The Black Cat

August 1901

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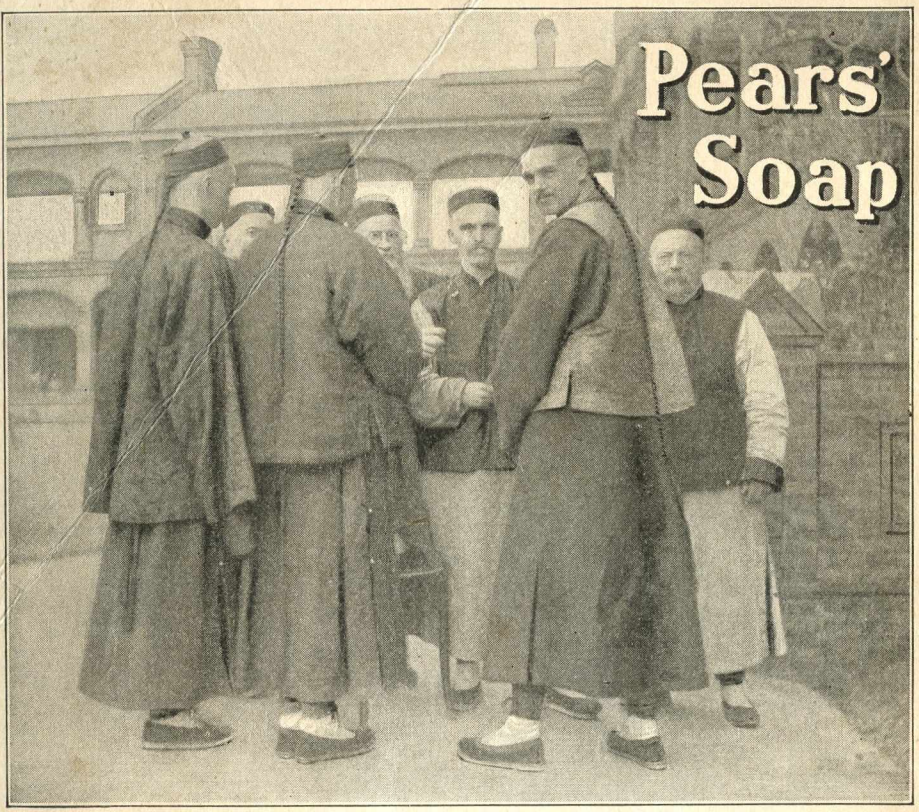

CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES IN CHINA

Photographed by J. Martin Miller, War Correspondent of *The Graphic* of London and *Harper's Weekly* of New York

The following is an extract from a letter written by Mr. Miller to a friend in New York:

"The missionaries have adopted native dress, 'pig-tail' and all, to avoid attracting undesirable attention among the vast hordes of interior China, who would regard a man dressed in western costume with the same class of curiosity as would be aroused by a Chinese Mandarin with his camel-train in an American town.

"You will note the exceedingly neat and cleanly appearance of these white people in the native dress. Is it due to the use of Pears' Soap, which I notice is the only soap to be found in a white man's house, anywhere in the far East?

"If anything can civilize and Christianize China, Pears' Soap and the missionaries will."

Pears' Soap is sold all over the world

The Black Cat

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Fifty Dollars' Margin.*

BY PAUL SHOUP.

"GOING!" said the auctioneer, impressively, shifting his footing upon the chair, one leg of which was sinking in the soil of Kansas. He lifted his hammer in front of Gunga Din, who regarded him with mild interest, and for a moment waited.

Redfern's Colossal Three-Ringed Circus and Unparalleled Aggregation of Wild Beasts was indeed going. The season had been a disastrous one. The long stretches of russet prairie, of grain too short to cut, of sere cornstalks that, drooping, scarce reached the flanks of the cattle turned in to an early harvest, told the cause. At town after town the long tiers of blue benches had risen as if by magic into a great amphitheatre — to remain empty. The band, in faded uniforms, had played desperately on parade, at the tent entrance and inside — all to no purpose. The clown, in commemoration of the season, offered only what he called dry jokes. So, at the little town of Washita Falls, 'way out on the edge of prairie land, where the sun had gone down red all summer long behind a range of purple mountains, the circus came to a full stop. Not the African lion nor the

Royal Bengal tiger nor even the circus proprietor could tell where the next meal was to come from. As the western breeze lifted the flapping canvas, Gunga Din gazed longingly at the nodding cornstalks, and lifted his trunk. They might be good to eat.

Uncle Abner Wallen thrust his hand inside his rusty black coat, buttoned up tightly to the chin. The wallet was still there, and he breathed a little tremulous sigh of relief. For a moment it had been forgotten.

The year was the one before prosperity dawned in Kansas. The mortgage, equally certain, was more feared than death or taxes. In the wallet Uncle Abner had enough money to pay the annual instalment on the mortgage and fifty dollars more. The family had bought no store clothes that season, and in the pinch of economy Uncle Abner had discontinued taking the *Washita County Clarion*, to which he had been a subscriber since he helped organize the county, fourteen years before. However, no particular misfortune had befallen them during the season of rainless skies, until that day, and the margin of fifty dollars had made the family a cheery one at breakfast. Aunt Ellen, wiping her hands on her apron, had said cheerfully as he turned from the door:

"We'll be monopolists yet, Abner."

But there were tears in her eyes. She knew how much hope and youth and energy had gone into grinding toil to yield this narrow margin.

On the road to town that morning, with the courthouse steeple a short mile away, the roan horse stepped into a prairie-dog hole, and falling broke his leg. The veterinary was of the understanding, and he turned his head when he said there was nothing to do but to shoot the animal. He knew what a hundred-dollar horse was to the man before him.

Uncle Abner shut his mouth closely, straightened his bent form a little, and walked away silently. At the corner he gazed hopelessly out over the dead prairie; even the mountains, purple along the western horizon, seemed bare and gaunt. It was then that the strains of the circus band playing for the auction came to his ears.

Almost every one has a weakness which, appealed to at a crisis in life, is apt to yield disastrously. Uncle Abner's trouble was

auctions. The home place was littered with objects of no particular use which a persuasive voice and an insistent hammer had forced upon him in more prosperous years. In his heart he cherished a faint hope that a good horse, even though a circus horse, might be bought at the auction for little money. Horse after horse was put up, and on each likely one Uncle Abner bid, and heard in every instance with sinking heart some one go above his fifty-dollar margin. A stout man with a hoarse voice, wearing a narrow-brimmed straw hat and a checkered vest and displaying a huge watch-chain, purchased most of the horses, listening to Uncle Abner's offers with a quiet smile. He noted the fifty-dollar limit.

The zebra and the sacred cow had gone cheap, and the monkeys were sold to a magic-lantern man who was branching out. Now only Gunga Din and two white ponies remained. Over these the auctioneer grew eloquent, obviously directing his remarks at the man with the red face and the checkered vest.

"I am going to bunch these three animals, because together they perform the most marvellous act ever witnessed in the sawdust arena. Each of them alone is a Solomon for wisdom in its line; combined, they beat a justice of the peace. I am not going to tell you all they know — for I don't know it all myself — and, anyway, I do not wish to make any of you blush for your ignorance. The two ponies are five years old and perfectly sound. Gunga Din is old enough and knows enough to vote, and if you don't think him in perfect condition, watch him eat.

"This the three will do: With clowns on their backs, the ponies start to race with Gunga Din. They gain on him, but as they pass he reaches out with his trunk and lifts the riders from the backs of the ponies to his own. Here they must remain until the ponies pass him a second time, when he replaces the riders upon their backs. So well grounded is Gunga Din in this trick that he will perform it under any circumstances; indeed, he *insists* on carrying out his part of the programme if the ponies pass him. Now, what do you say to this? How much in cash?"

