he had a breathing-space, Kelley climbed to a point above the cañon-walls and proceeded to think things over. First he radioed a brief report of what had happened to the detachment he knew must be breaking camp about now.

The report, though brief, summed up the situation and suggested that the small command could proceed without danger of being ambushed along the way. It also outlined the shortest possible route to the cañon, and ended up with the statement that he would keep in constant touch and inform them of any new developments.

Even with hard traveling, the party could hardly hope to reach the cañon before late in the afternoon, and a number of things might happen in the meantime—almost anything, in fact. Being prepared was a watchword with the airman; so he headed homeward to replenish his fuel and ammunition, and thus be ready for any situation that might arise.

WHILE mounted men on the ground and one in the air were attempting to rescue Corporal Kelley, that rather reckless young devil was experiencing a number of adventures. The last thing he remembered was cursing a spark-plug. The next he knew, he was balanced upon a horse a good deal like a sack of meal. Ropes kept him lashed firmly to a saddle, while an evil-looking Mexican afoot urged the horse along. Kelley blinked a few times, took stock of the situation, then weakly mumbled: "What's the big idea, Villa?"

Lacking an appreciation of American humor, the Mexican proceeded to explain that he was not Villa but just as good a man by the name of Remedez. The idea, it seemed, was to collect a little easy Gringo money. It had been done once, the Mexican explained, and it could probably be done again.

"SO you nearly bumped me off for a little change, eh?" growled Kelley. "Well, those other fellows got their money, all right, but a few days later we crossed the line and cleaned them up. You fellows don't seem to get some things through your beans. What you'll get for this will be a plenty!"

Maybe so, Remedez responded, but the situation was entirely different; and besides, once they reached the box cañon the whole American army could not retake the American nor hurt his captors. Remedez said so. He also told Kelley that he was a bad man to deal with, that his first intention had been to slaughter him merely for the equipment and the money he carried, but upon returning to the scene of his outrage, to assure himself that he had overlooked nothing, he had noticed signs of life. Then it was that the idea of ransom had suggested itself. He also informed Kelley that so long as he behaved himself, nothing serious would happen to him.

Kelley made no promises, but produced a first-aid kit and directed the Mexican to bandage his head. His wound was not serious, though it had been a close call.

Later the two men mounted the single horse and rode some distance, where they were met by the other members of the band. After a hard ride of an hour they went into hiding until late in the evening. A scout reported that an American force was already in pursuit, and they all had witnessed the airman as he soared over their place of concealment in his search for them.

Late that night they headed for the cañon, expecting to arrive there at daybreak. Kelley had been provided with a horse as well as a special guard of three, one of whom was the leader; the others constituted a rear-guard. The arrival of

the airman had rather upset things, and his attack had put the Mexicans in a bad frame of mind.

Safe within the cañon, Remedez waited while by ones and twos his band returned. Others, to the number of thirty, had remained in the cañon to prevent any other gang of outlaws from taking possession during their absence. It was the possession of this cañon that had enabled Remedez to carry on a successful campaign against not only Americans but his own race as well.

That afternoon the entire gang, with the exception of two killed and one missing, had gathered. The usual guards had been posted at the entrance, while the rest met in a sort of cave fitted up with some degree of comfort. It was filled with loot of all sorts, and a number of cattle fed on what little grass there was in the cañon.

The gang at once went into session; and from his limited knowledge of the language and the looks of hatred cast in his direction, Kelley realized his death was being demanded by a number of the men as payment for the lives the airman had taken in the morning.

The argument waged fiercely at times, with the majority of the gang listening eagerly to every word but taking no part. At all times it was apparent that Remedez was in supreme command; his authority was never questioned. With him it was rather a question of whether to consent to the American's death and the torture that would go with it or to obtain the money he felt sure would be forthcoming.

Nothing would have suited Remedez better than to have witnessed the agony of a man undergoing the tortures he could inflict, but he loved money even better than he loved torture. And so he hesitated. It was only when the missing man rode in badly wounded that he was won over, and nodded his consent.

A SHOUT of approval went up from the entire gang, while a number of excited voices suggested plans—plans that made Kelley's blood run cold. However, he eyed his captors coolly, determined that not in a thousand years would they make him beg for mercy. He was not bound, as escape was impossible—with armed men about him, sheer walls on every hand and the narrow entrance guarded by other armed men; in fact, the band sort of hoped he might try running, as his pathetic attempts to save his life under such impossible conditions would have afforded them no end of pleasure. It would have been a good deal like a cat permitting a mouse to crawl away feebly, only to be clawed back again when freedom was almost within its grasp.

While the men talked in eager tones and cast fierce glances toward the American, from the distance came the faint drone of a 'plane. It became louder and louder, though it was evidently flying high. A hush came over the men. Then several rushed out and peered cautiously into the air. The 'plane was circling a scant hundred feet above the walls. No chance of injury from that source with the birdman so high. Several stepped boldly into the open and gazed upward.

ABOUT ten feet away Remedez stood. Barely moving his eyes, Kelley noted the position of the men, the open field beyond, then the revolvers swinging from either holster at Remedez' side.

"So they are going to torture me, eh!" muttered Kelley. "Well, there is no chance of escape, but I will take a few of them with me."

With a quick leap he covered the intervening space, and his hand grasped the butt of the revolver. Even as Remedez caught up the other gun, turned and fired, Kelley had leaped backward and fired. Remedez crumpled up. Kelley, taking advantage of the surprise he had occasioned, raced for the nearest brush. He ran low, and as he dived head foremost, a volley of shots rang out.

Men were already running toward him as he rolled over in the brush and faced them. Taking a quick aim, he shot the leader in his tracks, then picked off the second. He had just three shots left, but it was sufficient to hold the rest of the gang in check for a moment while they dropped and sought cover. The majority took to the cave.

Knowing his life was forfeited anyway, Kelley took chances he might not have taken otherwise. He crouched low, ran a short distance and dropped again. He repeated this action several times. Though the bullets flew, he escaped unharmed. Breathing heavily from his efforts, he turned. Here he would stand and die, but it would be a costly death for the bandits. Already they had formed a plan of action, and heedless of the 'plane,

too far above them for harm, they were crawling forward—some fifty men after one lone American boy.

SUDDENLY the droning ceased, and with it all eyes glanced upward. Startled cries came from the Mexicans, while a howl of admiration came from the American. Shooting straight downward at terrific speed came the 'plane. It never paused, and it seemed that the bold airman must be dashed to death. Then he flattened out, went into a tight spiral and repeatedly circled the cañon. Finally, as if satisfied the plan he had in mind was a logical one, he came to earth halfway between the hidden motorcyclist and the entrance to the cañon. The machine struck violently, bounced over the brush in a wild manner, nearly upended several times, and came to a jerky pause.

A short distance to the right was a narrow depression; and before the astounded bandits could get into action, the airman had pushed his machine into it. Just above the bank, a scant ten feet away, the machine-gun peeped. The operator would be almost hidden, but the gun could sweep either end of the valley. Just by way of emphasizing his presence, he sent a burst down the valley and into the cave. Spurts of dust, flying stones and sticks filled the air an instant—then silence.

Crawling on all fours came the motorcyclist. It took time, but he made it safely.

"Good work, Jack!" he shouted, with a fine disregard for their difference in rank.

"Hurt much, kid?" queried the elder Kelley, glancing sharply at his brother's head.

"Nope—just a scratch! But how about you ever getting your bus out of here?"

"We'll not worry about the bus. I radioed headquarters that I was going to drop into the cañon and would attempt to keep the entrance clear with the machine-gun. Then I dropped!"

"That one that shoots through the propeller wont do much good where it is. Suppose I dismount it?" suggested the Corporal.

"All right, kid. Our friends have formed for an attack. Thought I saw a movement in the brush over there!" The machine-gun spoke sharply. "Didn't get anything, but it'll quiet 'em a bit."

Two minutes later the Lieutenant swung the little gun around quickly and sent a burst of ten shots toward the cañon entrance. Three men dashed from the brush for cover—two were caught midway and fell; the third made it.

"I'd forgotten all about those fellows!" said the Corporal.

"I didn't know they were there until I thought I saw something move and opened up. Lucky shot!" replied the airman.

"Yes; but we'll catch it tonight. That's all those birds are waiting for—darkness—then they'll rush us. Too bad we haven't a few star-shells to light up things with."

THE motorcyclist was right. The 'plane, the two men and the machine-guns presented a neat problem for the Mexicans. They had always planned to hold off attacks from the mouth of the entrance, but an airman had upset things by dropping down from the clouds and taking up a position where he commanded the entrance. At present he could not get them; neither could they get him, though snipers from time to time attempted to get a good shot in; but they had a world of respect for the machine-gun and refused to take chances.

Unless the American force arrived before dark, they still had the chance of crawling through the brush and rushing the position occupied by the two soldiers. It would cost a life or two undoubtedly, but the chances were all in their favor. This they decided to do, for well they knew what would happen once the American troops occupied the cañon. It would be a great day for the border-guards, and several choice and slippery outlaws would be rushed over to the American side for trial and certain conviction.

For the remainder of the afternoon neither side made a move. An occasional shot was fired and returned, but that was all. The Lieutenant divided his small water-supply with his brother, and save for thirst the two were comfortable enough.

Gradually sunlight gave way to shadows, and shadows to total darkness. Both sides then began to stir.

Quietly the Mexicans crept forward. Their plan was to spread out and gradually close in on the position. It was slow, painful work, with many a pause while straining eyes sought to pierce the gloom. Finally each man came to a halt and waited. Off to the left a single shot rang out. It was followed by a volley; then with a series of wild cries they rushed the

positions. Shots, shouts and curses rang out into the night, and knives flashed. Then a voice of authority spoke out sharply. The struggles ceased. All was quiet once more.

The Americans were gone!

From the distance came laughter. It was laughter of the hearty sort, as if the men had been waiting to express their mirth for some time over something they expected would soon happen — and had happened.

"Pretty good, kid, eh? I'd like to ease a few short bursts over that way. Bet I'd get one or two, but I might damage the bus—and I love that little bus!" It was the quiet voice of the Lieutenant.

"Just like those dubs," returned the Corporal in disgust; "they figured we'd be fools enough to stay there and let 'em rush us!"

ON the ground, bound hand and foot, was the third man who had been guarding the cañon's entrance. His capture had been comparatively easy. He had remained in hiding after the unexpected departure from this world of his fellow-bandits. When darkness shrouded the place, he began to "hear things." Being unable to stand it any longer, he had started to rejoin the others—when he ran squarely into the two Americans who were laboriously transporting the two machine-guns and ammunition to a place of safety. Both had piled onto the man, and his capture had been effected without undue noise.

"What'll we do with Villa?" inquired the Corporal.

"Put him up in front where I can keep an eye on him," directed the airman. "Then you hot-foot it out and see if you can find the detachment. I'll hold the fort, all right!"

Into the darkness went Corporal Fred Kelley, while Lieutenant Jack stretched himself on the ground and wondered if his improvised machine-gun mounting would stand the gaff in case he had to use it.

Once clear of the cañon entrance, the Corporal found it somewhat lighter. With his feet feeling for the trail he started forth, swinging along in the regulation stride, and whistling gayly. He had gone but a short distance when a sudden "Halt!" rang out.

Corporal Kelley halted in his tracks.

"Who goes there?" snapped the voice.

"Well, you big stiff, who do you suppose goes there—a friend, of course. Use your brains. You don't suppose a Mex bandit would walk along whistling, do you? Besides, I figured I'd better tune up a bit, for it would be just like one of you boobs to plug me and ask questions afterward."

The sentry led the way, and Kelley followed. Briefly he outlined the situation.

"We received the Lieutenant's message, of course," explained the C. O. "But it didn't seem hardly possible he could accomplish so ambitious an undertaking. We were preparing to rush the entrance and find out what had happened to you boys."

"All you got to do, sir, is to follow me," said the Corporal.

This is what they did. Quietly and with a few low-spoken commands they entered the narrow passageway between the walls, and came to the Lieutenant and his prisoner. Here they paused a moment, then proceeded into the valley, and spreading out in skirmish formation, waited until morning.

At dawn the prisoner was released. "Go tell 'em they can come out with their hands up in the air or we'll come in and get 'em, and our hands wont be up in the air, either!"

The prisoner hurried off. Half an hour later the bandits came slowly toward them with hands upraised.

"Huh!" grunted a man in disgust. "After all this hiking, they quit cold. Good night!"

IT was an hour later that the C. O. sent for the Lieutenant and Corporal. His congratulations were right from the heart.

But the Lieutenant had something to say too. He had been casting a critical eye about the cañon walls.

"With your permission, sir, we'll put the prisoners to work clearing away the brush so I can take off. I'm sure I can get out of here without difficulty."

"Very well!"

"And with your permission, sir," said the Corporal, "I'll sit back and watch 'em work, because a Mex bandit sure hates to work, and our boys will prod 'em right along."

"Very well!"

And Corporal Kelley seated himself comfortably in a side-car that had just appeared on the scene.

# The Blue Ghost

## A Complete Novelette

### CHAPTER I

ONE is forced to admire Jim Hanecy's cool and—possibly—ruthless manner of getting at a thing. Jim always admired efficiency and practiced it, sometimes leaving a rough trail.

Away up in western Yunnan, where the natives stared at his white skin in wonder, where the hills ranged through the clouds and China was farther away than Thibet, Hanecy encountered Baron von Friederman. He encountered him very unexpectedly and abruptly, on a narrow hill path, just as the Baron was in the act of kicking Hanecy's foremost *mafu* out of his august way.

Hanecy grabbed the muleteer by the hair and rescued him. Then, while the Baron was still staring at this apparition of a white man in gaping surprise, Hanecy hauled the poor nobleman off his horse, kicked him twice, rather violently, and hurled him into the bushes below.

"Confound you!" said Hanecy. "Whoever you are, you can't kick my *mafus* off the trail without learning a lesson!"

"Curse you!" responded the Baron melodramatically, shaking his blue-blooded fist up from the brambles. "I'll have your life for this!"

Jim Hanecy merely sniffed. He turned to the Baron's *mafus* and ordered them to crowd aside. They did it meekly, and Jim went his way.

He did not find out about the Baron until he arrived in Chian Fu that night and had a talk with the missionary there. Then he discovered who the baron was, and whistled.

"I heard about him!" he observed. "A famous ethnologist and scientist, eh? An Austrian. So no wonder he took the whole road!"

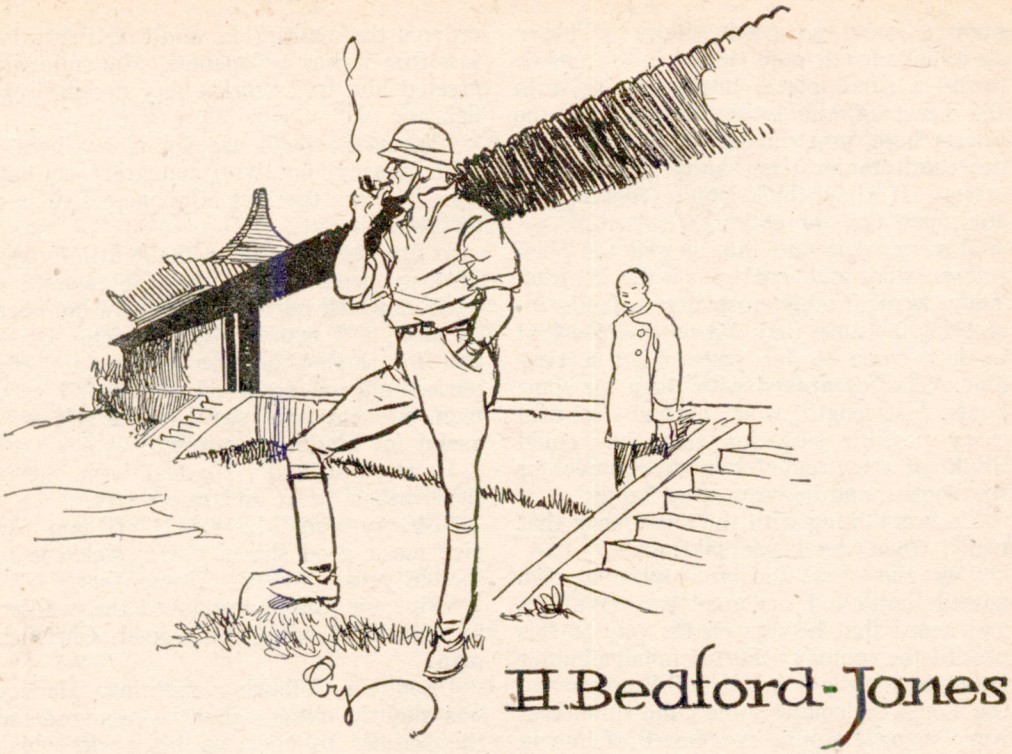
"All the crimes of the world need not be fastened on Austrians," said the missionary a bit stiffly. "I am one myself. We are not a bad race. We are not criminals!"

"I beg your pardon," said Jim, largely because the man was a missionary. "That's true. It's become the fashion to curse all Central Europe with the German curse. And one can't deny that the Baron has had hard luck, and has met it like a man."

The missionary was mollified.

Jim Hanecy knew the Baron's story—everyone in China knew it. At the outbreak of the war, von Friederman had been seeking zoölogical specimens in Thibet, and for two years knew nothing about the war. When he tried to come out *via* Szuchuan and Shanghai, he nearly reached the coast when China drew cards in the big game. That closed the coast ports, and he circled back hoping to get out by way of Mongolia. He was half Russian, and knew that in Russia he'd be safe.

Just before he got to Mongolia, Russia went to pieces, and most of his friends in that country were disposed of as Ger-




manophiles. So the Baron headed south again; he tried to cut through Japanese railroad territory, and the bandits which find shelter in such territory from the Chinese government promptly dropped on him. They got everything he had, and he fled nearly naked into Chinese territory again, glad to escape with his life.

As Hanecy remarked, the Baron fought like a man. Without money, without friends, he somehow held his own up there in the high interior of China until the war was over. They say that he robbed a Gobi caravan, almost single-handed, and looted some silver; at any rate, he showed up near the Yunnan border, turned in his silver and gold to the priests and so gained their protection and confidence.

THERE was guile in this, for the lamas have a monopoly on all the precious metals, and suspect white men of seeking to rob them of their mineral rights. Once the Baron got the Tibetan church behind him, he lived in style until the war ended. Then, provided anew with funds and hope, he sent his stored boxes of specimens down to the coast, and set out to obtain the glory that would crown them all—the blue tiger. This was at the point where he met Hanecy. So much for the Baron.