The man with the watch-chain laughed.

"I don't want 'em bad," he said. "It would take the price of one of your townships to get 'em back to New York. But I hear

your poorhouse is running over now, and it would be kind of tough on your county if I left 'em for your Board of Supervisors to tackle. I'll take 'em for fifty-one dollars."

He glanced at Uncle Abner with an amused smile, and a titter ran through the crowd, though here and there among Uncle Abner's friends was an uneasy shuffling of feet. Uncle Abner flushed angrily.

"Going," said the auctioneer, lowering his hammer.

"Two hundred dollars," said Uncle Abner, firmly.

The man with the checkered shirt lifted his eyebrows.

"Two fifty," he said, briefly.

"Five hundred," said Uncle Abner.

The circus man looked at him intently and saw the danger signal in his eye.

"You'd better lay in some hay," he said. "I'm going to catch the evening train for Kansas City." He made his way through the crowd as he spoke.

"Any more bids?" asked the auctioneer, waving his hammer. There was no response.

"Sold!"

"Dead easy to manage 'im," said the trainer a few minutes later. "I'm goin' to catch a train, too, but you won't have no trouble. He'll follow them ponies anywhere. Just give 'im hay till the sun goes down — and be good to 'im."

Aunt Ellen, who had patiently waited supper for an hour, saw at half-past six, with mingled anxiety and astonishment, a strange cavalcade approaching. At the head rode a tall man in a rusty Sunday suit, his seedy straw hat pulled down over his eyes. He was mounted upon a white pony, and led another by a halter. After them, swaying from one side to the other as he rolled along, stepping aside occasionally to reach over the rail fence after some choice morsel, but always keeping a wary eye on the ponies in front, was a dusty elephant, an elephant with little twinkling eyes and short tusks.

Aunt Ellen sat down on the porch steps and wiped her glasses and looked again. Surely that could not be Uncle Abner! The little procession halted slowly in front of the hitching post, and Uncle Abner clambered down from his pony.

"Land sakes!" cried Aunt Ellen. "What on earth!"

"Bought 'em at auction," replied Uncle Abner briefly, with averted face.

She turned white, for she knew his weakness.

"And the mortgage?" she asked in a whisper.

"I am a fool!" he replied, distinctly and bitterly, as he tied the horse.

Aunt Ellen buried her face in her arms and cried. Gunga Din, laying down his cornstalk, regarded her attentively.

"Whatever on earth are you going to do with them?" she asked, hopelessly, after a while.

"I don't know," replied Uncle Abner, gloomily. "I met the sheriff up the road a spell and he warned me not to turn the elephant loose. Said he'd have the law on me if I did. He must have shelter; the trainer said he just wouldn't stay out in th' open, and that if we didn't put him in the barn, like enough he'd pull off the roof and set it up over hisself. I'm a fool all right enough, Ellen; was born so, but hain't had enough sense to find it out. . . . T'other hoss is dead, Ellen; he broke his leg. It was desperation that drove me to this . . . don't take it so hard, dear. . . .

"I'll turn the mare and the colt into the pasture, and put the ponies in the stalls and Gunga Din in on the granary floor. To-morrow we'll see what's to be done. Call the boys and let's eat."

The sun set in a bank of clouds and the wind came down from the mountains, making the dry corn rustle in the fields. Uncle Abner lay awake watching the stars, while Gunga Din, perceiving plenty of hay and assuring himself of a firm footing, rumbled in peace as he swayed back and forth.

At two o'clock that night, by the light of a new moon in the western sky, two men rode up within a hundred yards of Wallen's place, each leading a string of four horses. Dismounting, they tied their horses to the fence.

"Remember," said the larger man, "no shooting. Leave the guns with the saddles. Too much to lose. If the old gent or the kids wake, git! They can't take the trail alone, and there's nothin' but sagebrush and moonlight between us and the cañon. Ride here and tie to the string."

The other man, who had a black handkerchief tied about his face below the eyes, nodded. He was not given to words.

They walked cautiously to the barn and went in.

"Some new stock," said the older man to himself, as he rubbed a white pony's nose. "Wonder what the fool's buyin' ponies for."

Leading the animals outside, the men mounted and rode away.

Perhaps it was just outside the barnyard gate, maybe a little farther on, that the older man, Wheeler, turning in his saddle, saw something following them. The new moon was low and outlines indistinct. Yet he could see that it was something gray and vast and shapeless, something that rolled rather than walked in its silent progress, yet was certainly gaining on them. Wheeler gasped in surprise and then in a whisper addressed his partner:

"Jim — in the name of the devil, what is that?"

Jim looked and said no word, for he was a silent man, but he lashed his pony. In another moment both were tearing down the road, the moving mountain swiftly following.

Through the open window Uncle Abner watched the early dawn creep across the brown field. There seemed little use in getting up. As the landscape grew brighter and brighter, objects began to be defined and in the still dim light he noticed something down the road that appeared much like a group of horses. In five minutes more he was certain they were horses. This was interesting and he sat up in bed. The horses were hitched to the fence. As the light grew stronger, he recognized them, one after another, and remarked upon them to himself:

"The roan is Johnson's — the one he traded Petersen the little mare for over on the South Fork this spring. The bay with the white feet is Judge Bronson's carriage horse, of course — there ain't another animal in the county stands like that. T'other bay belongs to the DeWitt boys. Now, what on earth are they all a-doin' down there?"

He slipped out of bed and called softly to the boys in the next room. Half dressed, they went together down stairs. From behind the back door Uncle Abner picked up the gopher rifle.

"Looks a little queer down there," he said, half apologetically.

So busy were they with their speculations concerning the horses that it was not until they were well down the road that they ob-

served Gunga Din over in the pasture beneath the one big oak tree in the whole township. He stood there quiet, with drooping ears, his huge body almost touching the tree's lower limbs. Nearby, the ponies were grazing.

Uncle Abner peered hard at the tree.

"Well, I swan!" he exclaimed. "Gosh all hemlock, if there ain't two men in the tree!"

He cocked the gun and went forward slowly, followed by the boys. At twenty yards he was hailed by a voice from amid the branches.

"Don't be backward. In the name of the devil get us away from this infernal brute before he kills us. We know the jig's up an' we're willin' to lie down — only run this brute off. We're frozen stiff and almost dead. Can't you drive him away?"

Uncle Abner began to see light.

"Oh, yes," he said, dryly, "you might as well give up. The evidence is still tied to the fence yonder. Good thing for you it's Kansas and not Texas. I reckon, though, you can't be accused of elephant stealing.

"John, you jump on one of those hosses and tell Robinson's we got a couple of hoss thieves treed and want 'em to bring their guns and help take them in."

Uncle Abner turned to the men in the tree. "What are you staying there for? Why don't you come down?"

"Why don't we!" roared a voice from the tree. The owner digressed for a moment from narrative to a more forcible and emotional manner of expression. Thus relieved, he went on:

"We comes ridin' along and this old brute takes after us. The faster we goes, the faster he goes. Purty soon he ketches up and with his trunk yanks us off the hosses and throws us up on his back — none too easy, either. We slide off, but it's no good. The crazy brute nabs us again before we can make our feet. After he gits tired playin', he breaks for the tree — and it's mighty cheerful we are at a chance ter climb, stranger. Eh? Yes, we tried to slide from here, too, but the lop-eared pirate is as ugly as ever. We're plumb played out — no fight left in us. If you'll get us out of his reach, you can do what you please."

Uncle Abner stood a moment, reflecting.

"George and Tom," he said, directly, "you get on the white ponies and head for town past Robinson's. Now, you idiots up there, drop down on the elephant's back — no hesitatin' now — and the procession will move. I'll tell mother as we go by to bring the hosses into the lot till we can send word. I'll just walk behind, and if these chaps try to skedaddle, and Gunga what's-his-name don't get 'em, I will. Go on, George."