Hanecy was after the blue tiger himself. An American museum had sent him an order to get it, and Jim Hanecy had gone to get it. It mattered nothing to him that half the sportsmen in the Orient had tried to get the blue tiger, either by expedition or by long-distance purchase. It mattered nothing to him that the beast was known as the "Blue Ghost," and that no one knew if it were a distinct species or a lone and outlawed gentleman of the tiger kingdom. It was Hanecy's business to fill commissions, either in the way of art, curios, natural history or human heads. At one time or another he had been in pursuit of all these, and for a number of years he had made a good profit from his business. He knew China as well as any man knows it, and usually got what he went after.

When he told the missionary what he was now after, the missionary laughed.

"Luck be with you!" he told Hanecy. "How'll you go after him?"

"Get hold of a temple somewhere, rent it, use it as headquarters and hunt from there," said Jim promptly. The missionary nodded.

"The only way, of course; I see you

know how to go about things. There's an abandoned temple twelve miles outside town—a small place, but good—right in the heart of the hills. If you see the priests here, you can rent it cheap. But don't fail to let them know what you're after! If they think you're looking for gold, you can do nothing."

Hanecy went and interviewed the chief priests who had charge of the district. They were frankly suspicious of his intentions, because they did not believe that he had come so far just to get a tiger hide. Hanecy argued with them for some hours. At length, when he had disarmed every possible suspicion that they could think of, they rented him the temple for six months, and he went away happy.

He was talking with the missionary that night, when the latter said:

"By the way, did you meet a man named Smith? I had mail two days ago, and heard that he was on his way to this part of the country. He's a famous hunter from the southern border of Yunnan and the Tongking country—he's the rhinoceros ivory man, if you've ever heard of him in that connection—"

"Lord, yes!" exclaimed Hanecy. "The fellow who has been shipping rhino horns into China and piling up money at it! What's he doing up here?"

"Looking for the Blue Ghost," and the missionary chuckled.

HANECY grinned. "All right, I'm willing! We'll join forces, if he shows up. After all, there's nothing to it except to connect with good native hunters, keep your rifle well oiled, have the natives all on the lookout for the tiger—and then go after him! But I'll get his hide, if I have to stay here a year!"

On the following day, Jim Hanecy set out for his temple. It was a quiet little place, well built, and with fires to keep out the dampness would be very comfortable. News of his presence had already gone out through the countryside, and several bands of hunters presented themselves. Of these, Hanecy selected half a dozen, armed with muskets or cheek-guns, who impressed him as being men upon whom he could depend.

It was three days later, after Jim Hanecy had first begun to realize that this Blue Ghost was a difficult and elusive proposition, that the peddler came to the temple one evening and asked for him. Hanecy ordered the man inside, and to his surprise saw that it was a Japanese, who smilingly greeted him in English—very decent English, too.

"What the devil are you doing here?" said Hanecy, not with too great cordiality. "You're the first Nipponese I've seen in this country!"

"I am peddler, sir," said the little brown brother, grinning widely. He showed a pack in which mirrors and razors lay open to view. "I exploit this district. I ask you for shelter, because I have not any place, and you not need all this. I good man, sir; cut hair, shave, make self very useful for kindness returned."

Hanecy laughed. He had been out in the brush all day, and was weary.

"I'll try you," he said. "If you can give me a good shave, you're welcome to shelter yourself here. How's that?"

"Fine, sir, fine!" responded the peddler. "I named Tokiwa, sir, good Christian man."

Upon the following morning, Hanecy was slightly uneasy about it, and ordered the peddler to open up his pack, which Tokiwa did very willingly.

"I not smuggler, sir. I good Christian man, and priests not like me so."

Hanecy went through the pack and found nothing suspicious. Tokiwa protested volubly that the priests hated him because he was a Christian, and the first Japanese to get into this hill country. He threw himself upon Hanecy's protection so cleverly that the red-haired American accepted the charge.

Hanecy walked away to bestir his men. Tokiwa looked after him, smiling as always, and hitched at his ragged garments, then patted them reassuringly.

"I good Christian man," he murmured softly. "Oh, hell, yes!"

## CHAPTER II

BARON VON FRIEDERMAN was a very decent sort of fellow—in his way. He did not look the heroic part that his record proved him to have played; he was a little stout, looked about forty, kept his hair carefully brushed over a bald spot, and had a red, genial countenance. He spoke most languages equally well, and was a boon companion.

After his unfortunate encounter with Jim Hanecy, the Baron followed the hill

trails for two days, seeking news of the blue tiger without avail. Then, toward evening, he stumbled plumb on Smith's camp.

Smith, blue-eyed and bronzed, very imperturbable and never giving way to impulse, saw the party coming and wakened his camp into action. He walked out to meet the Baron, who introduced himself at once.

"You're welcome," said Smith. "I've heard of you, of course. Glad to see you. My name's Smith; American. Up here tiger-hunting."

The Baron laughed. "A poor place for tiger, eh? They usually stick to the hot country. Then, it is evident that you are looking for the Blue Ghost."

"I am," said Smith.

"So am I," said the Baron, chuckling. "I'm glad I found you—I was looking forward to a brick bed in town, and when I saw your camp here outside the walls, it was a delightful surprise."

"Come along and make yourself at home," said Smith. "We're dining in a few minutes."

The Baron lighted a cigarette with unassumed joy. He told about meeting another white man, and he told just how he had met him, rightly blaming himself for hasty action.

"That must be Hanecy," said Smith. "I've been crossing his trail frequently on the way up here. He must be a regular buccaneer! Left unhappy officials everywhere behind him. Seems to have no tact at all—rides over the natives roughshod. Why, back in Chu Hsiung he actually beat up an old-fashioned mandarin who tried to make a little honest graft off him!"

The Baron chuckled again at this. "What's he after, do you know?"

"The Blue Ghost."

At this, the Baron roared with laughter, and Smith's blue eyes twinkled.

SMITH was new to this part of the country, although tigers were nothing new to him. He said frankly that he was on a vacation, and was after the Blue Ghost for no more scientific a purpose than to satisfy his love of hunting. A friend, who had started with him, had remained in Chu Hsiung to study some particularly interesting manuscripts in one of the temple libraries there, and would come on later to the hills. Smith had no interest in manuscripts.

He had heard of Hanecy, and imagined him very much as he was described—a fiercely impulsive man, of the type that regarded the natives as animals under his feet and kicked them out of the way. This was not Hanecy, of course, but it is regrettably true that Jim Hanecy, who was usually in a hurry and always going somewhere, outraged the peaceful somnolence of every official he encountered, and therefore left behind him a trail of so-called violence. Smith was quiet, very quiet, and had no use for the loud and violent sort of man; so he was not anxious to meet Jim Hanecy.

Before dinner was over, Smith concluded that he liked the Baron, who was really a good sportsman and had nothing of the offensive German bluster about him. There are occasional noblemen of the Central Empires who deserve the name, and von Friederman seemed one of these rare birds. He emphasized his sportsmanship, in the eyes of Smith, by offering to give the American a letter to any priests he might encounter, which would set him at peace with lamaism.

"I suppose you'd not consider going into partnership with me?" suggested the Baron suddenly. Smith removed his pipe and smiled.

"Suits me, Baron," he said quietly. "Do you care to walk into town? I want to leave a letter with the mission people for that partner of mine, if he ever gets this far. Chances are that he wont. We can settled our details of party and outfit, and be off in the morning if you like."

The Baron was delighted.

THEY walked into town together, discussing details of the amalgamation. At the mission station, maintained by a native convert, Smith left the letter for his partner, and they turned back. Darkness had fallen, and as they came to the edge of town they halted at sight of a dim shape blocking the road ahead.

"Gentlemen!" cried a voice in English. Both men started involuntarily.

"Who's there?" demanded Smith. The vague shape resolved itself into the figures of a man and a laden mule approaching them.

"Gentlemen, I named Tokiwa," said the man. "I am peddler, sirs; I exploit this district. I ask you take me on to Chian Fu, I being feared of dangers of travel. I good Christian, excellent man—"

"Be careful!" said the Baron softly, and in French.

"I know," responded Smith in the same tongue, and raised his voice in English. "Nothing doing, you Jap! Get on about your business and don't bother us again. We don't want to be seen in your company."

"I good Christian man," began the other dolefully.

"You lie!" snapped the Baron with sudden anger. "You're one of those cursed morphine peddlers—you come near us again and I'll put a bullet into you! A lot *I* care whether your country gets indignant or not! Get out of here!"

The figure of the little man disappeared in the obscurity. As the two men went on their way back to camp, the Baron cursed under his breath.

"That man goes to his death," he said, "if he goes on to Chian Fu. The priesthood is resolved not to let one of those peddlers into the district, and they'll stop at nothing to keep them out. My word! I feel like shooting the fellow on sight. But perhaps you, being from the coast, are not aware what's going on."

"Oh, yes," said Smith calmly. "It's been exposed at last—the foreign papers are full of it, and the Chinese press is conducting a propaganda on the subject. They've finally established the fact that the Japanese have deliberately flooded the Chinese provinces with these damned peddlers, and supply them with morphia through their postal system, which is not subject to the Chinese customs. Dr. Wu Lien-teh of Pekin says that eighteen tons are put into the country annually in this way; it's been proved it was done by Japanese officials. I brought along the last copy I had of the Tientsin *Times,* with a long article on the subject. It seems that the peddlers give free injections of the drug until the habit is formed, then charge for it."

The Baron cursed fluently.

"The lama priesthood is bitter about it," he returned. "They claim it is a deliberate attempt by Japan to debauch the entire Chinese nation."

"It is," said Smith gravely. "It's the most frightful thing that the Orient has ever seen; and the Chinese dare not arrest or touch a single Japanese peddler. Why the devil America can't be wakened to it and be made to take some action, I can't see! Japan buys the opium crop of India, ships it to Formosa, makes it into morphia, its chief alkaloid, and pours the morphia into China."

"You seem to know quite a bit about it," said the Baron.

"I do. I've seen a good deal of the effects of the traffic in the eastern provinces. Somewhere there's a presiding genius directing the whole diabolical thing, and if the Chinese ever discover who he is, heaven help him! However, let's change the subject."

"Willingly," said the Baron. "The Blue Ghost is a more cheerful topic."

SMITH shivered very slightly. The Baron could not know, of course, that in certain circles in Yunnan and other provinces closer to the seacoast, circles in which Smith had been wont to move, this very morphia traffic had gone by the name of the Blue Ghost. These circles had never heard of the blue tiger of the hills, nor had they known that the name was applied to such an animal—but Smith had known it.

Smith's business was that of hunting rhinoceros horn, which commands high prices in the Chinese market. He had been engaged in this business down in Tonking, and had made himself extremely useful to the French government there. The French sphere of influence extending into Yunnan, where the blue tiger of hunter's lore was famed to live, Smith took his vacation in that direction.

Meeting that peddler Tokiwa had put a bad taste in Smith's mouth. He could vision that little brown man going on to Chian Fu, the capital of the province, and being supplied by some invisible chain with morphia; he could see the little brown man injecting the drug—"dreamland elixir" or "soothing stuff" it was usually called—into peasants all over the countryside; the peddler, one link in a chain of deviltry unheard of in history! Smith knew very well indeed that the Tibetan church was resolutely determined to let none of these peddlers into the hills—this man was the first to arrive so far west—and that the lamas would stop at nothing to defend their territory against the deadly and sinister war.

Was that war of the white drug being waged by the Japanese Government? Smith did not know; indeed, despite the outcries of the press, despite the investigations which seemed to prove the fact, Smith doubted it. He knew that men of his own

race and country were entirely willing to make money by debauching other people—for evil is confined to no one breed of man. He knew also that the traffic was deplored by the conscientious and high-minded among Japanese statesmen. And Smith strongly suspected that somewhere in China there was one man unscrupulous, cunning and bold enough to organize the whole traffic.

All this was not tiger talk. With relief, the American regained camp that night and joined the Baron in forming one joint expedition from their two separate parties. Certain men were discarded, certain animals dispensed with; economy would be largely served, for there would be one outfit of hunters instead of two, one commissariat instead of two, and advantages in other ways.

The Baron was equipped with very good maps of the province, which he had made himself, and which were far superior to those of Smith. He gladly gave the latter permission to copy them. He also had a very fair scientific equipment, lately furnished him from the coast ports, while Smith had nothing except a small theodolite, compass and sextant, and a few miscellaneous instruments.

"The combination will run all to my advantage," said Smith, smiling in his calm way.

"My word, no!" exclaimed the Baron earnestly. "Do you realize, my dear fellow, that I've been in this cursed country for years, scarcely seeing a white face and rarely having conversation with a white man? Do you comprehend what your company will mean to me?"

SMITH nodded, and walked outside camp. There he stood and grinned broadly at the stars, as though he perceived some tremendous joke that nobody else could see. Presently he came back again, very sober and quiet. That was Smith's way—he never went in for any boisterous talk or high words. When he acted, he acted like the sharp, unexpected crack of a whip.

There were certain latent possibilities in Smith, and only certain high governing officials suspected them. Nobody else was intended to suspect them, and nobody else did. That was Smith's way. Down in Tonking some people stepped far and wide when he was around; but nobody knew him here.

## CHAPTER III

SMITH and the Baron had a busy two weeks, and the hill villages enjoyed their stay very much indeed, but they never got a glimpse of the blue tiger.

"I believe the brute actually is a ghost—the ghost of the Empress Dowager," said Smith irritably, one night. "So the peasants say. It'd be just like old Tzu Hsi to come back from the dead in the shape of a freak tiger!"

The Baron laughed softly over his cigarette.

"Yes, but, my dear chap, I've seen the brute—quite by accident, when I was unarmed! The most beautiful tiger I ever saw in my life. Light grayish blue on the belly, deepening elsewhere, with bold stripes like those of any other of the species."

"Oh, I suppose he's real," admitted Smith. "Black leopards are common enough down south, so he may be an abnormal brute of his own kind. He's certainly abnormal when it comes to eluding hunters!"

Von Friederman stroked his hair over his bald spot, and chuckled.

In that two weeks, Smith had rather astonished the Baron by his hunting, while the Baron had proven himself a good second to Smith. With all their combined skill, however, they had been dodged by their prey.

The Blue Ghost appeared to have a range of about twenty miles. One section of this district of his was near Chian Fu itself, not far from the abandoned temple which Jim Hanecy had taken over. From here it ran north into the district where Smith and the Baron were covering ground vainly.

The tiger appeared often enough. He came to villages all around the camp of the two, made his kills and went his way. The mountains hereabouts were largely deforested and were well populated, nor did the cultivated valleys afford the killer any protection; but on every hand were cañons and smaller valleys which were absolutely filled with thorns and sword grass. These were impenetrable to hunters, except by means of the tunnels through the bramble growths which were made by animals, and here a hundred tigers might have lain day after day without discovery. In fact, the Baron got one tawny beast, thinking he had followed the spoor of the Blue Ghost.

The two chased down the news of every fresh kill; by the time they had reached the spot and had begun to trail the beast, natives invariably arrived with reports of a fresh kill in a locality miles distant. Night after night they took goats or kids, tied them near the supposed lair of the tiger, and watched through the dragging hours, hoping thus to get a shot. The only result was one mangy and toothless old brute, shot by Smith in sheer disgust.

HOWEVER irritated the two hunters might be over the lack of luck, the natives of the district were wild with joy. Two tigers had been slain; that was enough! Every available bit of blood from the beasts was gathered—even the bloody twigs and grass were preserved; for tiger blood is a certain preventive against smallpox. Tiger flesh has the same quality, in native eyes, and not a scrap of the meat was wasted. Even the bones were collected, to be ground up and boiled into a jelly for medicinal purposes.

While primarily after the Blue Ghost, the two men did not neglect other branches of endeavor. There were ducks in plenty; sambur and other deer were more rare, while the serow or "wild cow" of Yunnan, a huge species of mountain goat, afforded excellent sport. Smith was not inclined to regard his time as wasted.

Early in the third week of their hunt, the two men were out after barking-deer and sambur, to serve as fresh meat for the camp, when they visited a small temple near a village. They were received with great cordiality by the priests, and this was not the first time that Smith had seen evidences of the excellent relations between von Friederman and the lamas. On this occasion, however, the chief priest immediately engaged the Baron in animated conversation, and the red, genial features of the Baron took on a look of worried anxiety. Smith did not admit a knowledge of the dialect, and appeared ignorant of what was said until the Baron turned to him.

"My word, Smith! You remember that chap Hanecy whom we discussed? The man must be an awful ass! He's over his ears in trouble."

"How so?" queried Smith.

"You recall that Jap peddler whom we met? He reached Chian Fu, and went on to a temple that Hanecy has rented as headquarters. The priest tells me that Hanecy has taken him under his own protection and is keeping him there. The filthy little blighter goes around on his hideous errands, filling the natives with dope; two priests caught him at it the other day and were beating him to death when Hanecy came up and gave them what-for. Lost his temper, I imagine. Your countryman is in an awful mess!"

"Damn it!" said Smith calmly. "Who would think him to be such a fool? Have the priests had him before a mandarin?"

"No. There'll be no publicity—I'm afraid they'll do for him on the quiet. Of course, I don't pretend to love the man, but all the same he should be warned. Er—you don't suppose that this Hanecy could have any interest in protecting him?"

SMITH frowned. From the stories he had heard of Jim Hanecy, he did not believe anything of the sort. He could well imagine that in some manner Hanecy had made a bad mistake with the peddler, and was too stubborn to be dealt with. The lamas were certain to deal with him in the wrong fashion, too. The most probable theory was that the peddler Tokiwa had absolutely fooled Hanecy about his business, and that Hanecy thought him to be an innocent fellow on whom the priesthood was picking without cause.

"Darned if I know what to think!" said Smith slowly. "This peddler seems to be a clever little devil, all right. He'd not be in this district unless he were mighty clever. Would these priests take charge of a letter and send it to him?"

The Baron talked with the chief lama, who nodded energetically. Smith was provided with ink, paper and brushes, and sat down to write. He was irritated by what he considered the utter folly of Hanecy; also, because his own name was Jim, he queerly enough felt a dislike toward the man whom he did not know. Thus, he did not phrase his letter diplomatically:

> Kick out that peddler, his note ran, or you'll be done for some night. I'm not sending you this warning because I like you; from what I hear about you, you've been playing the fool. Tokiwa is peddling morphine, and the devil ought to be shot. If you have any regard for the dignity of your own race, kick him out at once! Baron von Friederman is using his good offices to get this letter to you. It's a warning, and if you don't heed it good and hard, look out!
>
> J. SMITH

The priests took charge of the letter, and sent it off to Chian Fu by runner.

Upon the following evening, an excited native dashed into camp with word that there had been a tiger kill in a village five miles distant. A woman had been carried off, and it was not likely that she could be carried far. If the hunters would come at once, they could take up the trail at dawn and run down the tiger—he was supposed to be the Blue Ghost.

With their hunters and dogs, the two set forth. Shortly before midnight, they reached the village in question, fired with hope that this time they would land the elusive prey.

With the first streak of dawn, the hunt was on. The trail of the beast was not difficult to follow, and it was soon evident that he was a large one, for the trail led them a good two miles before hitting the brush. Tigers will carry their kill to a long distance before pausing to devour it, but only a large brute could carry a full-grown woman this distance.