The little cavalcade moved slowly up the dusty road.

"Land's sake!" was all Aunt Ellen could say in response to the brief explanation Uncle Abner gave as they passed by. "Land's sake!" she repeated, as they disappeared over the rise in a cloud of dust.

The sheriff, who was large and fat and comfortable appearing, was taking life easy in his great arm chair, with his feet on the official desk, when an excited deputy beckoned to him from the door. "Come, quick!" he cried.

The sheriff arose ponderously. "'Nother dog fight, I suppose," he remarked, good-naturedly, as he went to the door. But it was not a dog fight.

A procession with accompanying crowds on the sidewalks was coming up the main street of Washita Falls. First, two white ponies ridden by boys, then an elephant with two worn and haggard men on his back, and in the rear perhaps fifty men and boys armed with guns, clubs, scythes, pitchforks and axes, for the arm of the law had been re-enforced at every farmhouse passed.

"I hope to be hung to a sour-apple tree if this don't beat me," said the sheriff. The ponies stopped and Gunga Din stopped, too, lifting one ear inquiringly.

While Uncle Abner told his story, the sheriff sat on the door-step, his official dignity struggling with his sense of humor until he was red in the face. The deputy stood by impatiently, with photographs in his hand.

"Pretty good elephant, that, I should say," he remarked, sententiously. "The biggest chap is so beloved in Arkansas that the Governor will give fifteen hundred dollars to see him again, an' t'other fellow is such a remarkable hand with hosses that the State of Missoury owes a thousand to the man that brings him back. Pretty good elephant, that, I should say," he repeated.

"Yes," assented the sheriff, "and he's saved this county a heap of trouble, too — though, of course, we'd got the hosses back anyway," he added, hastily.

Gunga Din went back to the farm that night and revelled in good things to eat. Aunt Ellen, recklessly feeding him popped corn by the handful, said "Land's sake" under her breath several times. She cried a little, too, but it was not with distress. There was no longer any doubt about the mortgage.

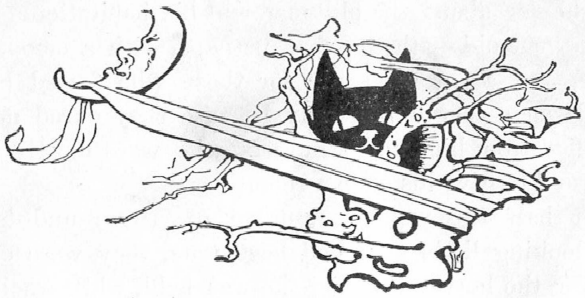
In Chicago the following day a man with a narrow-brimmed straw hat and a checkered vest was much mystified upon receiving the following message:

WASHITA FALLS, KAN., September 3d.

You will be glad to hear it was well for a county and three States that we did not have to accept your kind offer to relieve us of Gunga Din. Just saved us ten horses, much trouble and expense. This county places him in the best zoo in the country.

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS.

"Now what the deuce does that awkwardly worded puzzle mean?" said the man with the checkered vest.



A Witch City Mystery.*

BY FREDERIC VAN RENSSELAER DEY.

ACOB HAWKSLEY was a chemist, having succeeded to the occupation as an inheritance. The Hawksleys had lived and labored at the same location in Salem, for generations, and before that, tradition said, had compounded drugs in the city of London, in the days before the Puritans left England for conscience sake. The quaint old Hawksley shop and dwelling stood, and part of it still stands, near Salem's water front. Beneath its dingy paint and planking, though remodelled many times, it still retains the stout framework of its colonial days. A generation ago even the old, illegible sign yet hung above its doorway.

Jacob Hawksley, the last of his line, had no assistant and rarely a customer, and, indeed, none but strangers dared to enter his low-ceiled, dingy shop in the early "thirties," when superstition was not so veiled as now, for rumor had woven a web of weirdest horror about the old man and his habitation. Not that he was so very old — three score, perhaps, with a smooth, benignant face, and a shrewd smile for those who feared him most. But tradesmen served him only because they dared not refuse, children fled from him, and strangers, who were mostly mariners, were warned to give his shop a roomy berth.

If but half the wonders related of the round-shouldered, studious-looking little man had been true, they were enough to account for the horror in which he was held, while their foundation on facts was undeniable. Some people said, if any living thing crossed his threshold, it never re-appeared. The grocer opposite, who served the chemist with trembling, told of scores of stray cats and dogs enticed into Hawksley's shop, but they were always homeless, miserable creatures. Ill-natured persons hinted

that the old man ate the captured animals, though the butcher declared that Hawksley bought the best of beef and mutton. The charitable argued that the brutes were killed to release them from misery, but immediate neighbors shook their heads at this suggestion, for they remembered many nights — usually wild and stormy — when strange noises of barking and growling dogs, and still more inexplicable animal sounds, came from behind the chemist's door. Never a sign of anything of the kind was heard or seen by day, however, and if the weather permitted, the shop door stood well ajar, while the windows and curtains of the single story above were wide to the world, and canaries sang merrily there in their cages.

Sometimes screaming parrots or frolicsome squirrels took the place of the canaries, and altogether it might have been thought that Hawksley possessed a miniature menagerie but for the fact of lack of space. There were certainly no animals in the upper story, nor room for so many in the cellar as had been traced to the premises, to say nothing of long periods of unbroken silence, so the generally accepted belief made Hawksley a magician, at whose command birds and beasts appeared and disappeared.

Such benevolent actions as were sometimes reported of Hawksley were also attributed to his magical powers. On one occasion, when a friendless child was knocked down by a horse and taken up with a broken leg, it was the old chemist who bore the little sufferer tenderly away, closed the shop door in the faces of a gaping crowd, afraid to enter, and told them that he would care for and cure the foundling. The very next day the lad came forth completely sound and well, without a scar to tell of the fracture of a limb. Again, an old cripple, bent with rheumatism — a stranger in Salem — stopped to ask alms of the chemist. He entered without fear, and twenty-four hours later departed, erect and agile.

The neighbors called these cures sorcery. The rheumatic beggar could tell nothing of his cure, except that Hawksley had given him something to drink, and that presently he awoke from sleep to find himself free from shooting pains, and well and young again in his feelings. He did not know from his own consciousness whether the cure had taken an hour, a day or a year. He only knew that he was cured and could work instead of beg.

About this time came the crowning mystery. Salem then enjoyed a maritime commerce that rivalled that of any New England port, and the captain of a clipper in the Liverpool trade was seen to enter the mysterious chemist's shop, but, though watched, was not observed to go out again. Higham, the grocer, who knew Captain Simpson and his son very well, saw the captain call upon Hawksley, noticed that they seemed acquainted, and perceived that they had some sort of dispute, though neither the low tones of the chemist nor the captain's loud and angry epithets gave a clue to the matter under controversy. Hawksley, he noted, wore his wonted calm. While the grocer still watched, the door suddenly closed, and the voices could no longer be heard. An hour later, watching with unrelaxed vigilance, Higham saw Hawksley reopen the door, stand smiling a few moments on the threshold, and then, leaving the door ajar, walk deliberately down the street. But still the captain did not come out.

The tradesman was puzzled, but continued to watch, even after Hawksley returned. Then he called one of his clerks to relieve him, and all through that day and the following night the door of the chemist's shop was under observation; but Captain Simpson did not appear. There was no other means of egress from the building, and Higham, still leaving a watching assistant, and believing that a crime had been committed, went at noon to Captain Simpson's ship and told his story to Burke Simpson, the captain's son and first mate.

What follows of this strange tale is told in the words of Burke Simpson, as he wrote it down afterwards:

. . . . . .