THEY came to the lair at last—an impenetrable ravine, choked high with a tangled mass of trees, bramble and sword grass. The only way to reach the brute was to crawl along the tunnel which he had made into the mass; that it was a tiger tunnel was proven by the little heaps of grass raked carefully aside. Underneath that jungle, the sun could not penetrate.

"Nothing doing on the hunters," said Smith calmly, gazing at the place. "They wont go in there, Baron—it's up to us. Want to try it?"

The Baron chuckled and produced a coin. He flipped it high in air.

"Heads is mine; tails yours! Heads goes in first with the electric torch, tails comes with the gun."

Smith nodded. The coin fell heads.

Instantly the Baron called the man who bore their extra equipment, and took the big electric torch which Smith had added to the joint resources. Dropping to his hands and knees, he started forward along the tunnel, while the hunters murmured their admiration. Smith himself could not but admire the Baron's cold nerve, for if he had been alone he admitted frankly to himself that he would have gone away from there and left the tiger in peace.

He followed the Baron, gun trailing under his hand. Within a few moments they were in a world of tangled darkness, through which the ray of artificial light pierced bleakly. At intervals they passed the mouths of side tunnels which joined the main line; in any one of these the tiger might lie hidden.

Suddenly, without warning, the Baron flattened himself against the earth, holding the torch in front of him. A low breath escaped his lips—a wordless, inchoate sound.

Perhaps ten feet ahead of them, Smith caught a greenish glare as the light was reflected from the eyes of a huge cat. Then, for one brief instant, he saw the beast itself; a glorious striped blue, of immense size. He thrust forward his rifle above the Baron, but the chance was gone. The eyes had vanished. The tiger had fled.

The Baron swore luridly. "Let's get out of here!" he said. "If you fired that damned rifle above my head it would smash my eardrums, anyway. Hadn't thought of that."

Dripping with perspiration, they beat an undignified retreat. While they were still shaking brush and leaves from their clothes, outside, one of the hunters dashed up with word that he had seen the tiger at a distance, loping across a flank of the mountain. The beast had been in their grasp, and had escaped.

DISGUSTED with themselves, the two men returned to their camp, reaching it in the early afternoon. Before they had gotten bathed and fairly comfortable, a native arrived in camp with word that he had come from the chief temple in Chian Fu. He bore a letter, which he gave the Baron, who glanced at the writing and handed it to Smith with a chuckle.

"From our friend Hanecy."

Smith tore open the envelope, read the letter without comment, and handed it to the Baron. It was brief, and expressed Jim Hanecy in every line:

> I don't like your baron, and I don't like your style of writing. I might say that I've been all through the pack of Tokiwa, and he hasn't an ounce of any kind of drug. These priests are playing hell with him, and while I don't like him particularly, I wont stand for their killing him like a dog. You and your warning can go to hell with the baron to boot. Thanks.
>
> J. HANECY

The Baron glanced at Smith, his face grave.

"This is too bad!" he exclaimed. "The man has taken offense. Do you think we can—"

"Let him hang himself in the rope of his own folly," and Smith shrugged, his features quite inscrutable. "Tokiwa has fooled him, that's all. Hello! This chap is talking to you—"

The native bearer of the message broke into a flood of dialect. The Baron, listening, started suddenly and interrupted him with a question. The man nodded.

"My word!" Von Friederman turned to Smith with a gesture. "The priests in Chian Fu got this letter and sent it on to us. But this man says that, as he was leaving town, he met one of Hanecy's hunters coming in for help—the hunter told him that Hanecy was dying."

"Ah!" Smith rose, unhurriedly. "You think the lamas—"

"No, I don't," said the Baron. "They promised to keep hands off, at least until they heard from me, An accident, perhaps. What are you going to do?"

Smith was calling his hunters.

"I'm going to see Hanecy," he said calmly.

## CHAPTER IV

SMITH'S partner, who had remained behind in Chu Hsiung to look over some temple manuscripts, was not a hunter. He was a scientist and ethnologist of some fame, by name Tom Bryce; a big fellow of giant build, with yellow hair and intense black eyes which caused many natives to deem him a devil. He knew the ancient and modern tongues of China, and he accompanied Smith on his vacation out of friendship—also, because Smith needed his aid.

Chu Hsiung was not an important city of the "fu" class, but it was large enough to have its mandarin, its mission station, its Japanese consul, and its own troubles. The mandarin was a progressive man of enlightened principles and much learning.

One day, when he had been in Chu Hsiung a fortnight or more, Tom Bryce received the letter that Smith had sent him after joining forces with the Baron. That evening he went to play chess with the mandarin. Over the chessboard, the subject of Japanese peddlers came up.

"Why don't you put a stop to it?" demanded Bryce rather heatedly. "You have authority. There is an immense fine prescribed for morphia smugglers or dealers in opium."

The mandarin shook his head.

"I am helpless, my friend," he answered. "The peddlers can only be judged by their own consul; he will not find them guilty."

"Ah!" said Bryce thoughtfully. "Suppose he could be prevailed upon to find them guilty?"

The mandarin smiled. "Then the Japanese government would make fresh demands on China."

"But suppose this were guaranteed not to take place?"

"Entirely impossible, my friend! We do not rule our own country, shameful as it may seem to admit. By the way, have you heard the news? Prince Yamato of Japan is traveling in this direction; he has come to hunt the Blue Ghost, as they call—"

"What?" said Bryce. "I never heard of Japanese princes being hunters!"

"This man is very enlightened," said the mandarin complacently. "He is on his way to Chian Fu."

"Well, never mind him," said Bryce, taking a folded document from his pocket. "Would it be possible for you to catch any of these peddlers in the act of selling opium?"

The mandarin smiled politely. "Why not? It is done openly. The two Japanese drug stores in the city make no pretense about it."

"Very good," said Bryce, his black eyes flashing oddly. "See here! You get to work in the morning, and round up every peddler you can find; also the two drug stores. Get clear evidence against them. Bring them before the Japanese consul tomorrow night for trial, and demand a trial without a moment's delay."

"My friend, that would be folly! They would be let off free, and damages would be assessed against my district for false arrest."

"What of it?" said Bryce, smiling slightly. "You will at least have done your duty; and as matters stand now, you are not even pretending to do your duty!"

THE mandarin started. "Ah, that is a new way of looking at it," he murmured. A flash of resolution crossed his face. "Good! I will do it tomorrow."

"Without fail?" demanded Bryce. "Then glance at this paper."

He extended the document, and the mandarin opened it. Strange to say, it was written in Japanese characters, and he puzzled them out slowly, dawning amazement in his face. When he returned the paper, his voice was choked.

"My friend," he said with difficulty, "my friend—there is hope for China! I shall do this tomorrow. Thanks be to the Gods!"

Upon the following afternoon, the mandarin threw his city into a furor of excitement. Groups of soldiers came into town from various quarters, each group bringing a bound Japanese peddler with them; there were ten peddlers in all. The two drug stores were closed, and their proprietors taken into custody.

Tom Bryce arrived at the Japanese consulate to find it humming like a beehive, and the consul jubilant. This was the greatest stroke of luck that had happened for many a day! An assessment of damages would be levied against this district that would make the whole province stand aghast! These impudent Chinese would soon feel the strong arm of Nippon!

Bryce interviewed the consul, who was all ready to go to the mandarin's yamen. The polite surprise of the consul was turned into shocked astoundment inside of two minutes. When Bryce handed him the document in Japanese characters, the man read it only by an effort of the will; he seemed paralyzed beyond speech.

"Now, come along," said Bryce. "We'll go over to the yamen and assess the maximum fine against these criminals, and banish them from the province. Wont we?"

"We—nothing is proved yet," he stammered. "I must have time—"

"Listen!" and the black eyes of Bryce bored down at him. "If these cases are not proven, then do nothing; you must be just. But if they are proven, there is just one course of action for you to follow—the one I have suggested! And," he added grimly, "I shall be standing right beside you all the time, and my pistol will be within three inches of your back. You poor little cur! Do you know that it would give me positive pleasure to shoot you?"

The consul shivered and got out of his chair.

"Let us go," he mumbled.

THE scene in the yamen of the mandarin beggered description. The mandarin sat in his chair; and, as custom prescribed, the Japanese consul was seated at his left hand, with Tom Bryce towering just behind. Soldiers ranged the walls, looking very uneasy and perturbed, while the dozen culprits were ranged before their judge, grinning widely. The consul appeared very nervous, but the mandarin, who rather expected that out of this matter would come his official decapitation, seemed quite calm.

When the first case was called and the witnesses had presented their testimony, which was damning, the consul fined the peddler the maximum sum prescribed, confiscated all his goods, and banished him from the province. It was like an electric shock! Bewilderment and baffled rage filled the Japanese faces—astounded incredulity those of the Chinese. Even the mandarin seemed unable to believe his ears.

One by one the dozen criminals were found guilty and given the limit. When it was over, the white-lipped consul was gravely congratulated by Bryce, by the mandarin, and by other officials; none the less, he did not seem happy, and staggered rather than walked from the place.

"Is this a miracle?" asked the mandarin of Bryce.

"A miracle of justice," responded the big man soberly. "Now send throughout the province, send out runners tonight; gather in every peddler to be found, with news of what has happened here! I promise you that the consul will rule the cases justly, for he has seen the great good that comes with the rule of Justice, as your sage Confucius puts it. And, if you will be good enough, get me some animals so that I may go on to Chian Fu tomorrow and join my friend."

These happenings in Chu Hsiung were merely an interlude in the pursuit of the blue tiger. Bryce went on his way, unhurried, toward Chian Fu to rejoin his friend Smith. Some days after his departure from Chu Hsiung, arrived Prince Yamato of Japan on his way westward to hunt the blue tiger.

THE prince was one of the younger statesmen of Nippon, fairly close to the throne, and a man of great activity and promise. His influence was tremendous. He was blamed by Koreans and Chinese as being behind all the Japanese activity directed against them politically; by white men he was hailed as the shrewdest, keenest, and most upright man in

Japan's affairs. In some quarters he was an angel, in others a devil.

He came to Chu Hsiung nominally incognito, accompanied by six Japanese and a dozen Chinese officials; and the mandarin, beginning to tremble for his skin, assigned him a temple as dwelling-place. He remained two days in Chu Hsiung. On the evening before his departure, he sent for the mandarin, and greeted the latter in the Mandarin tongue, which he spoke fluently.

"I have heard, most honorable magistrate," he said, a silky smile on his strong brown features, "of the things you have done here against the smugglers of opium —men of my own country."

"Yes, your excellency," murmured the unhappy mandarin. "What was done was done in the cause of justice and according to the law."

"Quite true," said the prince, still with that inscrutable smile of Japanese etiquette. "Therefore, because I admire your action greatly, I wish to make you a present."

When the mandarin got home with his present and unwrapped it, he found that it was a very handsome sword—the short wakizashi of Japan, which in older days was used for the ceremony of *seppuku.*

Now, the mandarin knew of old the custom of sending from Pekin the silken cord of strangulation to unworthy officials. He knew that this sword was the one used in Japan for belly-slitting. It was a very handsome sword, of course, a real princely gift—and yet, to the unhappy mandarin, the obvious inference was that his best course in life was to join his ancestors as soon as possible, before some one else aided him on the path. Being an Oriental, he would naturally accept that inference.

However, he laid the sword aside in hopes that Bryce would return this way and help him. A faint hope, but an excellent action.

## CHAPTER V

SMITH started for Chian Fu that same evening he heard about Hanecy, in all haste, and alone. It was enough for him that Hanecy, a fellow-countryman, was dying.

The Baron gave him a letter to the chief lama at Chian Fu, and promised to follow him with the baggage and hunters in a couple of days. As Smith rode off shortly after dark, he looked back to see von Friederman, under a smoking torch, alternately patting his bald spot and waving his hand in farewell.

Smith did not go to Chian Fu at all, or rather did not enter the city, for the gates were closed upon his arrival and were kept closed each night for fear of banditry. Not bothering to obtain a guide, Smith circled around until he found the right road, and then rode off toward Hanecy's temple. He had learned where it was, and felt able to find it himself.

About midnight, the moon aiding him, he came to the little hill temple and drew rein. It was dark and apparently deserted. Smith sat his horse, waiting, wondering whether Hanecy lived or lay dead; the spell of the moonlight seemed to lay hold upon him. He had no definite idea in this waiting, unless perhaps he shrank from what he might find within.

Then it came to him that Hanecy was not dead, for he heard the stir of animals in the temple courtyard, and knew that the *mafus* were still here with their mules. Out in front of the temple entrance, by the ruined gateway with its inner wall that kept out devils, was a high stone lantern—the only thing about the place that seemed clear of brush. Just as Smith was about to urge his horse forward from the trees, he caught a movement in the gateway, and checked himself. A man came out into the moonlight, a small brown man, half naked and sandaled. It was the Japanese peddler, Tokiwa.

Tokiwa glided snakily to the high stone lantern, reached up one hand, and from the inside of the lantern produced a packet wrapped in silk. He thrust this into his waistband, and retraced his steps. An instant later the place was deserted, silent as before.

For a long five minutes Smith continued to wait, motionless, his hand at the nostrils of his hill pony to check any possible whinny. Then, suddenly, he lifted his voice in a shout, and the horse started to the sound. A moment later he urged the beast forward, and came to the temple entrance with much noise and shouting.

Two sleepy muleteers met him, followed quickly by Tokiwa. Seeing that he was a white man, the guns were lowered.

"Is Mr. Hanecy here?" Smith interrogated the peddler.

"He very sick, sir."

"Do you speak the dialect?"

"Very indifferent, sir. Yes, I speak him some."

"Then tell these fellows that I'm Mr. Hanecy's friend and have come to look after him."

SMITH heard Tokiwa translate his words very decently, then pushed forward. He was by no means desirous of telling Tokiwa all he knew. The peddler pushed after him, seeming rather agitated, and pattered out questions to which Smith paid no heed whatever. That Tokiwa had recognized him as the white man encountered in company with the Baron, he had no doubt.

He came at last to the chamber occupied by Hanecy, and stood for a moment gazing.

"How long has he been this way?"

"Since yesterday night, sir. I very indifferent doctor, send for missionary, he not come."

A moment later, Smith realized that Tokiwa had disappeared from the room, and he was just as glad that the man had gone. Around the doorway stood Hanecy's hunters and muleteers, watching in silence, awed by the way this foreign devil had come alone in the night.

In one corner of the chamber burned a native lantern, smokily and dimly. By its light, Smith could see the figure of Hanecy, outstretched on a pallet of pine branches covered with his blankets. The red-headed American lay stretched out stiffly, arms thrown wide. His eyes were stretched open, staring up at the ceiling in glassy fixedness. His boots had been removed, but otherwise he was almost completely dressed. To all appearances he was dead, except that a labored, regular breathing slightly distended his nostrils and slowly heaved his chest.

Smith went to him, sat on his heels native fashion, and took Hanecy's wrist. To his astonishment, the man's muscles were rigid, stiff. Smith turned.

"Tokiwa! Where's that damned Jap?"

The group about the doorway scattered hastily. After a moment the chief *mafu* returned and said that Tokiwa was gone from the building. A murmur of amazement broke from the men as Smith addressed them in the Lolo dialect, which was generally spoken in the hills; he could mix it with Chinese sufficiently to make himself understood.

"Chief *mafu* and chief hunter, come here! The rest of you depart. Find Tokiwa if you can."

The two natives stood before Smith, the others scattering. He pointed to Hanecy.

"Tell me how he became sick, and when, and all you know about it."

He learned that on the day before yesterday Hanecy had come in from hunting, to find Smith's note awaiting him, and on reading it had been angry. He had made a hasty meal, and had then despatched the answer to the note.

"Was Tokiwa here then?" demanded Smith.

YES, the peddler had been here. Shortly after the messenger had gone off with the answer to Smith's note, Hanecy, who had been out all that day and the preceding night, had lain down for a nap. He wakened, calling his men, and they had found him unable to tell them what was the matter. He had become speechless, and since then had remained as he now was.

Smith saw that these natives were good men in their way—honest, fearless mountaineers, and deeply worried over Hanecy. He ordered them to bring Hanecy's packs, and set about searching for medicines; he had already brought a small pocket-case of his own, but needed more. At this juncture, some of the other men entered with word that Tokiwa was not to be found, but had left the place with his mule.

"Who has been taking care of him?" asked Smith, indicating the sick man.

The peddler, he was informed, had been tireless in his care of Hanecy, and for this the natives, who did not like Tokiwa, gave him full credit. Smith grunted. Also, the missionary from Chian Fu had been summoned, but had not arrived.

As he rummaged among Hanecy's effects, Smith came upon a small packet tied up in silk. He opened it, and with a shock found a hypodermic outfit and a quantity of morphine. A moment later he came upon a second small packet, containing morphine.

"Damnation!" said Smith angrily.

He began a systematic search of his compatriot's packs. To his astonishment, he unearthed half a dozen packets of morphia. He stooped over Hanecy and searched the man and the pallet beneath. From Hanecy's shirt pocket he took a second hypodermic outfit, and from beneath

the blankets removed another packet of the drug. All of these packets were marked in Japanese characters. The syringes were of Japanese make.

Smith called for water. Into the water he emptied the morphia, and then took it outside and emptied it on the ground. The silk packets he burned, keeping out one of the largest.

For a time he sat beside Hanecy in thought, his brain actively at work. That Hanecy had been bringing morphia into the country, that he had been engaged in this damnable traffic, Smith did not for an instant consider possible. One look at the rugged, positive features of his compatriot told him enough to put this theory out of the question.

Smith lighted his pipe, striving to cope with the difficulties of the situation, while the natives watched him anxiously. From Hanecy's effects he had produced a very meager medicinal outfit, chiefly comprising a huge packet of quinine as fever remedy.

Gradually Smith's thoughts crystallized. He took the silk fragment he had saved, and in it he wrapped some of the quinine, replacing the packet beneath the pallet of Hanecy. He then told the chief *maju* to have his men search everywhere in their effects and in the temple itself, and bring him any more of those packets that might be found.

"And if you find Tokiwa," added Smith grimly, "bring him to me—now or later."

The men departed, but after a time returned with word that no other packets were found.

MEANTIME, Smith took Hanecy's stiff-muscled arm and bared it. After some search, he found what he sought—namely, two small punctures in the forearm. Nodding to himself, he began to melt certain hypodermic tablets from his own outfit.

"Probably Tokiwa is the man," he reflected, "although we'd never be able to prove it on him. For that matter, the temple messenger who brought my note here might not be guiltless! But Tokiwa is the man, all right. He doped Hanecy—gave him just enough strychnia to lay him out, then kept on shooting the strychnine into him to keep him stiffened, and ultimately to kill him. What a devil, what a devil!"

He realized suddenly that the paralyzed Hanecy must be more or less conscious.