I was beginning to think it strange that the old man did not came back to the ship when Mark Higham, the chandler, came and told me that father had gone into Hawksley's chemist shop the day before and had never come out, so I cleared for the scene at once. A hand was still on watch at Higham's and reported no sail; the old man had not yet got under way.

I crossed the street alone, for neither Higham nor his clerk would go. I knew that Hawksley and my father had been friendly in their younger days, before something — I know not

what — had come between them, yet I was surprised that father should go into a place with such a bad name. Though I believed Higham's story, I did not then believe that anything serious had happened. Hawksley looked unlike a murderer.

"I believe you know my father, Captain Simpson?" I said.

"I have known him since we were boys," replied Hawksley. "What can I do for his son?"

"You can tell me where my father is."

"I am sorry I cannot oblige you," he answered calmly. "The captain was here yesterday, shortly after noon. I have not seen him since."

"He left here, then?"

"That would seem to be the logical inference from the fact I have stated. We were together half an hour — possibly an hour — and I have not set eyes on him since."

Then I told the chemist the whole of Higham's story, and how his door had been watched from the moment of my father's entrance, and I added:

"I know there was bad blood between you, and I am going to find out, in some way, what you know about his disappearance."

He looked at me curiously, without replying. I can only compare his expression to that of a cat watching a disabled mouse that tries to crawl away. At the same time he endeavored to get between me and the door, but I was looking for such a move, and headed him off.

"None of that!" I said. "You can't close any hatches while I'm aboard. Now, then, where's the old man?"

He shrugged his shoulders, but kept his hungry eyes upon me. I had to repeat my question.

"I'm sorry I can't tell you," was all he said.

There wasn't a thing I could do, but there was one thing more I could say, and as I said it I watched him closely:

"If anything has happened to my father in this house, you'll regret it. I'll have the watch kept up, and if the old man doesn't turn up on board ship by morning, your den shall be searched, from cellar to garret."

Well, the captain did not turn up by morning, and a close watch of the chemist's shop had shown nothing out of the or-

dinary. So I went to the city marshal, and induced him and his constables to make a thorough search of Hawksley's place, but not a sign of a living thing, except Hawksley himself, was to be seen. The upper story was just a comfortable living place. The shop was just as it had looked for years. The cellar was full of casks, with movable lids, each containing liquid. Hawksley warned us not to put a finger into one of them, on pain of fearful burning. This made me suspicious.

"A body might be hid in one of these big casks," I said to the head constable. "Let's dump the whole cargo."

At this Hawksley showed the first sign of fright.

"Would you ruin me by spoiling the labor of a lifetime?" he cried.

"Then give us something to poke into them," I demanded.

He calmed down and fetched an iron rod, with which we stirred up every cask in the cellar, but not one of them contained anything but ill-smelling liquids.

After spending more than two hours in searching, sounding walls, rummaging cupboards and corners and finding nothing, we had to give up. The constables called me a fool and Hawksley's curious neighbors idiots, and I could only vent my own vexation on the grocer and chandler, at whose instigation I had caused the search. Yet, I found him as firm in his belief as ever.

Then I began a systematic search of the city, offered a reward, and did everything anybody could suggest to get a trace of my father, but nothing came of it. We had begun to discharge cargo when he disappeared, and had finished and reloaded, and still he was not heard from. He had sometimes remained away from his ship a few days at a time, but never without leaving word, and I came to the conclusion that he had been waylaid on the docks — a common thing in those days — and been thrown overboard, and that I should never see him again.

So, when sailing day came, and the owners were willing to give me charge of the ship, I had to go. But before we sailed, I had one more visit from Higham.

"Your father never came out of that place again, Burke," he said with the tone of certainty, "and there'll be other disap-

pearances, as sure as you live! Now, I'm going to keep a watch on that shop, night and day, till you get back — and there'll be something to tell."

"What makes you think so?" I asked, his manner was so solemn.

Higham leaned nearer, and said in a low voice:

"Hawksley's well off. His father left him plenty to live on. He hasn't taken in a dollar a week, sometimes, these ten years. Then why does he pretend to keep a shop? I'll tell you. He's experimenting! Sure's you're born, he's experimenting, and he must have something living and moving and breathing to try his devilish tricks upon. *That's* what I think! At first, cats and dogs and birds would do. Now he wants humans — *humans!* He's got your father and — mark me — he'll want more! And he'll get 'em!"

I thought it over a minute, and then I said:

"Nonsense! If what you hint is true, there would be *some* trace of it — and there wasn't one. However, if you'll watch the place, I'll be glad, and bear the expense."

Then the clipper slipped her moorings, and the round voyage took us seventy-five days.

So it was into October before I went ashore in Salem again, and bore away for the chandler's shop. Higham seemed to be expecting me, and was all excitement.

"What did I tell you before you sailed?" he stuttered, the moment we were alone.

I answered his question by another equally eager one:

"Has there been another disappearance?"

Another!" he cried. "Not only another, but *four!* Think of it, Burke Simpson, five altogether, counting your father. Three last week, and one only last night!"

I was too amazed to speak.

"Let me tell you the whole story," he said. "That place has been watched every minute since you left port, over two months ago, and last night two constables watched with me, and they're convinced at last. The old devil kept quiet as a mouse until last week — probably suspecting that he was watched. But he yielded to temptation at last. Wednesday afternoon a nigger — looked

like a cook off'n a coaster — went in, and I'll swear on a stack of Bibles as high as the South Church steeple that he hasn't come out yet! I reported that to the officers, and got laughed at."

I attempted to speak, but Higham broke in:

"Hold on. The very next day, Thursday, a carriage drove up, a gentleman got out and went into Hawksley's and the door closed. I told the driver that if he didn't follow his master immediately, he'd never see him again. He said I was crazy. After he had waited an hour, he went in. Burke, as sure as you're sitting there, *neither* of them has come out since!"

"But, good heavens, man —"

"Wait. I ain't through yet. It was about three o'clock when the coachman entered. After awhile the horses began to stray away, and my errand boy held 'em till about sundown, when I got on the box myself and drove to the watch-house. I brought pretty good proof that time, I guess, and two constables went back with me, and what do you think we saw? There was old Hawksley on his step, picking his teeth for all the world as if he had just eaten the two men! He told the officers that the coachman and his master had been obliged to go away on foot, because some one had stolen the horses! The constables were for quitting at that cool yarn, but I made 'em wait till my watcher came over and swore by all that's holy that not a soul but Hawksley had come out all the afternoon. That gave them something to puzzle over till they concluded to search the place on their own responsibility, Hawksley being willing, and I went in, too. I wanted to see with my own eyes, even if it was the Old Nick himself."

"And you found just what I did?"

"Just that and no more. Hawksley declared that he didn't know who the gentleman was, and nobody was reported missing till last night — Sunday. Then the city marshal sent for me, and set a watch of two of his men in my store, and now I guess he'll do something — after what they saw."

"And what was that?"

"The fifth disappearance! It was a sailor-man. Looked like he might be mate of a blue-water craft. You know that Hawksley, pretending to be a druggist, keeps his shop alight and his door ajar on Sunday evenings, and about half-past nine along came this

mate, half-seas over — begging your pardon — and blessed if he didn't turn in to Hawksley's before we could make a move, and the old spider shut the door on him in a twinkling. I wanted the officers to go right over, but they must needs wait what they called a reasonable time, so it was half an hour before we pounded on the door, which Hawksley promptly opened, picking his teeth, as usual, and smiling his hyena smile. We asked for the sailor.

"'You're quite mistaken, gentlemen," said Hawksley. "No sailor — no customer at all — has come in this evening.'