"I'll have you fixed up, old man," he said quietly. "Your heart's on the bum, every muscle in your poor body is strained, and you're cursed lucky not to be tied up in a knot! That's what you get for protecting that damned peddler. What's more, he had planted morphine in your stuff—just why, I can't imagine, unless he was keeping his stock there. Somebody has been supplying him with the stuff, putting it into that big stone lantern outside the gate. That little brown devil isn't alone, by any means! Probably some of his friends are in the vicinity, disguised as Chinese or Koreans. Well, now I'll tackle you."

He picked up his own hypodermic, and put the needle into Hanecy's arm.

Just before dawn, Smith found that his patient's eyelids had closed. With a surge of deep relief, for he had been only too certain that Jim Hanecy was hovering on the borderland, he announced to the men that their master was saved, and ordered the hunters to go out and bring in a sambur or other fresh meat at once. He extinguished the smoky lantern and flung himself down, dog-tired.

Two hours after dawn, Smith was aroused by the head *maju,* in something of a hurry. The hunters had brought in a small deer, and had reported that they had seen a white woman coming to the temple; thinking her a devil, they had hastened in with the fresh meat.

Smith hastily dressed, and found that Hanecy was now sleeping in complete relaxation. He questioned the hunters and muleteers, but they all stated that they had never heard of a white woman in this vicinity. They stuck to their story, saying that she had been riding a mule and had shouted after them in the native dialect.

Smith was inclined to lay the story to their imaginations, but a moment afterward one of the men who had ventured down the hill trail came dashing up with word that the woman was indeed coming here. Ordering the deer to be cut up at once, and a broth made for Hanecy, Smith strode out to the gate. Most of the natives crowded behind him, buzzing with awe and curiosity, for it seemed that none of them had ever seen a white woman. This in itself meant nothing. A dozen white women might have been in Chian Fu and these men would have known naught of it, for they were extremely provincial, bound by the limits of their own villages.

For a space, the American thought himself dreaming. Coming toward him, on a mule and dressed in Chinese costume, was indeed a white woman; her face struck out at him from the first sight of her. It was a delicately-lined face, touched with womanly curves, filled with a high and sensitive richness of color, the blue eyes like deep and steady stars; yet how delicate was the whole face! Perhaps this was the fault of the hair—a rich golden mass crowning her, like an aureole, through which the sunlight struck shimmering to the face below, transfiguring it and lining it with an exquisite transparency.

Smith removed his hat, almost reverently. He never forgot his first glimpse of her. As she came closer, he saw that the curious delicacy of her face was a matter of contour and sunlight; she was browned and very fit.

He stepped forward and extended his hand as she alighted, smiling.

"How do you do?" she said quietly. "I'm Mary Langhorn. My uncle is the missionary in Chian Fu. We heard Mr. Hanecy was ill, and I came out to see about it. Is he here?"

Smith stammered. He was never at his ease with women—especially women like this one!

## CHAPTER VI

"I'VE been off at a hill village for three weeks," said Mary Langhorn simply, "helping them with a bad attack of pneumonia—it's become a regular scourge, you know. I only got home late last night, to find my uncle away taking care of one of his converts who's down with fever. I heard about Mr. Hanecy, snatched time for a bath and a change of clothes, and came on. Of course, I thought he was alone here."

"Good lord!" said Smith. "Is—is this your regular sort of routine?"

A smile reached into her face.

"It has been, for two years, since my father died. He was an American, associated with the mission work here—"

Smith led her in to where Hanecy lay, now sleeping peacefully. He shook up the bed he had made for himself, and pointed to it.

"There, Miss Langhorn—you're going to settle right down here and get a bit of rest! No protests, please! I know a tired young woman when I see her. I'm going to get breakfast, and I'll call you in an hour. Sorry I can't offer you a better resting place."

When Smith chose to be authoritative, he usually had things his own quiet way. He made it clear that Hanecy was far from dead, that she could do nothing until Hanecy awakened, and then he left the girl to get some sleep.

Within ten minutes he had the camp on the jump in a way that Jim Hanecy would have envied.

"Hm! Looked a whole lot as though she knew Hanecy, by the way she greeted me!" he reflected. "What a girl she is—off nursing these ignorant yellow men day and night, and leading a dog's life—still, I suppose there are compensations. I might do the same if I thought it'd give me the inner glory that shines through her face—"

When he had seen to cutting up the deer, Smith turned in and worked. Coffee, flapjacks, biscuit—he evolved a breakfast calculated to tempt the appetite of any young lady who had not seen American cooking, presumably, for two years or more. With an extemporized table set under the eyes of a grinning god on the temple porch, he aroused Miss Langhorn and she presently joined him with an exclamation of delight over the result of his efforts. Hanecy still slept.

The morning was fresh and vigorous. From Hanecy's effects, many of them picked up en route here, Smith had laid out an old brocade for table-cloth, while crimson-lacquered chairs from the temple furniture lent a hue of richness. Beyond them was the temple courtyard, the gateway with its curving roof and age-tinted tiles; and, out past these, the glorious mountains that shot great crags into the sky. In the distance rose the white snow-peak of Teng Shan, majestic and glowing in the morning sunlight.

"Oh, I forgot something!" exclaimed Miss Langhorn, as she was seating herself, and an expression of dismay came into her eyes. "I meant to tell you about the lamas—"

"Yes?" prompted Smith, smiling.

"I'm not sure, but they are to be out here this morning. One of the mission boys told me they were highly excited about something, and the chief priest himself was coming. They don't like white men, you know—"

"I know," and Smith nodded. "Hanecy

has gotten into their bad graces. Here, you pitch in and enjoy breakfast, and I'll tell you about our red-headed friend."

HE briefly sketched what he knew of Hanecy's affairs. He found that the girl had met Baron von Friederman several times in Chian Fu.

"Do you like him?" she asked abruptly.

"Quite well; he's a very agreeable sort," said Smith. He fancied that her lips tightened a trifle, but gave no heed. "The main fly in Hanecy's ointment is that cursed little Jap peddler, Tokiwa; and now that you mention the lamas, I begin to see light."

He told her, for the first time, that Hanecy had been poisoned, and how. The swift catch of her breath, the quick widening of her eyes, indicated a good deal to him; he asked how long she had known Hanecy.

"Known him? Why, I met him a year ago in Chu Hsiung, and we've corresponded at times since then," said the girl quietly, a slight color rising in her cheeks. "But what is the connection between Tokiwa and the coming of the lamas?"

"When I got here, the Jap was very much agitated; evidently, he had not expected me. This morning he had vanished. Looking through Hanecy's things, I found package after package of morphine—and I'm certain that the Jap planted the stuff, then sent word to the lamas that Hanecy was the chief smuggler. That Tokiwa is a clever devil, and has friends around here. He kept Hanecy helpless, thinking the lamas would come, find the evidence, and finish Hanecy before our friend could say a word in self defense. You see?"

Miss Langhorn nodded, anger dilating her blue eyes.

"Oh, I wish they dared to do something to these peddlers!" she exclaimed. "But they are all afraid to touch a Japanese. It's different with the lamas, for they are savagely determined that the morphia peddlers shall never get a footing in this province; I'm surprised that they have not killed Tokiwa before this!"

"They might have done so, but for Hanecy," rejoined Smith. "Now the peddler has gained a foothold, has friends here, and is tenfold more dangerous than he was a week ago."

"Do you think he can be the one at the head of all the opium smuggling?"

Smith's brows lifted, as he regarded her.

"What makes you think anyone is at the head?"

"I have always thought so," she said, "and so has my uncle. We feel certain that it is not being done from Japan, but that someone here in China is behind the whole awful program—someone who is a great organizer. Do you know who I think it is?"

"Who?" asked Smith.

"Prince Yamato of Japan—you know, he's interested in the iron industry, and spends a great deal of time in China. They say he is a big man, and a tremendously bad man—and in one of the letters I looked at last night, there was news that he is on his way up to this part of the country, ostensibly to hunt the blue tiger."

Smith nodded frowningly. "I've heard of his coming," he said slowly.

AT this instant one of the hunters ran to them with word that Hanecy was calling, and they abandoned the discussion.

They found Hanecy awake, and he greeted them with a feeble, unbounded amazement. When the man's eyes fastened upon Mary Langhorn, in them Smith read all that he wanted to know. Then he found Hanecy gazing at him.

"I dreamed that you were here last night, talking to me—"

"I was," said Smith. "Heard you were dying, and came to be of use. By the way, do you know that your friend Tokiwa fed you strychnia?"

Hanecy shivered, and his eyes flashed.

"Let me get hold of that fellow!" he said. "That's all. I'll certainly make him—"

"You be quiet, please," said Miss Langhorn. "Mr. Smith, will you get that broth? Don't forget the priests are coming, and Mr. Hanecy must be in shape to see them. I'll explain to him if you'll get that broth."

Smith obeyed. He sent out two of the hunters to watch for the coming of the lamas, got the rich rice broth that had been prepared, and returned to the sick-room. Miss Langhorn had now assumed full charge of Hanecy. Between them, they managed to get the patient into pajamas, extremely against his will and his blushingly furious implorations. Hanecy had not been ill since he was a child, and his sense of modesty and self-sufficiency was violently offended by his present helpless position. He rebelled again at being fed

the broth, but he was very weak, and Miss Langhorn made it clear to him that he had only his own obstinate self to thank for his plight. Her quiet authority conquered him, and he submitted. Smith entertained a private notion that Hanecy really found it anything but unpleasant to be cared for by his new nurse.

"Anybody else would jump at the chance," he reflected. "Darn it all! If a girl like that ever took a shine to me—"

He left the room, shaking his head.

Outside, Smith passed one of the *mafus* squatting in a corner of the courtyard. He paused, gave the man a second keen glance, and went on to where the head *mafu* was tending a sick mule.

"Who is that man in the corner?" he asked abruptly. "One of your men, of course?"

The head muleteer glanced toward the squatting man and nodded, but hesitantly.

"Yes, master, but not from my company. His name is Tenfa, and I think he is a Lolo; I hired him at the last minute, for our master was in a hurry."

"Ah!" said Smith. "And this Tenfa —did he talk much with the Japanese peddler?"

"Often, master, for the peddler knew a little of his language."

Smith went on, without comment. At the gate he met one of the waiters, who informed him that the lamas were coming up the trail.

Smith went outside the gate to meet them.

## CHAPTER VII

THE train of mules halted. From them dismounted the head lama, two of the pillars of his monastery, and half a dozen attendants; the guard of four soldiers loafed in the shade. Smith greeted the priests, much to their surprise, and handed over his letter from the Baron. He was pleased to note that it produced an immediate effect. The head lama spoke Mandarin, and addressed Smith in that tongue.

"We have been informed," he went on to say, scowling toward the temple, "that the foreign devil who rented this holy place is engaged in smuggling the happy dust—"

Smith cut in, and gave a brief résumé of Hanecy's connection with Tokiwa. He went on to make it very plain that he himself would have no mercy on the peddler, should Tokiwa come into his hands, and that he was thoroughly in sympathy with the efforts of the lamas to keep the morphia smugglers outside the limits of their province.

While he was thus engaged, he saw the man Tenfa come into the gateway, peer at them, then start forward. Smith's lips tightened, and he turned slightly. A moment later the muleteer sank down in prostration before the head lama, and begged permission to address him.

Before the priest could answer, Smith jerked out his automatic pistol, and deliberately shot the muleteer through the brain.

There was a moment of startled, petrified silence, while the echoes of the smashing shot lifted through the hills. Smith coolly dropped the weapon back into his pocket again. The soldiers were running forward, and he waved them back. The lama and his company stood half bewildered, half frightened, and wholly angered. Hunters and *mafus* crowded the gateway, staring.

"This is murder!" cried out the head lama, incoherently.

"No," said Smith quietly. "It is execution. That man is one of the Japanese friends of Tokiwa. He is a morphia user himself; I saw it in his eyes. He is supposed to be a Lolo, but I think he is a disguised Japanese. Have your attendants search the body; if proof of my statements be not found, I shall allow you to take me before the magistrate in the city."

The lama motioned to two of his attendants. At this instant, Miss Langhorn appeared in the gateway, startled and alarmed. Her eyes fell upon the dead man in the sunlight; a chatter from the hunters and muleteers around her, told what had happened. Her eyes went to Smith with horrified incredulity.

"No protests, Miss Langhorn," said Smith calmly. "Please come along and back me up with the lama—he seems to know you. We've got to save Hanecy's bacon."

In fact, the girl's presence seemed to discomfort the lama and his two priests, who were well acquainted with her. She addressed them rapidly, confirming what Smith had told them; and in the midst of this, the two attendants returned from their search of Tenfa's body.

Before the lama and the silent throng of watchers, they outspread several papers

written in Japanese characters, which proved to be instructions in the use of the "happy dust;" a hypodermic outfit, two packets of morphia, and a number of coins —all Japanese yen.

"The evidence is sufficient, I take it," said Smith dryly. The priests were completely taken aback. The head lama looked at Smith with a hint of admiration in his heavy-lidded eyes.

"You are a foreign devil in whom there is no guile," he stated. "This was well done."

Smith shrugged unconcernedly, and ordered the body taken away. If he saw how Mary Langhorn shrank from him, he gave no sign. The thing was necessary, and he had done it.

"I have no pity to waste on these vendors of happy dust," he said to the lama. "If you will take my advice, you will force the Chian Fu mandarin to take equally prompt action."

"He is a Chinaman, and afraid," and the lama's eyes flashed. "But we of the church are not afraid! Once let us catch the men, and we shall act. But we are informed that in the baggage of your foreign devil there was a great quantity of happy dust—"

Now, Jim Hanecy, and with him most foreigners, would have straightway stood upon their dignity of race, resenting as an absolute insult any hint that their baggage should be looked over by a mere yellow man—whether pope or coolie! Smith, however, quietly smiled and ordered the muleteers to fetch out Hanecy's luggage, for the inspection of the lamas.

He turned to Miss Langhorn. "Please bring out that packet of quinine that's under Hanecy's pallet. Tell him that everything's going fine and he needn't worry."

Without speaking the girl turned obediently toward the gateway, her lips compressed. In that instant, Smith knew that she would never forgive him the shooting of Tenfa.

The luggage was examined and found blameless. Smith cleverly avoided the possibility of Tokiwa having sent word to the lamas, with its attendant need of explanation, by showing them the quinine and stating that some native had probably seen it and taken it for morphia. Indeed, the lamas took it for morphia themselves, until they tasted it.

The visit ended very amiably, and the visitors departed with an evident high regard for Smith, refusing his invitation to luncheon. He watched them off down the trail, then went in toward Hanecy's chamber. At the entrance, Mary Langhorn appeared before him, her eyes stormy.

"Mr. Smith, do you intend to bury that poor man you murdered?" she demanded coldly.

"Certainly not," said Smith. "I told the boys to dispose of him. They'll probably jerk him over some cliff—"

"Oh!" Indignation and horror fired her eyes and voice. "Oh! How can you say such things! I demand that you have him decently buried and a prayer said over his grave—"

"Miss Langhorn, please listen a moment," said Smith quietly. "I'm busy; too blamed busy to say prayers over the grave of anybody, much less over a confounded thieving, degrading morphia smuggler who deserved all he got. And I'm too busy to bother about sticking him under the earth, the yellow snake!"

"Oh—you beast!"

SHE fled past him. Smith went on into the room, and met the silent, half amused, half worried gaze of Hanecy fixed upon him. He sat down and lighted his pipe, his fingers trembling a little.

"That hurts," he said after a moment, knowing that Hanecy understood perfectly. "They oughtn't to let girls like that try to take on men's work. This is a hell of a country for women! She's a magnificent girl, and no end efficient, but she'll hate me all the rest of her life for this day's work."

"She will," assented Hanecy. "I'm cursed sorry. You seem nervous all of a sudden. What's up?"

Smith shrugged his shoulders. "It was touch and go out there," he observed. "That fellow was just about to cut in with some devil's suggestion when I shot him. Those lamas had come to do you in, Hanecy; they had soldiers along to drag you out and shoot you. The Baron's letter and my appearance made them hesitate, Miss Langhorn's appearance disconcerted them, and my brutality, which they took for abstract justice, saved your fool neck and maybe my own. Those guys meant business. You don't find a head lama, especially a chap who's a little pope himself like this one is, chasing about the country on any business that isn't first-chop important!"

"I'm glad you came," said Hanecy simply, the words implying everything that was left unuttered. "It was white of you, Smith, after—after our correspondence."

Smith grinned. "I didn't like you because your name was Jim, like my own," he said. "Isn't it queer how trifles will react on a man?"

"Where's Mary Langhorn gone?" asked Hanecy suddenly.

"Planting that chap with decent formality, I guess," rejoined Smith. "It'll make her happy to do it. Missionary people like to apply decorum to savages."

"My Lord! I never imagined that you'd do a thing like that—you seemed so confounded quiet and cool—"

"My dear fellow, that disguised Jap would have precipitated a massacre in another minute. What in thunder did I care about his life, when it was a question of us all? He's done a darned sight more good dying than he ever accomplished living, or I miss my guess!"

"You leave Tokiwa to me," said Hanecy firmly. Smith looked at him and laughed.

"To you! If you got him, d'you know what you'd do? He'd grovel in the dirt, and you would hesitate about murdering him off-hand, and in the end you'd kick him off the place. You're too impulsive to be an executioner!"

HANECY grinned, knowing these words spelled truth. "Say, you're nobody's fool! What'll you do to him if you catch him?"

"Kill him," said Smith calmly. "But I fancy I won't catch him; he's a bit too slick to give me a chance."

"Well, I'll plead your case with Mary—"

"Don't you do it!" said Smith, acerbity in his tone. "You pretend real handsome that you think I'm a brute, savvy? You're going to be off your feed for some time, and it's a godsend that she's here to take care of you; let her think what she likes about me!"

"Why don't you go after that blue tiger while you're here?"

"I mean to. The Baron will be along in a day or so, I suspect. He has my guns—"

"Use mine," said Hanecy, waving his hand toward the gun-cases in the corner.

"Thanks. I'll be glad to."

Thus in a few words was the affair settled. The two men liked each other and understood each other thoroughly. Smith regretted the attitude of Mary Langhorn, but was far too wise to attempt changing it.

Looking over Hanecy's guns, he selected one that suited him and laid it aside. He knew that all the villages roundabout would send word directly the tiger had been seen, for Hanecy had offered bountiful rewards for such information as would lead to the kill; and he had some hope that he might put Hanecy's hunters to use.

When Mary Langhorn returned, she had lost her anger, but was obviously cool to Smith, and hence he knew that in her eyes he was branded forever, although she would never refer to the incident again. Their luncheon was a distinct contrast to the breakfast they had enjoyed together. Hanecy slept.

Smith issued orders to the muleteers and hunters that Tokiwa should be shot on sight if he ventured to return to the temple. He found them greatly awed by his penetration of Tenfa's disguise and the way the chief lama had come around to a friendly attitude; in their eyes this was a distinct proof that Smith embodied all the powerful magic of foreign devils, and the news of his powers promised to spread swiftly through the surrounding villages.

After luncheon, Smith stretched out to make up for lost sleep. It was three o'clock when he found himself excitedly shaken awake by the chief hunter; a frightened villager had just come in with word that the blue tiger had entered the village that morning, in broad daylight, had killed a goat, and carried it off toward an impassable cañon in the vicinity. That he could be found there was practically certain.

"Good!" exclaimed Smith, and leaped up. He ordered the hunters to get the dogs and go ahead, saddled his mule, took Hanecy's gun, and departed hastily.

## CHAPTER VIII

TOM BRYCE, big and cheerful and easy-going, arrived at Baron von Friederman's camp the day after Smith had departed to succor Jim Hanecy. Smith's retinue had already been sent off after him; there remained with the Baron only certain of his own men who had been held over in the partnership. The Baron seemed to have no intention of following Smith.

Bryce introduced himself, was welcomed heartily by the Baron, and his first question was for Smith. At this, the Baron patted his bald spot and smiled.

"He went up into the hills to look after a white man who was ill," said von Friederman complacently. "I expect him back any time; you had better wait here, eh? A fine chap, Smith. By the way, are you the Bryce whose articles on the history of jade created quite a stir some years ago?"

Bryce modestly admitted the indictment, and returned the compliment by remarking upon the scientific fame of the Baron. It threatened to become a mutual-admiration meeting.

"Smith tells me you're not particularly interested in hunting the blue tiger?"

Bryce yawned lazily. "I'm no mighty hunter, Baron—I'm running down what to me is a more interesting thing; namely, the meaning of the old Chinese term *se-se* that occurs in the T'ang Shu, a word taken by Chavannes and others to mean turquoise—"

The Baron sat up, and an exclamation broke from him.

"My word, Bryce! Do you know that I have a monograph in preparation on that subject? It's one of the most puzzling and fascinating things in Chinese literature! I have a copy of the Tang Annals in my luggage—"

"Hello!" said Bryce, with alert interest. "Well met! But I'd hardly call the thing so puzzling; I've come to the conclusion that the word refers to the balas ruby, and also to the emerald of Tibet."

"My dear fellow," exclaimed the Baron commiseratingly, "That's utterly impossible!"

"Not a bit of it," asserted Bryce with gathering energy. "Arabic authorities say that the finest balas ruby comes from Pijazak, and was called *piyazi* in Persian. This corresponds phonetically to the Chinese word pi-ya-se, the present name for the stone. Then we find—"

"Ah, let me argue this a moment!" broke in the Baron. "It is evident that *se-se* as used in the Tang period refers to onyx, being drawn from the Tibetan *ze* and the Persian *djisa*. This is the more probable because it was used as a building material. And there is no other word for onyx in Chinese, for the stone was called a variety of streaky agate—"

"Ah, but don't forget," cut in Bryce, "that when Chang Te was sent as envoy to Persia in 1259, he reported that in the palace of the Caliph he saw *se-se* together with lapis! And in the Sui shu, chapter 83, comes the word—"

"My dear chap, let us leave the argument until morning!" said the Baron with a smile. "I'll get out my notes, you get out yours, and we'll fight the question in battle royal. Eh? I fancy I can convince you—"

"Gladly," assented Bryce eagerly. "When you see my evidence I'm certain that you'll have to admit its value! Well, forget it until morning. I suppose I'd better camp here until Smith comes back, eh? I want to see the temple libraries at Chian Fu, later."

"You'll find them interesting," said the Baron. "Did you bring any news with you? Everything quiet in China?"

"Quite as usual," yawned Bryce. "Nanking is talking the usual revolution against Pekin, and the Japs are sinking their talons deep into Shantung. Well, I think I'll turn in; had a hard day's trip, and I want to be fresh in the morning when I enter the lists with you."

THE Baron smiled. "It'll be a battle, I promise!"

Bryce retired to his own tent. For a long while the Baron sat reading by his tent lantern, occasionally puffing at a large pipe or patting his bald spot complacently. He had just closed his book and was preparing to undress, when one of his muleteers pulled aside his tent-flap and uttered a low word. The Baron started.

"What! Bring him inside, quickly."

An instant later, a nearly naked man entered the tent—a small man, yellow of skin, about his coarse black hair a sweaty fillet. His body streamed sweat and dust, and the heart in his breast beat violently. He was a runner, a courier.

Without speaking, he handed the Baron a letter, then squatted on the ground and panted. Swiftly the Baron opened the epistle and spread it out by the lantern. A soft oath fell from his lips as he read, then he thrust the paper into the flame and watched it burn. He turned to the courier, a snarl in his face.

"Do you speak Mandarin? Very well. Did you witness the doings at Chu Hsiung?"

"I did," responded the other calmly.

"This man Bryce is the same?"

"Beyond question," said the courier.

"And Prince Yamato was expected daily when you left there?"

"Yes."

"He'll put a stop to this nonsense!" said the Baron violently. "He'll make these dogs know their place!"

"You were to be warned against this man, and against his friend," said the courier.

"I have already taken measures," said von Friederman, calming himself. "I suppose you don't know whether Prince Yamato is a member of the opium combine?"

The coolie shrugged. By his ease of manner one saw that he was not really a coolie at all.

"Two months ago he bought stock to the value of five thousand yen. Therefore, we may fear nothing from him."

"But, devils take it!" exclaimed the Baron. "If this man Bryce has such a paper signed by him—"

"That is easily understood," said the messenger calmly. "He would be only too glad to apparently use all his influence to favor the white men and their efforts. Under the surface, of course, he will stand with us. Thus, he may be of great value to us. The more he is trusted by foreigners, the more will Prince Yamato be able to help us. He is a true son of Nippon. Under his patronage, the company need not fear anyone or anything."

"I understand," said the Baron thoughtfully. "Well, I'll take care of things. Are you going back?"

The other shook his head.

"I go on to Chian Fu, to join Tokiwa and the others. I have been learning that dialect and shall soon be of value there. He has had no trouble?"

THE Baron waved his hand and laughed. "He? That Tokiwa is one of the cleverest men the company has sent me! One of the very best. In another week we shall have the full organization at work! So Prince Yamato is a stockholder, eh? That is great news; he can help us in Chian Fu, too. Because of his position, the mandarin and lamas will have to receive him with much honor, and he is too astute a diplomat to make mistakes. Well, ask my boys for anything you desire, and when you reach Tokiwa, tell him that all goes well. You know where to find him?"

"I was to obtain that from you."

"Oh! Then go to the bazar of Ur Hun the Mongolian—he sells furs and skin coats, and is our central agent. He will know exactly where Tokiwa is."

The courier glanced up, grinning. "Ur Hun the Mongolian?" he asked with a trace of mockery.

"Yes." The Baron smiled. "He is in really Kokko Sukimasa."

"Ah!" The courier drew in his breath sharply, as in respect. "Truly the company has sent you its keenest brains, master! It was Kokko Sukimasa who first carried the business into prosperity in Korea and Chili! Even into Pekin itself."

"The company has need of all its brains in this district," said the Baron drily.

The courier bowed respectfully, and withdrew.

Upon the following morning, von Friederman and Bryce began at breakfast and talked in a solid streak until noon—discussing *se-se* and all its allied subjects. In the course of this they covered everything from Persian and Arabic mineralogy to the Armenian *lapidarium,* not to mention classical works on ancient Chinese history. When noon came, they adjourned after reaching no common conclusion; each savant held grimly to his own theory, scoffed at that of the other man, and they ended by agreeing to disagree amiably.

In the early afternoon, the Baron persuaded Bryce to take one of Smith's guns and go out after a goral, several of which the hunters reported to be in the vicinity. The day was cold and gray, with a blanket of cloud woven about the peaks and ridges.

They set off, the hunters and dogs going around the shoulder of the hills to drive the goral toward the two white men. Bryce and the Baron strode along, still discussing echoes of their morning argument, and presently came to a trail winding along the vereg of a tree-clad, bushy drop of fifty feet into a ravine below filled with brush. The Baron pointed to the opposite slope, a hundred yards distant, where the hunters expected to bring the goral into view.

BRYCE was thinking, as he laid down his gun and lighted his pipe for a smoke, that the Baron did not look the part he played in Central Asian events—the same thought had occurred to Smith on their meeting, but perhaps Smith had more correctly judged the man. With his bald spot, his ruddily perspiring features, and his unathletic figure, the Baron scarcely appeared fitted for a heroic or even prominent part in any events.

The thought was still running through Bryce's mind as he cupped his hands about his lighted match and sucked at the pipe. The Baron, ten feet behind him, calmly drew a pistol from his pocket.

"Good place for a shot," said Bryce, striking another match and holding it above his pipe-bowl, his eyes on the opposite hillside.

"Or an execution," said the Baron. "Especially of a man who has come into this country with the idea of running down morphia smugglers—"

And before Bryce could turn, the Baron shot him through the back.

Von Friederman stood motionless, pistol in hand, peering at his victim. Bryce whirled half around, then plunged forward; the plunge carried him over the verge of the drop, and his body went crashing down among trees and bushes.

After a moment, the Baron stepped forward to the edge. He peered down, but could see nothing; the body of Bryce had dropped out of sight in the undergrowth below. Grunting as he stooped, the Baron picked up Smith's rifle, laid it with his own across his shoulder, and calmly started back for camp.

Upon his return there, he sent one of his men to bring back the hunters. Then he paid off Bryce's *majus,* and dispatched them whence they had come, with word that their master had no further need for them. They went, unquestioning.

Before the afternoon was half gone, the Baron was on his way to Chian Fu, well satisfied with himself.

## CHAPTER IX

RIFLE in hand, Smith crouched behind the screen of brambles and peered into the lair of the blue tiger. He waited like a graven image, motionless, tense of brain, relaxed of body, ready at each instant for the gray-blue beast to appear.

He had been waiting here for two hours; it was now nearly sunset.

The villagers had shown him where the beast had its lair. Smith, disgusted with his native hunters and the ill result of his past hunting, had sent them and their dogs back to the temple. The villagers had been only too glad to leave. Smith was relieved to find himself alone and dependent upon his own efforts; now, for the first time, he felt some hope of getting the Blue Ghost.

Somewhere in that long ravine, somewhere in that choking density of sword-grass and thorn, lay the tiger. So much was certain. Smith had crawled far enough into one of the animal's tunnels to gain the first lair, where an opening admitted a shaft of daylight through the overhead tangle.

On the terrace ahead of him lay a litter of bones, and among them the partly devoured carcass of the goat that had been stolen that morning. After its usual custom, the tiger had licked the hair from the goat's body and it lay strewn about. Then the beast had retired to some inner lair amid the maze of tunnels, probably to sleep through the day; Smith knew that he would be returning now, at any minute, to finish his prey.

"I'll get him this time, if I have to wait till morning!" resolved Smith, munching a bit of chocolate from the supply in his pocket. "And it'll be one on the Baron, if I do. Wish old Bryce would get along here! Blessed if I can see what's holding him in Chu Hsiung all this time—he should have cleaned that place up in a hurry. But he's able to run his own end of the game, I suppose."

As he was thinking thus, he was startled by a sudden crash in the tangle ahead; a prolonged, tearing crash, as though made by some heavy object falling through the trees and brush. An instant later, came a second crash, followed by a faint yell. Smith swore in a sudden burst of rage.

"Somebody throwing rocks into the ravine—the cursed fools!"

Disgusted fury seized upon him, and he flung down his rifle in an access of bitter disappointment. Well he knew that the crafty tiger would slip away, warned by those boulders, frightened from his half-eaten prey. Some passing wood-cutters or rice-harvesters, perhaps, had flung those stones on their way home. It was rarely that Smith lost his temper, but now he cursed heartily and furiously as he turned about and crawled on hands and knees through the dark tunnel toward the ravine's entrance.

"Confound these fool peasants—and my own lack of sense!" he muttered. "I should have posted my hunters all around to warn people away. I suppose those fools on the hillside don't even dream that I'm down here to kill the tiger!"

But in this supposition he was very much amiss.

HE emerged at last from the tunnel, and stood up in the open to clear himself of brush. It was close upon sunset. As Hanecy's temple was only two miles away over the hill trails, Smith had sent his mule home with the hunters. He glanced about to see who had flung the stones, but sighted no one, and concluded that the peasants had gone their way.

He turned from the ravine with a sigh, and began his ascent to the trail above. It lay a hundred yards up the mountain-side, where it wound along a flank of the hill. The ascent was gradual, but was dotted with great boulders and thorn-clumps, through which ran a very faint path. Smith gained the path and started upward toward the trail.

Suddenly he halted.

It was very silent here in the mountains —silent, cold, the air rarified and clear. No village was in the vicinity, there was no stir of life along the hillsides. But to Smith's ear had carried a faint and distant "click"—only a trained ear, trained to catch any sound out of the ordinary, would have heard that faint clicking noise. Yet that slight sound was as much out of place here, as would be the blaring defiance of a tiger on Broadway, for it was unmistakeably the click made by the cocked hammer of a rifle.

Smith halted; then, almost in the same impulse, he jerked himself sharply to one side. From a boulder ahead of him came the spanging impact of a bullet that whanged off into the air with a thin wail; the sound was lost in the crack of a rifle from the opposite hillside. From another direction came another echoing report, and Smith felt a tug between his arm and body as the bullet tore at his clothes and was gone.

Smith threw up his arms and let himself fall into a clump of bush that grew about the boulders to one side of the path. He lay motionless.

From the opposite hillside lifted a thin, shrill yell of triumph. From another quarter, more distant, the yell was repeated. From the hillside above the trail, above the point where Smith lay, leaped out a third yell, and there the figure of a man appeared, waving a rifle and descending the slope toward the ambushed hunter. He was a small man, a brown man, and from his lips came a cry filled with the savage exultancy of the man-hunt.

This man continued his descent toward Smith. That the American had been deliberately trapped, now became painfully evident. The rocks had been flung into the ravine to bring him forth; up above had been stationed one assassin, on the opposite hill a second, and farther along the sloping hillside a third. Smith had been caught fairly between the jaws of a three-sided trap; in whatever direction he went, an enemy awaited!

Only that swift, instinctive jerk of the body had saved him as the trap had sprung. Only that click of the cocking hammer had warned him. Yet, to those who lay hidden, that movement had seemed the jerk of a stricken body; the little brown man descending the hillside had not the slightest suspicion that the bullets had not driven home—until Smith rose up.

He rose sharply, suddenly, his rifle rising with him. The brown man halted in consternation, but had no chance to duck for shelter. The report of Smith's heavy .405 banged out in a volleyed echo. The brown man quietly collapsed over the rocks above, and hung there with death quivering through his body.

Smith leaped for the shelter of a group of boulders.

ACROSS the ravine a rifle barked; down the hillside another rifle spoke angrily, but too late. Smith had gained his desired cover, and lay there hidden. The hillsides were blank and empty, save for the brown body that dripped crimson over the sunset-reddened stones above. A few birds, stirred by the shots, settled back again.

"Crafty devils!" thought Smith, as he waited. "They've heard about my disposal of Tenfa this morning. Say, these fellows are quick on the action, all right! It looks blamed queer to me—they couldn't have learned about Tenfa's death, and then planned this little party, so readily. No! This must have been planned beforehand; more likely, they've been keeping watch on me for just such a chance as this. That's about the right of it! And our friend Tokiwa is no doubt the gentleman in the woodpile. Sorry it wasn't Tokiwa I bagged up yonder!"

He stirred slightly. On the opposite

slope banged out a rifle, and the bullet shivered on a rock beside Smith. The latter answered the shot, only to draw a taunting yell, and a flanking bullet from down the hillside that whipped within an inch of his cheek. Smith swore, and burrowed farther into the clump of boulders.

"It's a holdoff until dark—which wont be long now," he reflected uneasily. "That devil along the hill-flank will work up above me, and the one across the way will come in closer. My only chance is to get ahead of 'em and reach the trail first."

That any of his hunters of the villagers would come upon the scene, was practically out of the question. Not even the rifle shots would draw them—there were too many mountain devils wandering about in the darkness! They would come again at daylight, and if the assassins were successful, Smith's disappearance would be laid to the tiger or to devils—against which his rifle had been unavailing. By the time any report came in to the mandarin or lamas, all trace of the possible truth would be far lost.

"Clever little plan, all right," said Smith to himself. "Wouldn't Hanecy enjoy himself if he were here?"

He lay back and munched chocolate unconcernedly. Presently, with a grin, he lighted his pipe, and chuckled as the two bushwhackers vainly tried to search him out with bullets. It was too dark by this time for him to indulge in any sniping, and he was saving his energies.

DUSK fell rapidly after the sun had dropped behind the western peaks. Smith knew that he must make his effort in the few moments between dusk and clear starlight; too soon or too late, and he would be knocked over like a deer. Those two assassins knew how to shoot.

As he lay, he mapped out that faint path in his head; one misstep would cost him the game, for he must reach the trail above at a single dash. After that, he would be out of the trap and could make a running fight.

He watched the shadows of the gloaming carefully. At length, when he judged the time to be right, his hand closed over a stone. He hurled it twenty feet away; as it fell, two shots leaped out of the night.

"They're closing in!" thought Smith, gathering his muscles. Rifle in hand, he darted from his shelter.

With a spring, he had gained the path, and he followed this openly. From the ravine below came a bullet, from the hillside another; his figure was too indistinct for good aiming, however. He dashed up the path unhurt, while bullet after bullet spurted on either hand.

Unhurt, Smith flung himself to the trail above. He dropped like a stone, and began to fire at the positions of the two men, now below him. He had no great hope of reaching them with his bullets, but until he regained breath he wanted to keep them where they were, as he would be thus assured of a flying start homeward before they could gain the trail.

When his magazine was empty, he rose to his feet. Then, from behind him, he caught a chuckle of amusement. Whirling quickly, he saw a figure not a dozen feet from him but *above!* In a flash, he realized that the man had been there all the while.

"I very glad to meet you," said the voice of Tokiwa.

Smith flung up his empty rifle, but as he spoke, Tokiwa had fired point-blank. Smith staggered; he seemed knocked backward by the force of the bullet, and sprawled on the trail, arms outflung.

Chuckling to himself, Tokiwa sent a shout to his friends, then advanced to Smith. For a moment he gazed down at the body of the American, and at length drew from his tattered robe an electric flashlight. He played its tiny beam over the figure of Smith, and chuckled again, as though extremely amused by the effect of his bullet.

The two others were now climbing up from below, and five minutes later they joined Tokiwa.

"It was a beautiful trap!" said the latter admiringly.

"It was, indeed," agreed one of the other two men. "Is he dead?"

Tokiwa again got out his flashlight. "No! My bullet struck the butt of his rifle—you see?—and flung it against his chin. It knocked him out like a blow of the fist, but he is unhurt."