"Of course, this bare-faced lie made the constables mad, and they went in at once after the man they had seen disappear, while Hawksley smoked a pipe on the doorstep. Well, they found nothing, but their report to the city marshal made him almost as mad as the rest of us. He's promised to do something by ten o'clock this morning — and if he doesn't the citizens will; there's lamp-posts handy. There, Burke, that's the story, up to date."

It was only half-past eight, as you would say ashore, we having made port by dawn, and suddenly I said to Higham:

"Lend me your pistol."

"Don't do it, Burke," he said, "don't go in there alone!"

But I was determined, and he let me have the pistol, and I crossed the street, banged the chemist's door behind me, and pocketed the key. Hawksley looked astonished, but not alarmed. When I pointed the pistol at him he even smiled, but he said nothing.

I was feeling ugly, and meant every word when I said: "Hawksley, if you don't within ten seconds tell what's become of these people, and especially my father, I'll shoot you dead, and take the consequences!"

"I wouldn't," he answered, calm as a summer sea.

"Why not?"

"Because you would be a murderer."

"It's no murder to kill a shark," I retorted.

"Ah, but your bullet would take five lives besides my own, including your father's!"

I felt obliged to lean against the locked door.

"Then he's alive?" I exclaimed.

Hawksley shrugged his shoulders and thrust his hands out

palms upward, like a slop-shop clothier. I was about to repeat the question, when he said:

"I think, Burke Simpson, that this affair has gone quite far enough. I had determined to explain this morning, and I would like to do so to you first. You may trust me. Put up your pistol — I will not harm you. I never harmed any living thing — never — and I will do the world untold good with the greatest discovery it has ever known. Come with me; you shall be my assistant!"

He rubbed his hands joyously as he talked, and though I thought him crazy, I believed him harmless when watched; and so, with the pistol in easy reach, I followed him to the cellar.

Near the centre of the floor was half of a whaler's water cask that I remembered having seen there before, but I was surprised when the old man proceeded to dust it out very carefully with a silk handkerchief. Then he surprised me much more by pointing to another smaller cask, and saying coolly:

"Simpson, your father is in there."

I jumped to choke the lie in his throat, reaching for my pistol, but he eluded me, and panting, but calmly as ever, gasped:

"If you injure me you may lose your father. He's alive now, and well — better than he has been since boyhood. You'll thank me for this — though I've kept him longer than I meant to."

"In heaven's name —" I started to say, and stopped. The man was as mad as a hatter.

"Wait; be calm; you shall see. Here, I need your help with this cask. We must pour its contents into the large one I have just dusted. But don't spill the least drop. It might be a finger or a toe, or even an eye. One cannot tell. And don't let the liquid touch you; it would injure you. Easy, now, lift together."

Though I was sure he was as crazy as a loon, I thought it best to humor him, and we gently decanted the contents of the cask into the tub, to the last dregs. Then he fetched a tin dipperful of liquid from a barrel that stood just a bit away from the wall. I watched carefully, while he seemed to forget my presence as he poured the contents of the dipper into the huge tub — one so large that a man might lie at length in it.

The mixture produced a marvellous effect. The liquid began to boil and seethe and whirl as if stirred by a mighty hand. In

amazement I soon discerned a floating substance that gradually took shape, though the whirl was so rapid that I could not define it, and then, with a swiftness that the eye could not follow, and in a manner impossible to describe exactly, the whirling motion ceased as the whole contents of the tub seemed to leap together. And there before me, lying on the bottom of a perfectly dry tub, was the body of my father.

I blinked my eyes and looked again — but there was no mistake. The miracle was a fact, and my father was alive and breathing regularly. Hawksley pushed me aside till he had felt the old man's pulse. Then he bade me help him lift the captain out and carry him up stairs.

"When I awaken him, do not tell him what you know; let me do the talking. Heavy, isn't he? Better flesh and better health than he's had for many a year — it's perfect now."

Astonishment kept me silent. We placed him in a chair in the shop, and Hawksley put on his clothes, hidden in a most ingenious locker, and held a vial to his nose. Presently he opened his eyes.

"Hello, Burke!" he exclaimed. "When did you come in? I must have had a long nap, Hawks. Devilish fine one, though, for I feel like a new man. Hawksley's remedies beat the world. He said he'd cure my rheumatism if I'd take his medicine, and damned if he hasn't. Hello! What's all that row?"

It was, as I expected, Higham, alarmed at my long absence, backed by a crowd. I showed my face at the glazed and curtained upper panel of the door, and told them to wait.

When father had stretched his limbs a bit, he helped us, in the same wondering way I had done, to bring to life the four other men confined in casks in the cellar, and when the city marshal and his men came at ten o'clock to make their search they not only found all whom they sought, but those persons assured them that they had come to Hawksley's and remained of their own free will, in order to be cured of their ills. So there was naught for the officers to do but go with the healed, when they departed; all save my father, who remained with Higham and myself to hear the wonderful tale which Jacob Hawksley had to tell.

"Of course, you think you have witnessed a miracle," he began,

"but it was really done in accordance with nature's — and therefore God's — simplest laws, though it has taken generations to discover them. Many generations ago one of my ancestors began the work, so all the credit does not belong to me. I have only completed the task bequeathed from father to son through two centuries. But you comprehend the result — man's complete triumph over disease by this process of dissolution and rehabilitation. The foundation was my ancestor's discovery that every substance — iron, gold, or any metal, flesh, bone, gristle, etc., — may be dissolved by some chemical or combination of chemicals, and his inference was that a universal solvent might by their combination, be discovered. He did not succeed, nor his son nor grandson, but four generations back that much was accomplished — the solvent was achieved, but the effort to restore the dissolved substances to their original state always failed. If a combination of metals was dissolved, the restorative fluid gave back no alloy, but the separate metals. If an organic substance — that is, vegetable or animal matter — was put in the solution, it could be restored, but unorganized — a chaotic mass of tissues.

" My grandfather made the next step forward, and his restoring chemical not only gave back iron for iron, but brass — which is an alloy — for brass, bronze for bronze, spelter for spelter, and so on. But when he dissolved an animal — say a sickly cat — he only recovered a great quantity of separate particles, though analysis showed that they contained every substance that the live cat had contained.

" My father — doubtless the greatest chemist that ever lived — left little for me to do, for he succeeded where his ancestors had failed, and the fluid which he devised would restore a dissolved animal to its original size and shape. Unfortunately, the restored cat, dog or guinea-pig was always dead. He worked to remedy this fault, on the natural supposition that it lay with the dissolving fluid, the invention of his predecessor. When I took up the labor independently after his death — having been his assistant for years — I did so on the hypothesis, which proved to be correct, that the imperfection was in my father's restorative fluid. It came to me as a revelation one day that, on principles which we had again and again proved to be true, the potentiality of life

was still present up to the moment when the Restorative was mixed with the dissolved being, and that death therefore was caused by the restoring agent.

"It is twenty years since I experienced that conviction, and it has taken that score of summers and winters to find the complete remedy. You are eye-witnesses of its success, but you are not chemists nor physiologists, so it would do no good to explain to you in the language of science all the details of the glorious process which will be such a blessed boon to humanity, and which I shall immediately publish to the world. The result has even exceeded my highest expectations. For example, Captain Simpson, suppose that the cask in which you have lived for nearly three months could, with its contents, have been preserved, sealed from the air, a thousand years — which is perfectly possible — and that at the end of that time some one possessing my secret should apply the Restorative, you would awaken as you did an hour ago, full of life and energy, not a day older, and utterly unconscious of the ten centuries of sleep! How would you like to be dissolved again, and try it?"

My father shuddered, but we all laughed when he said drily:

"Thank you. I'd rather take my chances on the broad Atlantic than in one of your casks. That fellow, due in a thousand years, might not keep the appointment, you see."

"I shall not soon forget my own feelings the first time I took courage enough to try my discovery on a human being," continued Hawksley. "You can well imagine them. If I failed, I should differ from a murderer only in intention, and not at all in the eyes of the world. Fate brought a drunken sailor to my doorstep with a broken arm. I dragged him inside, gave him a sleeping potion, worked rapidly while my daring spirit prevailed, and let the man go again within twenty-four hours, whole and well, and never knowing that his arm had been broken. You can see how that success emboldened me. I have practised on many that even my friend Higham did not know about. Then, Captain, you came, and told me about your rheumatism, and I judged that at your age a long rest in solution would be beneficial. You are all beginning to understand the whole thing now, but friend Higham, who has interested himself so much in the matter, has not yet

seen the operation. Come to the cellar, where I have still a fine Newfoundland dog dissolved, and I will bring him to life for you, Burke, for a present."

All notions of witchcraft blown to leeward by Hawksley's sensible talk, Higham followed us eagerly, and witnessed with bulging eyes the re-embodiment of the great dog. No sooner had the animal sniffed from Hawksley's vial than he leaped to the floor, wagging his tail.

As I patted the pet thus strangely bestowed upon me, the old chemist watched me with an inquiring look.

"Have you faith and courage enough now to do something to please me?" he finally said.

Hawksley laughed the first hearty laugh I had ever heard him utter in the dozen years I had known him by sight, when I said emphatically:

"If it is to submit to your process, I certainly have not!"

"Oh, no, not that," he answered lightly and cheerfully. "On the contrary, I wish myself to submit to it, and I want you to be the operator. You have proved to be a man of firmness, nerve and sense. I have overworked myself in this concentrated study, and I need renovation to do the important work of assuring my discovery to the whole world. Besides, none of you have seen the dissolving process. Come, be our chemist."

I still hesitated, but he continued eagerly:

"Though I am not young, my constitution is exceptionally sound, and I shall need but a couple of hours in solution. I will administer to myself the drug that causes unconsciousness, and lie at length at the bottom of this great tub. When I am fast asleep pour over me three pailfuls of the liquid in yonder yellow cask. You may watch me dissolve, or cover the tub with this tarpaulin. In from fifteen to thirty minutes I shall be completely dissolved. Counting from that time, wait in the shop for two hours. Then, from that cask, which you have seen me use several times, pour one dipperful, just as you have seen me do. Then you have only to hold this vial to my nostrils till I open my eyes. It is all very simple. You will do it, won't you?"

"We'll do it, certainly," spoke up Higham, who entered into the matter mightily, and I uttered no dissent.

Hawksley peered into the cask of Restorative.

"Enough for a dozen small men like me," he said, "but it's getting low."

The goblet of medicine to put him to sleep he fetched from the shop, and when all was ready, and he lay in the big vat, he drank it off and almost immediately lost consciousness, as we could plainly see. Then we proceeded as he had directed, drawing the tarpaulin over the tub, for none of us cared to watch. While we silently waited in the cellar for the passing of a full half hour our hearts beat anxiously — I know mine did — and we were in such a state as to shrink unnerved when, with a loud bark and ponderous rush, the Newfoundland dog dashed among us, pursuing a rat. We leaped aside, and I tried to stop the brute, but he dodged me, and as the rat slid in between the Restorative cask and the cellar wall the great beast followed, like a stone shot from a catapult, upsetting the cask, which was but half full and therefore quite light. It was all over in a moment.

Stupefied with amazement and horror, we stood there and saw the last of the priceless liquid vanish, spilled beyond redemption — soaking into the rotting boards of the cellar floor! My father was the first to recover the power of motion. He sprang to the tub and snatched away the tarpaulin. Nothing but a milky-looking fluid met our eyes. Hawksley had disappeared.

With shaking steps and trembling voices we left that awful place, followed by the dog. We left it just as it was — never to return — but in the upper shop we swore an oath of eternal secrecy.

. . . . . .

Here the statement of Burke Simpson stopped, but old newspapers and records show that on that very night Hawksley's shop was burned to a charred framework, and that his opposite neighbor, Henry Higham, the grocer, was supposed to have been its incendiary, in a fit of insanity from which he never recovered.

The Wayside Sphinx.*

BY MARY FOOTE ARNOLD.

"IT does seem as if all the bad luck comes at once," Mrs. Seabrook complained. "First, the wheat crop failed last year; then I got down with the grip and it took every cent we had to buy medicine and pay the doctor's bill; next the barn burned down just after the insurance had run out; then, after we had raked and scraped to pay off the mortgage and thought we should be able to breathe freely once more, you had to break your leg and be laid up at harvest time; and now, with the Hill Farm to be bought for a mere nothing, we have to sit by and see some one else carry off the prize." After setting forth this appalling array of disasters, Mrs. Seabrook leaned back in her chair and heaved a prodigious sigh.

"Why, mother, that bad luck didn't all come at once; it came gradually," said Ann, soothingly, though her eyes danced.

Mr. Seabrook, from his lounge in the corner, listened as to an oft-told tale. "It is hard lines, sure enough, wife; still, things might have been worse," he said.

"I should like to know how?" she asked, tartly.

"Don't you remember, mother," consoled Ann, "how you've said over and over that the mortgage was a stone around father's neck? And it's paid. And then you got well from the grip — Lucy White's mother died — father's leg is healing so that he will soon be able to work again; and you have me and father, and we all have one another."

"Goodness, child, how you do rattle on! Of course I know that we have much to be thankful for, but I do insist that we've had more than our share of misfortunes, with very little to encourage us." Having had the last word, Mrs. Seabrook departed for the kitchen.

Ann's needle flew in and out across the heel in her father's sock. "I declare, I believe I actually like to darn, and I thought I never should! I suppose it's all in knowing how; most anything can be made interesting if we'll only think so." Mr. Seabrook smiled indulgently. It was plain to see that Ann was the apple of his eye.

"Father," she asked presently, "do you think I ought to sympathize more with mother about our troubles?"

"I think," answered her father, thoughtfully, "that your mother needs to be cheered up and taken out of herself more than anything else; she has brooded over our misfortunes until her nerves are upset. You should help her in every way you can, because the hardest part comes on her."

"I do try, father; do you think I'm any comfort to her?"

"Of course you are; you're a first-class optimist."

"And what is that, please? Anything awful?"

"An optimist is one who looks on the bright side of things."

"Oh! Well, that is easy to do; the really hard thing is to look on the dark side. Sometimes, when mother gets unusually down on her luck — imagines we are on a short cut to the poor house with nobody to head us off — I try to be blue about it just to keep her company; but the first thing I know I am hoping for better things in spite of myself. Something inside of me seems to say that everything will come right if we just give it time."

"That is why you are such a comfort to your old dad."

Ann beamed on him affectionately, and, leaning over, deposited a kiss on the tip of his ear. "If anything could make me discouraged it would be that you can't have the Hill Farm when you've wanted it so long. It's queer, and I know you'll laugh at me, but I have a feeling that we'll manage it yet, some way. It doesn't do any harm to hope we'll get it, does it?"

"Wishing is first cousin to hoping, you know," laughed her father, "and if wishes were horses, beggars might ride."

Mrs. Seabrook now appeared in the doorway holding an empty bucket. "Ann, suppose you run down to Wilson's lot and try to find some blackberries for supper. Seems as if we had to skirmish around to get enough to eat even, nowadays."

Ann sprang up with alacrity. "Just the thing, mother; I

should love to go; I'm in the mood for blackberrying. And I know where there are some big, juicy, dead-ripe ones."