"Ah! Then—" The other man caught at his rifle, but Tokiwa smilingly halted him.

"No! The orders were to kill this man, but if we chanced to take him alive, then to bring him to the shop of Ur Hun for questioning. We must bind him and take him to our camp tonight. By tomorrow

afternoon we can bring him into the city hidden in a cart. I think we shall find the master waiting for us there. We must bury the body of our brother, also."

The others assented obediently, and fell to work trussing the senseless American.

## CHAPTER X

BARON VON FRIEDERMAN reached Chian Fu barely in time to get inside town before the gates were closed for the night, and went straightway to the chief lamasery. The head lama received him with all honor, and requested his presence that evening at a meeting of the abbots from the other monasteries in and near the city. The Baron assented with alacrity.

The meeting, it appeared, had been called at the request of the local mandarin, who was quite aware of the fact that his authority as representative of Pekin was in force only by grace of the Tibetan lamas. China might rule in Pekin, and England might rule in Tibet, but the districts which lay in between were subject chiefly to the ancient sway of the yellow-robes, who ruled with a jealous temporal authority.

The Baron chuckled to himself as he surveyed the assemblage, which was gathered in a chamber whose dingy tapestries and painted hangings had been old when the Normans conquered Britain. They were his firm friends, these lamas with the big rosaries and the hats and the robes and the lean, fierce faces; he had duped them very neatly, he was strongly established in their good graces, and it was amusing to think that they would never connect Ur Hun the Mongolian with the morphia trade, nor him with Ur Hun the seller of furs!

The mandarin appeared, a rotund and spectacled son of Han who looked much out of place among these swarthy mountaineers. He proved, however, to be possessed of a surprising depth of character; before he had finished his long address, the Baron was eyeing him with a wholly new respect.

"Thus you see, honorable gentlemen," concluded the mandarin, after pointing out that the morphia traffic had entered the province, "we must deal with this evil at once, if at all. I dare do little without your backing and help, for my government is much under the thumb of Nippon. So I have come to humbly ask your advice and the aid of your superior wisdom. I have been informed by courier today of certain events in Chu Hsiung, where my honorable colleague has set a noble example. Have I your permission to communicate them?"

The head lama assented eagerly, and the mandarin informed them of the Chu Hsiung riddance of the morphia traffickers, and of the fact that Prince Yamato, upon reaching that city, had complimented the mandarin on his upright actions. This last was news to the Baron, who patted his bald spot in some degree of anxiety. This was rather relieved by the head lama, who sprang up and delivered a fierce invective against trusting the prince or any other Japanese. The Baron began to perceive that Prince Yamato must be a very wily diplomat indeed if he were to deceive these lean men of the church who were reared in intrigue.

"And what does this prince of Nippon want in our country?" snapped the head lama fiercely. "To hunt the blue tiger! That may be true, but it seems to me a lie. It is well known that this tiger is inhabited by the spirit of the Dowager Empress, and to have this foreign prince hunting such game is not to my liking."

"But," said the mandarin blandly, "the government has requested me to give him full protection and hospitality."

"Look you to it, then," said the head lama, "for we will have none of him! Where one of these snakes comes, a dozen spring up."

"May I speak a humble word?" The Baron rose, patted his head, and beamed about. He spoke the dialect fluently. "It seems to me that the best course is to receive this prince with all courtesy, further him in his purpose, and send him on his way. So far as the hunting goes, I will be glad to take charge of it—for I want to kill that tiger myself, and if he is in my hands he will have small chance of doing it!"

A RIPPLE of laughter arose at this. The Baron went on to point out how bitterly opposed was he himself to the morphia traffic, and urged that immediately Prince Yamato had come and gone, strict measures should be taken against the traffickers.

The meeting ended with the mandarin

fully assured as to the support of the priests whenever he thought it best to take action against the peddlers in morphia. The mandarin was plainly suffering much anxiety over the forthcoming visit of Prince Yamato, for the safety of the prince would lie entirely in his responsibility.

Upon the following day, the Baron sallied forth alone from the temple. He passed through the native city, halting now and then to make purchases in the bazars, and after half an hour came to a pause before a booth occupied by a merchant of furs. The merchant who squatted in the booth was clad in the thick woolen garments of a Mongolian, and his face was scarred into a hideous mask which made any other guess as to his race quite impossible. The Baron entered the booth and sat down, indicating a fine coat of sable skins, which the merchant spread before him as though for examination and barter. The low words which passed between them, however, had nothing to do with the price of furs.

"You have heard about the coming of Prince Yamato," said the Baron. "You are the wisest man in my whole organization. Is it true that the prince is a stockholder in the company?"

The merchant smiled slightly. "That is quite true," he answered. "His highness is interested in the enterprise, although I cannot say why he is coming here. It is most probable that he is coming with a view to giving us new instructions in regard to handling the happy dust. I have just received a large shipment and everything now seems on the road to success."

The Baron nodded. "I suppose the courier gave you information about the two Americans?"

"Yes." The scarred dealer in furs made a slight gesture. "Your orders have already been attended to. I expect reports tonight or tomorrow from the hill temple. Unfortunately, the arrival of Smith made our plans there go amiss. You should not have let him leave you."

THE BARON shrugged his shoulders. "Everything happened very suddenly. I suspected him but was not sure until after he had left me. However, I have attended to the other man myself. Tokiwa will be able to take care of the man Smith. I understand that Hanecy is very ill from the effects of the poison and that Miss Langhorn is nursing him; he is not concerned in the matter, and unless he makes trouble in future, you can leave him alone. I have arranged with the priests to receive the prince, and shall myself have charge of his hunting expedition. Thus we shall be able to arrange everything with him and yet incur no suspicion. Another thing—I have discovered that the mandarin here may prove dangerous. You had better write to Pekin at once and demand to have him replaced by another man who will be more satisfactory to us."

"What shall I do," inquired the false Mongolian, "if the man Smith is brought in alive? You ordered that in such an event you wished to speak with him—"

"In that case send word to me at the temple." The Baron rose. "The prince will be here in a few days, and by that time all obstacles will be cleared away. We shall be able to distribute the morphia through the whole district once these foreigners have been removed."

That night, the Baron was informed by the head lama that, in a temple twenty miles to the westward, had been discovered a chest of ancient documents relating to the days of the early Ming period. If the Baron wished to inspect them, he would be given an escort and full authority, and could do so at once.

The scientific interest of von Friederman was fanned to white heat by this intelligence. He was by no means sure how long his intrigues could go undiscovered, and he wanted to take full advantage of his friendship with the priests as long as it lasted. So, telling his men to inform Ur Hun that he would be back in a few days, he departed at sunrise the next morning.

In reality, he intended to return by the following night. The Baron was no fool, and he knew that a good deal depended upon the extinction of Smith immediately; for it had become very plain to him and to his friends that Smith and Bryce had not come into this district to hunt the blue tiger only. The Baron was very anxious to find out who was behind Smith. He had failed to obtain a certain paper which Bryce had been known to possess, probably because it had been on the body of Bryce when the latter was shot; but he knew that Prince Yamato, according to that paper, had accorded the two friends powers as his personal representatives.

The reason for this was obvious to the Baron. The astute Japanese diplomat and prince was keeping very secret that he

held shares in the morphia and opium syndicate. Warning had come to the Baron to watch for the two Americans; although the warning had been delayed, it had plainly been sent by Prince Yamato, who was playing a clever double game. The two Americans could easily be disposed of in this far western corner of China, and the blame laid upon anyone. The bland effrontery of Yamato's trip here caused the Baron to chuckle; the most able chief in the company, and the distributing agent and brains of the morphia traffic, meeting here under the very noses of the outraged lamas!

"Well, a man must live!" reflected the Baron philosophically. "I can't go back to my estates until the accursed reds are destroyed, and this business in a fair way to make me rich; so I'll keep at it until the Yunnan organization is perfected. Then I can go out into the world with a handful of scientific discoveries, and assume my rightful station as a wealthy, honored and authoritative man of position!"

WHEN he reached the temple twenty miles to the westward, however, he discovered that the documents which had been unearthed were extremely valuable from a historic standpoint, as they covered the relations between Tibet and the early Ming empire. He wanted to take them back to the city for study, but this the jealous hill lamas refused to permit; they would not let the documents out of their possession. So the Baron hired six of them as copyists, and started in to transcribe the most important of the documents.

After three days of absorbing work, a courier reached him from Ur Hun, with word that the man Smith was a prisoner in the house of the fur merchant. The Baron sent back word to keep the captive until his arrival, and threw himself feverishly into his scientific pursuits. He foresaw most vividly a tremendous amount of worldly fame from his publication of these documents, and he could not bear to pass up the chance.

Three more days slipped past, when another courier came, this time with word that Prince Yamato was expected daily in Chian Fu. The Baron had been working eighteen hours a day, and was staggering on his feet, but the end of the labor was in sight. On the following evening he started on the final documents; at four in the morning his work was finished and he was packing up. At sunrise he climbed into his four-man chair and collapsed over his bundle of precious copies, snoring blissfully while the bearers took him back to town.

He did not waken until the chair was entering Chian Fu, but he arrived at the lamasery refreshed and extremely happy. The head lama received him glumly, and from the temple steps pointed to the banners streaming over the gardens of the mandarin's yamen. Prince Yamato had arrived.

## CHAPTER XI

BEHIND the bazar of Ur Hun the Mongolian—who was in reality one Kokko Sukimasa, a man not without honor in his own country—was a very commodious establishment. In fairly recent times, a couple of hundred years back or so, the place had been an inn; it had its own courtyard, and many chambers, and could house a large number of people without crowding.

From Inner Mongolia, Ur Hun had received a large camel-train of furs. The bales were being opened, and from them was taken a great number of packages of the "happy dust." In one of the unused rooms, the powder was being sorted into tiny lots, suitable for use about the countryside. As he showed the Baron over the establishment, Ur Hun complacently chuckled that he had enough morphia on hand to last for six months.

"Many of the priests in the hill temples," said the Baron, "are outlaws and rascally fellows. I have listed certain temples, and you had better arrange to introduce the morphia to them. If we thus attack the priesthood from within, we shall rot them at the heart and they will be able to do little against us."

"The bonzes will howl when we begin to drain the peasants of money!" chuckled Ur Hun. "That is an admirable idea, master; I shall act upon it at once. I myself will do the work, passing as a Mongolian lama."

"And now for the man Smith," said the Baron. "Let us have some tea, while he is brought in to us."

Ur Hun assented. They returned to a large room, pleasantly furnished, where a

bookkeeper was checking over accounts. Seating themselves, the merchant ordered that tea and cakes be brought them, and also the prisoner. The peddler Tokiwa, who received the orders, departed.

Ten minutes later Jimmy Smith, handcuffed and guarded by Tokiwa, stood in the room and met the curious gaze of the Baron with a flinty stare. Smith was far from looking his natural self. For a week he had been lying chained to an iron ring in the floor of a filthy basement room. He was unwashed and unshaven.

"I have kept him for you to interrogate," said Ur Hun in English. Like his master the Baron, this fur merchant seemed to speak all languages with equal facility.

"Smith," began von Friederman calmly, "you are charged with the murder of a muleteer named Tenfa—who was a Japanese subject. What is your defense?"

Smith merely gazed at him, with a hint of biting scorn in his eyes, and said nothing. The Baron shrugged.

"Ugly, eh? My dear fellow, I am quite impersonal in all this. I've known for some time that you and your friend Bryce were in this district on purpose to investigate morphia smuggling. If you hadn't rushed off to aid Hanecy, you'd have met Bryce; he came into camp the day after you left. I had the pleasure of shooting him."

The blow was a brutal one—Smith winced.

"You lie!" he exclaimed thickly.

"Not a bit of it." The Baron smiled. "His effects are with my things, at the lamasery."

His perfect calmness drove conviction into Smith.

"If this is true," said the American, an icy flame in his eyes, "I'll get your mangy hide if it takes me ten years!"

UR HUN chuckled amusedly, and the Baron laughed.

"Upon my word, Smith, your optimism is most admirable. It is a pleasure to find that you are here in such excellent physical condition. I presume that we may waive explanations?"

Smith merely glared at him like a trapped beast, Tokiwa watching him narrowly.

"Very well, then," resumed the Baron with a wave of his cigarette. "My company does not seem to know who sent you and Bryce up here; it's something I'm really curious about! If you'll provide me with the information, I'll keep you in detention a month or two, when my work will be finished; and I'll guarantee to turn you loose at the seacoast. Eh? Is that fair?"

"No one sent me," said Smith.

"A lie, my dear fellow! You and Bryce certainly did not come up here of your own accord. Beside, Bryce carried an authorization from Prince Yamato; it was very clever in his highness to give you that paper! I suppose that by this time both Pekin and the foreign legations are fully convinced that Prince Yamato is trying to stamp out the morphia traffic. Ha! What would they say if they knew that he is a stockholder in the company, eh? And he's here in the city, to confer with me. So I'd advise you to talk freely."

"Nothing doing," said Smith curtly.

"Don't bother, master," and Ur Hun gazed at Smith from his black slits of eyes. "If you wish to make him talk, I promise you that it can be done within an hour."

The Baron shivered slightly, and patted his bald spot with frowning unrest.

"I don't like torture," he said. "It may be that Prince Yamato will know everything, and that we shall have no need of this man. I can let you know tomorrow after seeing the prince. Take him away, and neglect no precaution."

Smith was dragged out of the room, still silent.

The Baron departed, and returned to the lamasery and his precious documents. He found word awaiting him that Prince Yamato would be pleased to receive him in private audience early the next morning; an honor of which the Baron was fully sensible.

With the morning, von Friederman bathed and shaved, dressed in his best, summoned his men, and set forth for the mandarin's yamen. There the visiting prince and his suite—half a dozen Japanese and twice as many Chinese officials—occupied two buildings in the yamen. Above one of them fluttered the sixteen-petaled chrysanthemum, for the prince was of the blood royal, and before this building, the Baron left his chair. He had been announced, and waiting to receive him were two Chinese officials and a smiling, bowing son of Nippon, who greeted him in German and begged him to follow to the presence of Prince Yamato.

He was ushered into a chamber furnished in the richest and best that the mandarin could provide, and the door closed behind him. Here were a rug of silk, gold and silver bullion thread; chairs of scarlet lacquer, drum-like porcelain seats in the blue-and-white of the old imperial kilns, tables of ebony inlaid with fine traceries in gold and silver, wall-hangings of the finest southern embroidery, the heaviest silks. Against all this magnificence sat the figure of a small man attired in frock coat and the accompaniments thereto—a small man, oddly foreign to the splendor around him.

"I am glad to meet you, Baron von Friederman! I have heard much of you, and to talk with you is an honor. Will you be seated? I pray you, abandon formality. There are cigarettes on the table. I myself do not smoke, but do not let that deter you."

THE BARON refused politely, and seated himself. He spoke of the honor of this private interview, and behind his words lay a half-veiled significance. Prince Yamato smiled, and continued to smile through the interview, for this was the politeness of his own race. His smile had no meaning, but it veiled many meanings, after the manner of Oriental smiles.

"I have lately become an investor in many companies operating in China," he said after a moment. "Let us be frank, my dear Baron, for I do not believe in wasting words. I know that you are working in this province for one of the companies in which I am interested financially."

The ruddy features of the Baron beamed.

He spoke very freely to the prince, informing him of that admirable man Ur Hun and of Tokiwa and the others. He then passed on to the case of Smith, which he described exactly. The ultimate disposition of Smith was of course in the hands of His Highness, and the Baron made it plain that he would obey orders to the letter. To all this, the prince listened in inscrutable silence, no trace of feeling upon his iron features.

"Of course," he said quietly, "I am scarcely here to represent the company, Baron von Friederman. I am only a very small stockholder—"

The Baron waved his hand.

"Your Highness is close to the throne," he responded. "Your Highness is a power in the Japanese world of diplomacy, of finance, of statecraft. The mere fact that your Highness is associated with us, is a sure augury of great success—and a high honor."

Prince Yamato inclined his head slightly; his polite smile deepened.

"It is very kind of you," he said. "You will not mind if I despatch a note to one of my friends? Tea shall be served, and we may discuss our affairs in comfort."

From the inlaid table at his elbow, the prince seized brush, ink, and paper, and swiftly limned a message in Japanese ideagraphs. This done, he clapped his hands. A Japanese officer entered and bowed. Prince Yamato silently extended the note to him, then spoke.

"You will have tea served at once. When those whom I have summoned arrive, let them enter. There will be no delay!"

## CHAPTER XII

"DO you like the music of Wagner?" demanded the prince suddenly, as they talked.

"Above all things!" exclaimed the Baron eagerly.

"I detest him," said Prince Yamato calmly. His smile deepened as the Baron changed countenance. "The only two scraps of his music that I like, are in *Tristan*—one is the sound of the little pipe, and the other is the 'Wohin nun Tristant Scheidet'."

"Ah! 'Whither now Tristan departs,' " murmured the Baron perfunctorily. "It is indeed beautiful, Your Highness—*ach! What was that?*"

He half started to his feet, his ruddy features whitening. From outside had come a ragged rattle—the terrible rattle of a volley of rifles,which must have been discharged in the compound of the yamen itself!

Prince Yamato smiled and waved his hand negligently.

"That," he answered, "marks the departure of several pseudo-Trisans, I believe. The mandarin has discovered the bandits responsible for the disappearance of our friend Mr. Smith from America. As evidence of his zeal, he is executing them. Do not become nervous, I beg you!"

The Baron reseated himself and patted his bald spot.

"Devil take his zeal—it startled me!" he admitted. Then he started violently; from the compound had come another rattling volley. The prince merely continued his unconcerned smile, and poured another thimble-cup of tea.

The door opened. An officer appeared, bowing. Prince Yamato nodded his head, and sipped at his tea. The officer stood aside, and into the room walked—Bryce!

"You are just in time for a cup of tea," said the prince calmly. "I think you know the Baron von Friederman?"

Bryce came forward, smiling a little.

The Baron sat motionless, the teacup poised in his hands. His eyes widened upon the figure of Bryce—widened horribly. A queerly inarticulate sound rose in his throat and died again. Then his hands fell in his lap, nerveless; the little teacup, unheeded, fell and spilled its fragrant brew across the gorgeous carpet of silk and gold.

"It's a pleasant day, Your Highness," said Bryce, dropping into one of the scarlet-lacquered armchairs. He seemed a trifle faint, as though his splendid body were weakened. "A very pleasant day. I hope the shots didn't startle you—there'll be more in a few moments. The chief victims have been reserved to the last."

WITH this, his gaze rested upon the Baron, and he smiled. Something in his smile seemed to pale the Baron's ruddy cheeks—to pale them into a mottled, inchoate mass. Von Friederman's eyes became glassy and fixed.