An hour later, the bucket well filled, Ann crawled through an opening in the fence that divided Wilson's lot from the roadway, and sat down on a big stone to rest. Just across the road was another large stone, similar to the one upon which she was sitting, except that it rested perpendicularly, its broad, flat surface being at the side instead of on top. The two were called the "halfway" stones, because they equally divided the distance between the town on the west and the bluff on the east. But the stone opposite Ann was different in still another particular, for a rude but unmistakable likeness of the great Egyptian Sphinx was cut into the side toward the road, while a curious ribbon-like band, which seemed to spring from the head of the sphinx, ran downward on the right of the picture until, doubling on itself, it waved irregularly across the stone and came to an end at the upper right-hand corner. Beneath this band, just before it ended at the edge of the stone, two minute arrows were engraved, one after the other, pointing outward.

Ann recalled the excitement, now nearly a year ago, that had attended the making of this picture. One hot afternoon, Mr. Pool, an artist who had spent several summers in the neighborhood, placed his camp chair in front of the stone (then as smooth as its mate across the way), impaled the handle of his big red umbrella in the earth beside it, and began to cut into the hard surface with steel instruments. This routine was repeated many afternoons, until curious onlookers assembled at his back, making remarks and asking questions. And though he worked in silence for the most part, the few answers he vouchsafed to the eager questioners were strictly to the point. He was chiselling a picture of the Sphinx; he worked in the afternoon, rather than in the morning when the particular spot where he sat was shaded from the sun, because the light in the afternoon was better suited to his purpose; and his reasons for cutting a picture on a stone at the roadside, rather than in a studio where he could be comfortable, concerned nobody but himself — unless, indeed, some person chose to make it his especial business.

All of which mystified the questioners more than ever, as per-

haps he intended that it should. For some of them had never even heard of the Sphinx, and, forthwith, there was much surreptitious consulting of encyclopedias. But they found only that the Sphinx was not a real person or thing, but a myth, a sort of riddle in itself; that its supposed image had been hewn out of the rock ages ago, and left on the sands of the desert, nobody knew why; and that it was a fad among artists to copy it in painting and sculpture. So most of the curious went their ways, shaking their heads sadly at the "crankiness" of the "mad artist."

It did seem as if the man were not quite sane, so determined was he to work on afternoons when the sun shone fiercest. In vain did Mrs. Merriweather, with whom he boarded, urge him with motherly kindness to take the cool of the morning for his work, reminding him that he was far from strong, and to run such risks was simply tempting Providence. But even she lost patience with him at last, and let him go his own way. So when he took to his bed on the completion of the picture, she was scarcely surprised, though she nursed him carefully. He grew weaker steadily, and died within a fortnight. The day before he died he called Mrs. Merriweather to his bedside and gave her a check for three hundred dollars on the Highville Savings Bank.

"This represents all the money I have in the bank," he said; "and when I am gone, and the necessary funeral expenses have been paid, keep what is left of it for yourself."

Mrs. Merriweather carried out these instructions faithfully, even generously; for she marked his grave with a neat headstone, bearing an appropriate inscription. Yet there were those who said that she was a good manager, and that the greater part of the three hundred dollars remained in her possession; also, that it was a pity that, as Mr. Pool had no near relatives, a part of the residue, at least, might not have gone to the new hospital in Highville.

After the artist's death there was a slight revival of interest in the picture on the half-way stone. Several persons professed to think that there was a "deeper" meaning to it than was apparent; something about bygone ages, or his own life, or his religious beliefs. But the practical minded laughed at these theories, and soon the Sphinx by the roadside was all but forgotten.

When Ann was sufficiently rested she rose from her seat on the

stone, took up the bucket of blackberries, and was about to resume her walk homeward when her glance wandered to the field across the way. Then she gave a little gasp, and stood staring into the field for a full minute; and, finally, she set her bucket down again and said, weakly:

"Great hat!"

For there, outlined on the dark green earth, was a gigantic Sphinx, made by the shadows of an irregular cluster of trees and bushes; more than that, Silver Brook emerged from the shadow at the top of the great head, ran downward on the east side, doubled on itself, wavered across the field, and was lost to view in the northeast corner, which corresponded exactly to the upper right-hand corner of the stone. Ann compared the shadow Sphinx with the stone one, giving way to little bursts of joy as the points of interest proved similar to one another. She ran into the field back and forth over the shadow, and followed the brook to the edge of the field.

"To think that I should be the one to guess it! Oh, how surprised and glad everybody will be!" And Ann laughed aloud out of the fulness of her heart. But, as she turned homeward, the thought came that, after all, she had learned nothing definite; that she had nothing to tell except that the picture on the stone was apparently a copy of the shadow on the ground. If there was a "deeper" meaning to it she had not fathomed it; she firmly believed that there was something more, though what it could be she did not even attempt to guess; but no one else would believe it unless she could prove it. So, though she was almost bursting with the secret, she determined to say nothing about the matter to any one until she had investigated it further.

It was not surprising that Ann should employ original methods in the performance of her duties that evening, though her vagaries were rather trying to Mrs. Seabrook's already overburdened nerves.

"I didn't mind her salting the blackberries so much," she told her husband, plaintively, "but she had no excuse for putting bird-seed in the biscuit. I found a dab of flour in Blackwing's feed-cup afterward! And there she sat all through supper like one in a trance, her eyes as big as saucers. And after supper she kept

dodging into the pantry and behind doors, so's I wouldn't see her laugh; and when I demanded an explanation, she only said: 'Oh, mother, don't ask me! I just can't help it!' And with that she burst out again."

Early the next morning, the breakfast work having been finished after a fashion, Ann once more crossed the fields toward the half-way stones. The sun was already high in the heavens, and no shadow Sphinx rested on the green turf. Ann had not expected to find it; she understood now why the artist had worked on the picture in the afternoon instead of in the morning. She knelt in front of the Sphinx picture and examined it critically, noting each detail of the curious figure, and tracing the ribbon-like band to the edge of the stone. Here she came upon the tiny arrows pointing outward. Surely, since the picture was an exact copy of the shadow and brook, with the exception of these arrows, might not they mean something of importance? She remembered that on maps the currents of streams were sometimes indicated by arrows; but in those cases the arrows pointed downstream, while here they pointed upstream. Slowly it dawned upon Ann that if the arrows were intended to convey any information, the point of interest must be in the direction which they indicated, which was toward the source of the brook. Acting upon this conviction, somewhat blindly, it is true, she followed the brook into the woodland beyond.

Soon the bed of the stream became narrower and the banks more irregular; tall trees hung over it, interlacing their branches from bank to bank, and wild grapevines drooped in graceful festoons, making natural swings. Ann had followed the same path many times before, but never with the sense of delightful expectancy that now possessed her. She could not have explained what she was looking for, but, sustained by her naturally buoyant temperament, she believed that she would clear up the mystery of the Sphinx picture; if not to-day, some other time. She might have to search for a week, or even longer, though how she could keep it to herself all that time was more of a riddle to her than the quest itself.

She pushed steadily upstream, keeping a sharp lookout for "clues," with occasional excursions into nearby thickets for ber-

ries to fill the bucket on her arm. When the noon hour came she dispatched her simple luncheon of brown bread and butter and blackberries, then scrutinized the brook for a clear place from which to get a drink. A little farther up, and across the stream, she spied some huge bowlders overhanging the bank; they were partly covered by vines, which were nourished by the abundant spring of water that gushed from their midst. Ann picked her way lightly across a fallen log and quenched her thirst at this natural fountain. Suddenly, her foot slipped, and, to save herself from falling, she caught at the vines, tearing them partly away. Stepping backward to regain her balance she saw something that set her heart to thumping furiously.

"Great hat!" she exclaimed once more.

Roughly scratched on the bowlder was the inevitable Sphinx, similar to the picture on the half-way stone, save that the ribbon-like band was not there and beneath the figure was the word "Finis." She had come by accident upon that for which she might have searched a lifetime without success!