"No, he's not a ghost, my dear Baron," said Prince Yamato pleasantly. "Some Chinese wood-cutters found him hurt in a ravine; I passed by there soon afterward, and brought him along with me. My surgeon soon fixed him up—an excellent man, a graduate of Johns Hopkins and the Royal College in London—ah, there is your prediction verified, Mr. Bryce!"

From the compound had crashed out a third volley.

"You wouldn't care to say good-by to Mr. Ur Hun of—Mongolia?" Bryce smiled again at the Baron, but his smile was cruel. "And to the peddler Tokiwa? I fancy their turn is now at hand. They will just about be stepping up to the wall now, Baron, while the mandarin's soldiers are reloading."

Globules of sweat slowly formed upon the cheeks of the Baron and hung there like drops of ghastly portent. For the first time, his gaze wavered from Bryce and went to the smiling countenance of Prince Yamato; but if the smile of Bryce had been cruel, that of the prince was inflexible and frightful in its iron fixity.

Von Friederman's head jerked as though upon hinges. He glanced at the doorway, he glanced at the wall-hangings; upon his ruddy lips had settled a mortal pallor.

"A very interesting room, yes," murmured Prince Yamato, as though answering some unspoken word. "There are hidden galleries; a single gesture, a single motion, could fill the room with bullets At times, I find these customs of medieval China very useful."

The Baron relaxed slightly in his seat. A waxen pallor had turned his cheeks ashen. He opened his mouth as though to speak, but no sound came forth. His lips clenched again.

From the compound broke a fourth volley, and to it the Baron shivered, as though some clammy chill had echoed down his spine.

"It is finished," said Prince Yamato. "You will admit my friends, please!"

The officer at the doorway bowed. An instant later, the Baron stared glassily at the entrance; he seemed quite paralyzed by the horror of realization which had come upon him.

Into the room came the local mandarin, bowing respectfully, his silken robe sweeping the floor, and stood aside; after him, the head lama. The prince was standing, now, and to him the lama inclined his head slightly, then joined the mandarin, his fierce eyes fastened upon the awful gaze of von Friederman. Then, still unwashed and unshaven, but smiling, Jimmy Smith entered the doorway and strode toward Prince Yamato. He flung Bryce a single look, and extended his hand to the prince.

"Hello, Prince!" he exclaimed, shaking hands without formality. "Everything O. K. outside. The yellow pope and the mandarin, over there, are a little mixed up on the details, so perhaps you had better make your position clear to them—the lama especially."

PRINCE YAMATO looked at the huddled figure of the Baron, then his gaze lifted to the penetrating stare of the head lama. He spoke in Mandarin, which all present understood perfectly. And as he

spoke, there came upon him a new dignity, until his slight stature was forgotten, and he grew visibly before them into the man he was.

"My friends," he said, "I am a prince of Nippon. Not long ago, I listened to the charges that my government, my country, was deliberately seeking to spread morphia all through the land of China, with the intent to debauch her people and render them slaves."

He paused, and upon the room was a hush so acute, so terrible, that in it the breathing of the Baron sounded loud.

"I looked into these charges," continued Prince Yamato, a flicker of energy in his eyes. "I found a company dealing in opium and its products—a company of great financial and even political power; a company of my fellow-countrymen. I bought stock in this company. I found out, further, that it had many agents in China. At the head of these distributing agents was a foreigner, a white man, a nobleman of Europe. Many of our consular officials were concerned in the company. I found this company of rich men boasting that no power in our empire could destroy them. They thought—the dogs!—that I was one like themselves.

"So, my friends, I went quietly to work to destroy this company. At home, I knew that I could destroy them as a man wipes out an hill of ants. But here in China, I needed help. And where could I find helpers who would be above bribes, trustworthy men who could see the same vision that I saw? I found this man Smith—the French governor of Tonking lent him to me, and with him came his friend Bryce. They are Americans, men of that country to which China owes so much today!

"I sent these men here, and I followed them. Now, my friends, you know what has taken place here today. A little while ago I sent you a note," and he addressed the mandarin, "and you obeyed it. You arrested every man in the house of Ur Hun the Mongolian, and you shot them—all except this man Smith, who was a prisoner there, and who doubtless told you much. You shot them, those countrymen of mine! And that was well done, my friends."

THE PRINCE paused, and his eyes flickered to the figure of the Baron, seemingly paralyzed by his awful dread.

"Here," he said with a slight gesture, "is the nobleman whose cunning brain has effected the morphia organization—the white man who has not scrupled to direct this traffic in the lives and souls of his fellow-creatures! His lesser aides have been destroyed. In every province throughout China, the mandarins are being given my authority to deal with the morphia peddlers as the law directs, for I have annulled their rights as subjects of Nippon. To do this, my friends, I have the authority of our ruler, the Mikado."

The prince turned and bowed reverently to a table on his left, where reposed a plain, red-lacquered box upon which was a sixteen-petaled chrysanthemum.

"I shall show you his commission later, if you so desire," he pursued. "But I, who am not without power, promise you that in my own land I shall destroy this company as ruthlessly as I have destroyed its agents here. That is all that I have to say. I thank you, gentlemen, for your help and co-operation. Baron von Friederman, the audience is ended."

Prince Yamato sat down, his eyes upon the Baron.

As though wakened by those final words, von Friederman stirred in his chair. His head jerked up. In the eyes of the mandarin and the head lama, he read no mercy. In the eyes of Bryce and Smith he read neither pity nor help. His gaze lifted to that of Prince Yamato, and what he read there made a tremulous shiver pass through his body. He rose to his feet, swayed an instant, unsteadily, then bowed.

"If Your Highness will permit it," he said, his voice hoarse, "I should like to retire to a private room."

"By all means," and the prince smiled assent.

The Baron turned and walked to the doorway, his shoulders thrown back. The door closed behind him.

In the room that he had just left, not a man stirred. Silence gripped them all—a silence that was ridden with suspense, with tensed waiting; deep and terrible silence pregnant with a frightful significance. It was broken by a crashing sound—the report of a pistol-shot that lifted and burst through the house.

Upon the lips of Prince Yamato quivered his set smile of ceremony. He pointed to the silk and gold rug, upon which still lay the tiny teacup dropped by von Friederman.

"I much regret this unseemly accident," he said to the mandarin. "The stain will remain in the rug. If you will permit me to replace the rug with another one of equal—"

"Not so, Your Highness!" said the mandarin, his plump, scholarly face filled with a strange light of dignity and exaltation. "To me, that stain shall ever remain as a badge of honor, and the rug as a symbol that there are still men in the world who can tread underfoot the gold and silver of iniquity!"

Prince Yamato reflected with bent head for a moment.

"Well said," he uttered at length. Then, murmuring: "But one must admit that after all, this man knew how to die without shrinking!"

## CHAPTER XIII

JIMMY SMITH smoked his pipe with keen enjoyment, as the four bearers jogged along the mountain trail with the chair in which he sat.

"This thing has cleared up most beautifully," he reflected. "I've gotten a lot of *kudos,* not to mention having had a most enjoyable vacation. Old Bryce has fallen heir to the Baron's manuscripts, and would cheerfully have taken a dozen bullets in the back at the price—he's so happy! The head lama is tickled to death. Prince Yamato is going to organize a whopping big shooting party and beat up the blue tiger. But—poor old Jim Hanecy is the goat! Hanecy gets nothing out of it except a dose of strychnia! The girl doesn't count, for I guess he had her cinched already. I bet Hanecy will ruffle up his red head when I tell him all that's happened!"

He chuckled amusedly and knocked out his pipe as the hill temple came in sight around the curve.

Beside the high stone lantern, out in front of the temple gate, an awning had been stretched. Under this awning, in an easy reclining chair, sat the figure of Hanecy; and beside him, busy with some sewing, Miss Langhorn. They rose as Smith left his chair and joined them.

"Hello!" he exclaimed. "How's the patient, Miss Langhorn?"

"Just about cured," said the girl, a trifle stiffly; and Smith knew that he was not and would not be forgiven the shooting of Tenfa. "I'm returning to the city in the morning."

Hanecy's freckled features expanded in a grin.

"I guess I'll go back too," he said with elaborate carelessness.

"Go back?" Smith's brows lifted. "Why, I thought you never laid down on a commission, Hanecy? Have you given up the blue tiger as a bad job, after waiting so long?"

"Nope." Hanecy jerked his head toward the entrance. "Go and look in the compound, and you'll see why I'm going to beat it out of here."

Smith strode to the entrance of the temple and disappeared. Hanecy grinned at the girl, then suddenly caught her hand and drew it to his lips; their eyes met in a smile. Smith, returning, coughed loudly as he neared them.

"I'm sure I—ah—must congratulate you," he observed, his eyes resting upon them. "A wonderful shot, Hanecy—a wonderful shot! But I thought you were an invalid?"

"Eh?" said Hanecy. "What are you talking about?"

Smith affected not to observe the blush of Miss Langhorn, and Hanecy's confusion.

"Why, the tiger, of course!" he returned lightly. "It's the finest skin I've ever seen, Hanecy! How'd it happen, old man?"

"Oh, *that!*" Hanecy colored. "Darn you, Smith! Anyhow, I beat you to it. I was sitting out here yesterday cleaning a rifle, when he walked right out on the road over by the bend, and stood gazing at me. Thought I'd make a good meal, maybe. I got in one shot, and got it in right. The blue tiger's mine, old boy! I got the Blue Ghost in spite of you and the whole blamed crowd!"

Smith chuckled. "Well, I guess we're all happy, then! I got the Blue Ghost myself, or had a hand in it—and you got it—and Bryce got it—and the prince got it—"

"What the deuce are you talking about?" demanded Hanecy in astonishment.

"Oh, I'm just raving," and Smith chuckled again. "Wait till I get my pipe filled; I've got some news for you—some news about the Blue Ghost!"

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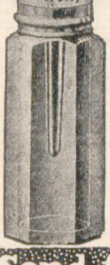



The most concentrated and exquisite perfume ever made. Produced without alcohol. A single drop lasts a week.

Bottle like picture, with long glass stopper, Rose or Lilac, $1.50; Lily of the Valley or Violet, $1.75. Send 20 cts. silver or stamps for miniature bottle.

TRADE MARK REGISTERED
**Rieger's**
PERFUME & TOILET WATER
**Flower Drops**

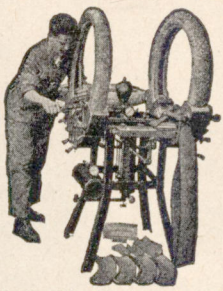
The above comes in less concentrated (usual perfume) form at $1.50 an ounce at druggists or by mail, with two new odors, "Mon Amour," "Garden Queen" both very fine. Send $1.00 for souvenir box, five 25c bottles same size as picture, different odors.

Ask your druggist — he knows there is no better perfume made.

PAUL RIEGER, 149 First St., San Francisco

**Send for Miniature BOTTLE 20¢**

## Your Chance to Make Big Profits in Vulcanizing



Here is your chance to get into a highly profitable business which will make you independent. High class vulcanizers are in demand everywhere. Many of our graduates make $3,000 a year and over.

We make the Anderson steam vulcanizer and Anderson retreader and teach you the famous Anderson Method of vulcanizing. Our students make good because they can do superior work with the Anderson machine and method and do it at one-tenth the cost required by all other vulcanizers. Highly satisfied customers and large profits mean a paying business. Not only are we able to convince you of this but we invite you to compare the Anderson make and method with others.

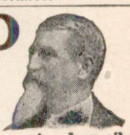
We have installed Anderson schools of vulcanizing in 30 states for teaching the Anderson method of vulcanizing and retreading. The course requires 5 to 10 days and costs $20. If you buy an Anderson vulcanizer we return your $20 and pay you $2 per day expense money while learning.

Our reputation is valuable. We expect Anderson vulcanizers to do work which will outlast the rest of the tire. We expect Anderson students to succeed in a business way. Their success is our success. *Therefore we do not sell an Anderson vulcanizer to anyone who has not received our course of instructions.*

Don't miss this opportunity. Write today for full particulars and address of Anderson school nearest to you.

**ANDERSON STEAM VULCANIZER CO.**
**31 WILLIAMS BLDG., INDIANAPOLIS, IND., U. S. A.**
*Print your name to avoid mistakes.*

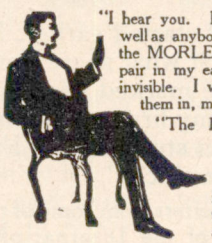
## I was BALD

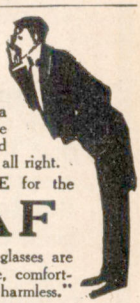


Picture (from photo) shows **how bald I was** when I came across a hair elixir that gave the long needed aid to Nature, and now I possess the **prolific growth of healthy hair** shown in photo. This elixir is called **KOTALKO.** Contains *genuine bear oil.* Women, men, children use Kotalko for dandruff, falling hair, baldness. Most druggists sell it; or I will mail you a proof box of Kotalko with brochure and guarantee for 10 cents, silver or stamps.

J. H. Brittain, BA-413, Station F, New York

## "DON'T SHOUT"





"I hear you. I can hear now as well as anybody. 'How?' With the MORLEY PHONE. I've a pair in my ears now, but they are invisible. I would not know I had them in, myself, only that I hear all right.

"The MORLEY PHONE for the **DEAF** is to the ears what glasses are to the eyes. Invisible, comfortable, weightless and harmless."

**Anyone can adjust it.**

Over one hundred thousand sold. Write for booklet and testimonials.

**THE MORLEY CO., Dept. 778, 26 S. 15th St., Philadelphia**

## ALLEN'S FOOT-EASE

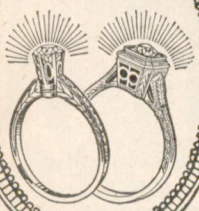
Gives ease and comfort to feet that are tender and sore.

If shoes pinch or corns and bunions ache this Antiseptic, Healing Powder will give quick relief.

Shake it in your Shoes, Sprinkle it in the Foot-bath.

Sold everywhere.

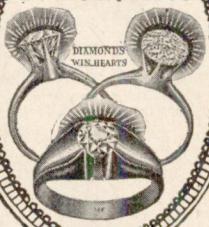
All the new fancy engraved and pierced Diamond Rings are shown in our Catalog



# DIAMONDS WATCHES ON CREDIT

## LOFTIS BROS. & CO.

For elegance and artistic beauty our Diamond Rings are unsurpassed




**Satisfaction Guaranteed** Every article listed in our large Catalog is specially selected and priced **unusually low.** Whatever you select will be sent prepaid. **You see and examine the article right in your own hands.** If satisfied, pay one-fifth of purchase price and keep it; balance divided into eight equal amounts, payable monthly.

### Extraordinary Values

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| Diamond Rings, Solitaire | $25.00 up |
| Loftis Solitaire Diamond Cluster Rings | 150.00 up |
| Diamond La Vallieres | 15.00 up |
| Diamond Brooches | 12.00 up |
| Diamond Ear Screws | 35.00 up |
| Diamond Studs | 15.00 up |
| Signet Rings, Diamond-set | 10.00 up |
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**Send for Your Copy of the LOFTIS Diamond, Watch and Jewelry Catalog.**
**Liberty Bonds Accepted**

**Established 1858**

The easiest, most convenient way to buy Diamonds, Watches, Jewelry, either for personal wear, or for gifts, is to send for our Catalog, make your selections in the quiet of your own home, and have **everything charged in one account.** By this plan you can make very little ready money supply all your needs.

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| Diamond Scarf Pins | 15.00 up |
| Pearl Necklaces, with Diamond-set Clasp | 18.00 up |
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We Prepay Shipping Charges

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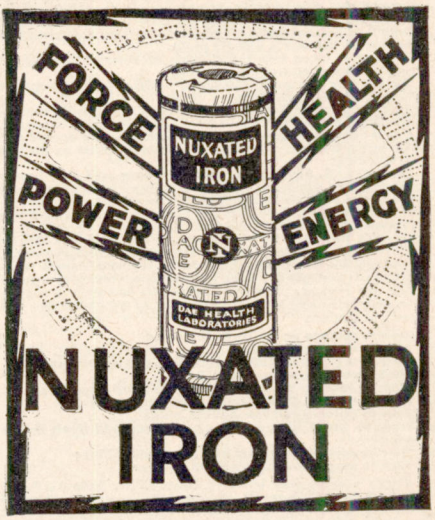
**Safely. Immediate Results.**

Get **Robust Health,** avoid Nervousness, Indigestion, foul breath, **Heart Disease, Prolong Life,** regain **Manly Vigor,** Lasting Vitality, **Calm Nerves,** mental strength, strong clear eyes. Calmness, tranquil sleep, Normal appetite, No habit-forming drugs. Send for valuable **Free** booklet, telling how to conquer habit, the most **Safe,** marvelously scientific; **Quick,** absolutely, thoroughly reliable in every respect, permanently, positively guaranteed.

**GUSTAFSON MFG. CO. S. B. Cleveland, O.**




# NUXATED IRON

Nuxated Iron by enriching the blood and creating new red blood cells, strengthens the nerves, rebuilds the weakened tissues and helps to instill renewed force and energy into the whole system. Three million people use it annually. Ask your doctor or druggist.

# No More Wrinkles

## BEAUTIFUL BUST

### Superfluous Hair Vanishes Like Magic. Eyelashes Beautified

**Pimples and Blackheads Removed Forever**

Let this woman send you free, everything she agrees, and beautify your face and form quickly.

This clever woman has not a wrinkle upon her face; she has perfected a marvelous, simple method which brought a wonderful change in her face in a single night. For removing wrinkles and developing the bust, her method is truly wonderfully rapid.

She made herself the woman she is today and brought about the wonderful change in her appearance in a secret and pleasant manner. Her complexion is as clear and fair as that of a child. She turned her scrawny figure into a beautiful bust and well-developed form. She had thin, scrawny eye-lashes and eyebrows, which could scarcely be seen, and she made them long, thick and beautiful by her own methods and removed every blackhead and pimple from her face in a single night.

Nothing is taken into the stomach, no common massage, no harmful plasters, no worthless creams.

By her new process, she removes wrinkles and develops the whole figure plump and fat.

It is simply astonishing the hundreds of women who write in regarding the wonderful results from this new beauty treatment, which is beautifying their face and form after beauty doctors and other methods failed. She has thousands of letters on file like the following.

Mrs. M. L. B. Albin, Miss., writes: "I have used your beauty treatment with wonderful success. I have **not a wrinkle on my face** now and it is also improving my complexion, which has always troubled me with pimples and blackheads. My weight was 112 pounds before taking your treatment and now I weigh 117, a gain of 5 pounds. Your treatment **is a God send** to all thin women. I am so grateful you may even use my letter if you wish".

The valuable new **beauty book** which Madame Clare is sending free to thousands of women is certainly a blessing to women.

All our readers should write her at once and she will tell you absolutely free; about her various new beauty treatments and will show our readers:

**How to remove wrinkles in 8 hours;**
**How to develop the bust;**
**How to make long, thick eyelashes and eyebrows;**
**How to remove superfluous hair;**
**How to remove blackheads, pimples and freckles;**
**How to remove dark circles under the eyes;**
**How to quickly remove double chin;**
**How to build up sunken cheeks and add flesh to the body;**
**How to darken gray hair and stop hair falling;**
**How to stop forever perspiration odor.**

Simply address your letter to Helen Clare, Suite A-349.3311 Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill., and don't send any money, because particulars are free, as this charming woman is doing her utmost to benefit girls or women in need of secret information which will add to their beauty and make life sweeter and lovlier in every way.

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*You can be quickly cured, if you*

# STAMMER

Send 10 cents coin or stamps for 70-page book on Stammering and Stuttering, "Its Cause and Cure." It tells how I cured myself after stammering for 20 years.

**Benjamin N. Bogue,** 3853 Bogue Building, Indianapolis

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# WHY DON'T YOU MAKE MONEY AT HOME?

You can earn from $1 to $2 an hour in your spare time writing show cards; quickly and easily learned

NO CANVASING

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WRITE TO DAY FOR FULL PARTICULARS **AMERICAN SHOW CARD SCHOOL**

200, RYRIE BLDG. YONGE & SHUTER ST **TORONTO, CANADA**

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# FREE DIAMOND RING OFFER

Just to advertise our famous Hawaiian im. diamonds—the greatest discovery the world has ever known. We will send absolutely free this 14k gold f. ring, set with a ½k Hawaiian im. diamond—in beautiful ring box, postage paid. Pay postmaster $1.48 C. O. D. charges to cover postage, boxing, advertising, handling, etc. If you can tell it from a real diamond return and money refunded. Only 10,000 given away. Send no money. Answer quick. Send size of finger.

KRAUTH & REED DEPT. 160. Masonic Temple, Chicago

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# Comfort Baby's Skin With Cuticura Soap And Fragrant Talcum

For sample Cuticura Talcum, a fascinating fragrance, Address Cuticura Laboratories, Dept. D, Malden, Mass.

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# DIAMOND BUYING

10 Months To Pay

## DON'T BUY WITHOUT THIS BOOK

It's filled with solid facts about the values of high grade Diamonds, Watches and Jewelry that will double the purchasing power of your purse.

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**ASK FOR EDITION 141**

# ROYAL DIAMOND & WATCH CO.

ESTABLISHED 1895

35 Maiden Lane ~ New York

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**$2.80 A Month**

Examine ring FIRST, then if you decide to keep it pay only $2.00. Buying direct assures you the Rock Bottom Price. A perfectly cut blue-white Diamond in ladies' solid gold setting at only $2.80 a month.

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# EYEBROWS and LASHES

They add wonderfully to one's beauty, charm and attractiveness. A little

*Lash-Brow-Ine*

applied nightly, will nourish, stimulate and promote growth of eyebrows and lashes, making them long, thick and lustrous. Guaranteed absolutely harmless. *Two Sizes, 50c and $1.00.* Send price and we will mail you "LASH-BROW-INE" and Maybell Beauty Booklet, "*The Women Beautiful,*" prepaid, under plain cover. Thousands have been delighted by the results obtained by its use; why not you? Remit by coin, currency, U. S. stamps or money order. *Satisfaction assured or price refunded. Avoid disappointment with imitations. Get the full name correct—"LASH-BROW-INE."*

**MAYBELL LABORATORIES, 4305-51 Grand Blvd., CHICAGO**

# A Scientific Hair Color Restorer

The way has been found for scientifically restoring gray hair to its natural color. It is offered to women in Mary T. Goldman's Scientific Hair Color Restorer. It ends gray hair in from 4 to 8 days.

*Mary T Goldman's*

*Scientific Hair Color Restorer*

**FREE** Send today for a free trial bottle of Mary T. Goldman's and one of our special combs. State the exact color of your hair.

Try it on a lock of your hair. Note the results. Then you will know why thousands of women have already used this scientific hair color restorer.

**MARY T. GOLDMAN**
**1751 Goldman Bldg., St. Paul, Minn.**

*Accept no Imitations—Sold by Druggists Everywhere*

# Stop!

# Using Tobacco

Perhaps you've tried to stop using tobacco only to find that the habit has such a hold on you that you gave up trying.

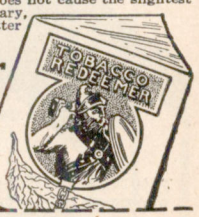
**You** know, better than anyone else, that you **ought** to stop because, sooner or later, it is bound to undermine your health. Heart trouble, indigestion, dyspepsia, nervousness, insomnia, poor eye sight—these and many other disorders, can often be traced directly to the use of tobacco. Besides it is an **expensive, utterly useless** habit.

# Habit Banished

## In 48 to 72 Hours

**No matter how firm a grip tobacco has on you—no matter whether you've been smoking cigars, pipe or cigarettes or chewing plug or fine cut for a month or 50 years—Tobacco Redeemer** will positively remove all craving for tobacco in any form in from 48 to 72 hours. It does its work so quickly that all tobacco "hunger" is gone almost before you know it. Your desire for a smoke, or a chew begins to decrease after the very first dose.

Tobacco Redeemer contains no habit-forming drugs of any kind—it is in no sense a tobacco substitute. It does not cause the slightest shock to the nervous system; on the contrary, it quiets the nerves and makes you feel better in every way.




**SEND Coupon for Proof** Get our free booklet. Tells you all about the deadly effects of tobacco and how easy it is now to quit. We will also send you copies of letters from confirmed users telling how this simple, home-treatment freed them absolutely from the habit. Just mail coupon—or a postal will do.

**NEWELL PHARMACAL CO.**
**Dept. 308** **St. Louis, Mo.**

Send, without obligation to me in any way, proof that Tobacco Redeemer will positively free me from the Tobacco Habit.

Name .....

Street and No. .....

Town ..... State .....

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THERE'S no place in our live-wire business and social life for the weak, sickly man who is of no use to himself or anybody else. Health, Strength, Energy, and the Ability they give a man, to win SUCCESS, are the only qualities that count. Nobody will care anything about you, or even give you a second thought, if you go staggering through life with some miserable chronic ailment, weakness or bad habit making you a misfit in the busy, wideawake world; holding you back, keeping you from doing anything worth while and slating you for the shelf or junk heap before your time.

STRONGFORT
The Perfect Man

## Get Out of the Rut

Don't be content to end your life a miserable failure. Don't let a sickly ailment ruin all your chances of success. It won't cure itself. You will never be any better until you **exert your will**, get hold of yourself, lift yourself out of the rut that is growing deeper every day you travel in it. YOU CAN DO IT. You can free yourself from the Constipation that is destroying the tissues of your body and brain; you can get rid of the Dyspepsia and Indigestion that make you feel as though you carried a millstone in your chest; you can cast off the shackles of any bad habit that is sapping your vitality and making you ashamed to face your fellow men. YOU CAN BE FREE FROM YOUR TROUBLES—strong, well, with every chance of making a success in the world, if you will only WAKE UP!—Look the Facts squarely in the Face and ACT AT ONCE.

### WIN BACK YOUR HEALTH AND STRENGTH

I'll show you how to do it, in a way that has never failed. I have made a lifetime study of the methods whereby renewed VITALITY—bringing with it Health, Strength and Energy—is restored by Nature's own methods to the human organism. By those methods I built myself up, until today I am called the strongest man in the world. By them I have built up thousands of weak, ailing, despondent men and women; turned the watery fluid in their veins to rich, tissue-building blood; strengthened their vital organs; developed their muscles, external and internal; given them back health, happiness, hope, ambition and the joy to the full of Living Life.

## STRONGFORTISM

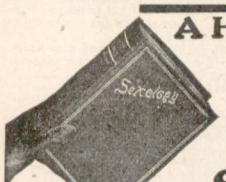
Strongfortism is the Science of Living Life as NATURE meant it to be lived; of taking advantage in the utmost degree of the marvelous recuperative powers she has implanted in the human organism and letting her work the cure of any ills. Nature's way is the only safe, sane, sure way of getting back lost health and strength. Her laws operate for every individual alike, **and never fail.** Those laws, those methods, I have incorporated in the system of Strongfortism and applied them with unvarying success to my pupils in every part of the world. What NATURE, through the practice of Strongfortism, has done for others, she will do for YOU, if you will only give her half a chance. There isn't the slightest doubt about it.

## Send for My Free Book

**"Promotion and Conservation of Health, Strength and Mental Energy"** will tell you all about Strongfortism and show you how it can do for YOU what it has already done and is now doing for other weak, wornout, ailing men and women. It makes no difference where you live or what your occupation is. You can practice Strongfortism in the privacy of your own bedroom, if you like, and gain the utmost benefit, if you will devote to it as little as fifteen or twenty minutes a day. You will notice the improvement, physically and mentally, within a few days after you begin, and your friends will notice your improved appearance as well.

SEND FOR THE BOOK NOW. Don't put it off. Every day counts when our vitality is ebbing away. THE BOOK IS FREE, but you gladly would pay a good price for it, if you knew what it would bring you. Send for it today and simply enclose three 2c stamps to cover packing and mailing.

**LIONEL STRONGFORT** PHYSICAL AND HEALTH SPECIALIST
**1271 Strongfort Institute, NEWARK, N. J.**




## A Happy Marriage

Depends largely on a knowledge of the whole truth about self and sex and their relation to life and health. This knowledge does not come intelligently of itself, nor correctly from ordinary every-day sources.

# SEXOLOGY

*(Illustrated)*

*by William H. Walling, A. M., M. D.*, imparts in a clear, wholesome way, in one volume;

**Knowledge a Young Man Should Have.**
**Knowledge a Young Husband Should Have.**
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**Medical Knowledge a Husband Should Have.**

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Write for "Other People's Opinions" and Table of Contents.
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See Anderson Steam Vulcanizer advertisement on second Page of this advertising section.

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SMOKERS ATTENTION. 100 High Grade Stogies $2.65. Post Paid. Satisfaction Guaranteed. Flack Cigar Company, South Bend, Ind.

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AGENTS—$40—$100 a week. Free samples. Gold Sign Letters for stores and office windows. Anyone can put them on. Big demand everywhere. Liberal offer to general agents. Metallic Letter Co., 431J, N. Clark St., Chicago, U. S. A.

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SALESMAN—CITY OR TRAVELING. Experience unnecessary. Send for list of openings and full particulars. Prepare in spare time to earn the big salaries—$2,500 to $10,000 a year. Employment service rendered members. Natl. Salesmen's Tr. Ass'n, Dept. 141G, Chicago, Ills.

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B. Max Mehl, Coin Dealer, Dept. B, Mehl Building, Fort Worth, Texas.

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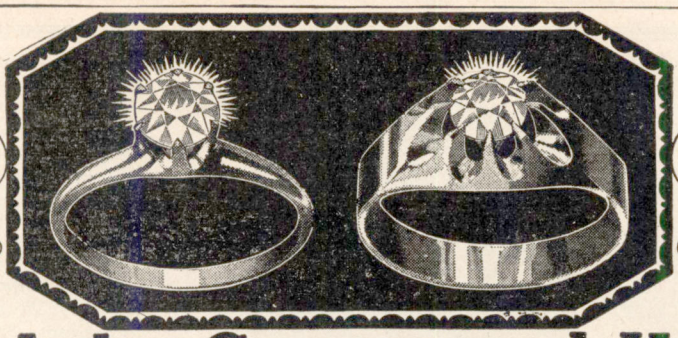
**SLINGERLAND SCHOOL OF MUSIC, Inc. Dept. 32 CHICAGO, ILL.**



# Send the Coupon and We'll Send You a Lachnite

Don't send a penny. Upon your simple request we'll send you a genuine Lachnite gem mounted in either of these solid gold rings on 10 days trial. These exquisite gems have the eternal fire of diamonds. Over 150,000 people have accepted this offer and have found the way to own beautiful jewelry at a trifling cost.

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When the ring comes make the first small deposit ($4.75) with the postman. Wear it 10 full days. If you can tell from a diamond send it back and we'll refund your deposit. If you decide to buy, merely pay the balance at $2.50 a month. The total price of either ring is only $18.75.

## Send Coupon—No Money

Send us your name and address today. Use the coupon or a letter or a post card. Be sure to send your finger size. To do this cut a strip of paper just long enough to meet over the second joint of the finger on which you wish to wear the ring. Send the coupon now—and not a penny in cash.

**Harold Lachman Co.,** Dept. A116 **12 N. Michigan Ave. Chicago, Illinois**

**Harold Lachman Co.,** Dept. A116 **12 N. Michigan Ave. Chicago, Illinois**

Send me prepaid, Ladies' / Men's ring on 10 days' free trial. When it comes I will deposit $4.75 with the postman. After ten days I will either return the ring or send you $2.50 a month until the balance is paid. Total cost to me $18.75. If I return the ring, you will refund my $4.75 immediately. **I enclose my finger size.**

*Name* .....

*Address* .....

Ranger Electric Lighted Motorbike

## 30 Days Free Trial

***Freight prepaid*** on any **"RANGER"** bicycle. **Write at once** for our *big catalog* and *special offers*. Take your choice from 44 styles, colors and sizes in the famous **"RANGER"** line. *You cannot afford to buy* without getting our *latest propositions* and **Factory-to-Rider** prices.

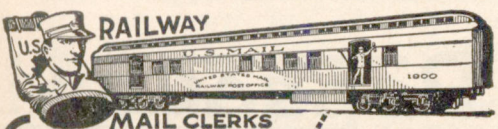
**Easy Payments** if desired, at a small advance over our regular **Factory-to-Rider** cash prices.

**Boys,** be a **"Rider Agent"** and make big money taking orders for bicycles and supplies.

**TIRES** equipment, sundries and everything in the bicycle line at *half usual prices. Write today.* A post card will do.

**MEAD CYCLE COMPANY Dept. B-14 Chicago**

# Wanted!

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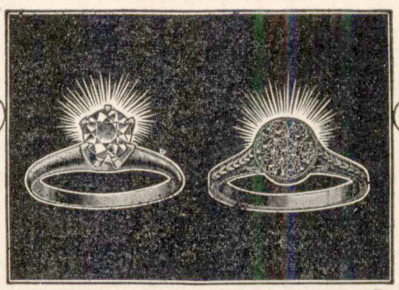

# DIAMONDS

## *for a Few Cents a Day*

SEND your name and address and we will send you our 128-page book of diamond bargains. It is the result of nearly 100 years' experience and shows you millions of dollars' worth of jewelry to choose from—and they may be paid for at the rate of **only a few cents a day.**

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The diamond you select will be sent upon your simple request—*without a penny down.* Then if you do not think it the *greatest bargain* you have ever seen send it back at our expense. If you decide to keep it, your credit is good.

## 8% Yearly Dividends

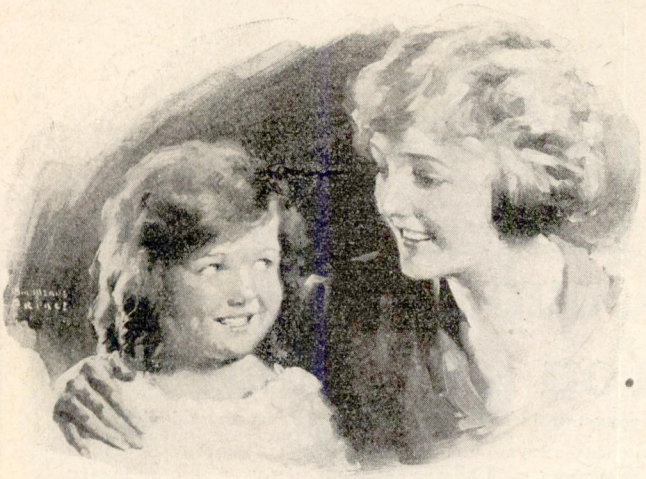
You are guaranteed an 8 per cent yearly increase in value on all exchanges. You can also earn a 5 per cent bonus. The book tells how.

## Write Today

Send your name and address today—NOW. You will be under no obligation. You will receive our 128-page diamond book by the next mail. Send your name and address **NOW** to Dept. 8D.

**J·M·LYON & CO.**

**1 Maiden Lane, New York, N. Y.**



# Those Pearly Teeth

## Learn how people get them

*All statements approved by high dental authorities*

Millions of people have adopted a new teeth cleaning method. Wherever you look you see pearly teeth nowadays. Let this ten-day test reveal what this method means to you.

### End the cloudy film

Most teeth are dimmed by film. A viscous film clings to them, enters crevices and stays. Most tooth troubles are now traced to it.

It is this film-coat that discolors—not the teeth. It is the basis of tartar. It holds food substance which ferments and forms acid. It holds the acid in contact with the teeth to cause decay.

Millions of germs breed in it. They, with tartar, are the chief cause of pyorrhea, and very few people escape it.

The ordinary tooth paste does not dissolve it, so the tooth brush does not end it. Thus most people suffer from that film.

Now dental science, after years of searching, has found a way to combat it. Able authorities have amply proved its efficiency. Now leading dentists everywhere advise it, and millions of people have come to employ it.

### Everyone is welcome

Now this new method is embodied in a dentifrice called Pepsodent. And everyone is welcome to a ten-day test.

Pepsodent is based on pepsin, the digestant of albumin. The film is albuminous matter. The object of Pepsodent is to dissolve it, then to day by day combat it.

Pepsin long seemed impossible. It must be activated, and the usual agent is an acid harmful to the teeth. But science has found a harmless activating method, and pepsin can be every day applied.

Two other new day requisites are combined in Pepsodent. So this method in three ways brings unique results, and everyone should know them.

Send the coupon for a 10-Day Tube. Note how clean the teeth feel after using. Mark the absence of the viscous film. See how teeth whiten as the film coat disappears. It will be a revelation.

Do this for your sake and your family's sake. Judge the method by results. Cut out the coupon now, for few things are more important than whiter, safer teeth.

**10-day tube free** 413

THE PEPSODENT COMPANY,
Dept. 584, 1104 S. Wabash Ave., Chicago, Ill.
Mail 10-Day Tube of Pepsodent to

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Only one tube to a family.

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Pepsodent
REG. U. S.
*The New-Day Dentifrice*

**A scientific film combatant which, after 5 year tests, is now advised by leading dentists everywhe**

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The delicate but enduring fragrance of these exquisite creations brings to the mind's window the rosy dawns, the brilliant sunlight, the purple dusks of the Orient—the enchantment and mystery of strange Far Eastern countries—the subtle, langorous sweetness of tropical gardens and blossom-laden breezes blown from palm-fringed islands set in turquoise seas.

Their seductive odors bring fabled memories of Cleopatra, of Zenobia, of those queenly Oriental beauties whose charms were enhanced by the aromatic preparations of learned Arabian chemists. Their fascinating wrappings are veritable gems from the Orient, reflecting the perfect taste and infinite patience that the Orientals alone know how to bestow upon their work.

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