Ann tore away the remaining vines, trod down the undergrowth at the base of the bowlders, and peered beneath them. A small natural shelf of rock projected outward a few inches. She cleared away the stones and dead leaves that clogged the opening and, thrusting in her hand, brought out a rusty tin can. The lid of the can was soldered on, and painted upon it in plain characters was:

"To be opened in the presence of a lawyer by the person finding it."

"Something definite at last!" murmured Ann, dizzily.

Some time afterward Ann entered the kitchen of her home and set the bucket of blackberries down beside her mother. "Here are some berries to make your mouth water, mother," she said.

"Well, get a crock and put them away."

"I'm so tired, mother; you do it."

At the tone of suppressed excitement, Mrs. Seabrook looked up. Ann's eyes were dancing, her cheeks were flushed, her breathing hurried; she looked anything but tired.

"You do act so queerly, Ann. Very well, I'll do it if you won't." She lifted the bucket, then set it down suddenly.

"It's as heavy as lead! Don't tell me that's all blackberries! Ann Seabrook, what's in this bucket — rocks?"

"Look and see for yourself, mother," and Ann danced into the next room and collapsed joyfully into a chair beside her father. Mrs. Seabrook followed, bringing the can, which she had dislodged from the bucket of berries. Then Ann told her story. Next she flew for Mr. Randolph, a lawyer friend of her father; and when she got back to the house, accompanied by Mr. Randolph, several neighbors, scenting something unusual, had come in. So the story was told again, after which the lid of the can was pried off with a hot poker, and Ann took from it a sealed envelope addressed to "The Person Finding this Can." Under the envelope was a chamois-skin bag, well filled with golden eagles and banknotes. The envelope contained a letter which ran as follows:

Having no kindred, and knowing that I am ill of an incurable disease, I take this means of disposing of my property.

It is my wish that the money in this can shall be divided into two equal portions, one portion to go to the Highville Hospital, the other to the finder of the can.

I am not mentally unbalanced, as some will imagine, but do this because I prefer to leave to chance that which I cannot decide for myself. There are, doubtless, some needy persons in this neighborhood, but I have no means of finding out who they are; it pleases me to think that some such person will find this, perhaps by his own ingenuity in following up the clues I have prepared. I know it is possible that a dishonest person may find it and appropriate the whole of the contents to himself, but I have faith in the integrity of the average human being, and take the risk.

EZRA POOL.

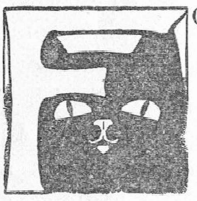
Witnesses:
MARTHA MERRIWEATHER,
ELLEN BURKE.

Thus it came about that many persons were made comfortable and happy by the contents of the old rusty can. For, though it did not contain a fortune, in the general acceptation of the term, it was sufficient to put the hospital on an independent footing, to enable Mr. Seabrook to pay off his indebtedness and buy the Hill Farm, and to give Ann an education.

Perhaps the person most disconcerted by the turn of events was Mrs. Merriweather, who bemoaned her own shortsightedness in not "smelling a mouse" on the occasion, some weeks before Mr. Pool's death, when he asked the signatures of herself and her handmaiden as witnesses to a "legal document."

The Wine of Pantinelli.*

BY HARLE OREN CUMMINS.



OR an Italian Prince, Fabriano was exceedingly good company for an American doctor. He rode and shot like a cowboy, kept a stud of seventeen polo ponies, and had travelled this little world from end to end. Above all things, he was a connoisseur of wines, and his cellars were stocked with cask upon cask and tier upon tier of cobwebbed bottles of rare old vintages. Indeed, it was indirectly through this passion of Prince Fabriano that Doctor Hardy made his acquaintance. Hardy was consulting physician to the Protestant Hospital in the Villa Betania, outside the Porta Romana, and the Prince, on a flying visit to the Tuscan capital to secure a vinous treasure, and incidentally witness the annual festival of Santa Croce, brought with him a touch of Roman fever which caused his commitment to the care of the American doctor. His illness was short, but long enough to ripen the acquaintance with the Doctor into a warm friendship, resulting in an invitation to the physician to visit the princely estate of Fabriano. In this Umbrian fastness, where his ancestors had exercised sovereign power, Fabriano was regarded as the lord of the soil, by all but a few adherents of a deposed house under the leadership of Luigi di Folengo.

One evening, as Hardy went to the Prince's rooms for their usual smoke and game of cards, he found the Prince sitting by the table, holding a bottle of amber-colored liquid.

"Why not pull the cork, Fabriano, and let us have something more than a sight of this richly-colored fluid?" said the Doctor in a bantering tone.

To his surprise, the Prince answered quite seriously, and with almost a shudder:

"I would not drink one sip of the wine that comes in that flask — not even for the polo pony Gustavo that we saw in the Royal

stables last week, and you know how much I coveted that pretty little beast."

A second look showed Hardy that the bottle was of peculiar shape and peculiarly stoppered, and he asked the question which he saw the Prince was ready to answer.

"You remember the trip to Florence to which I owe the pleasure of your acquaintance? Well, I had another reason beside my interest in the Santa Croce festival. You have heard of the Monastery of La Certosa, out on the Galluzzo road, beyond your hospital? The government had abolished it, and there was a store of valuable wine to be put up at auction, including a few bottles of Pantinelli. Fate has seemed to be against my getting any of that wine, until to-day. I have tried for years to get one small bottle, but never yet have tasted it. Pantinelli was a rich old banker in Genoa, who owned a vineyard on the sunny slopes of the Riviera di Ponente. He never sold his wine, but presented it to his friends, and, as he was a cousin of Luigi di Folengo, of whose hatred for me I have already told you, he, naturally, never included me in his list of beneficiaries.

"There was nothing peculiar in the appearance of Pantinelli's wine, but it was invariably put up in bottles just like this. He was an eccentric old fellow, and always corked his bottles by means of this peculiar device, which he claimed to have invented. He gave as a reason for his oddity the belief that if he used the customary seal his friends would keep his beverage for years unopened, without discovering its flavor, and that he meant them to taste its superiority at once on receipt. He seems to have relied on his friends themselves to prevent the fraudulent substitution of another wine, which would, in his queer bottles, have brought an enormous price. However, any one lucky enough to receive a bottle of the famous beverage usually followed the old man's request to the letter, and drank it the same day.

"This afternoon, while you slept, a messenger brought this bottle with a message from Luigi di Folengo, expressing the wish that we might live in amity hereafter, and begging the acceptance of a gift which he believed that I, more than any one else in all Italy would appreciate, a flask of genuine Pantinelli.

"Now, I do not absolutely know that the wine he sent is poisoned,

but I think I know Folengo pretty well, and I am going to try an experiment this evening which I should like to have you witness. I answered him immediately to the effect that his overtures were gladly welcomed, and that on my part I should be pleased to give him an important appointment in my service and hand him the papers to-night. I ended by telling him that to-morrow, seeking out a quiet spot, I should enjoy my Pantinelli to the last drop."

The Prince put the bottle away in a sideboard and produced from a desk a folded paper as Count Luigi di Folengo was announced. He was a swarthy person, with a sabre cut across one cheek and a droop to the eyelid which, to Doctor Hardy, was singularly unprepossessing. The physician highly approved his friend's course in leaving the Pantinelli untasted.

The conversation was general for a few moments after the guests had been introduced, and then the Prince, taking out the queer-shaped flask, silently placed it upon the table as he handed Folengo his appointment. Doctor Hardy watched the man as he stared at the bottle, half-guessing what was to come. Folengo mumbled words of thanks for the paper, but his eyes never left the wine.

"I see you looking longingly at your present of the afternoon," said the Prince pleasantly, "and instead of selfishly drinking it all by myself to-morrow, I will be generous. Of course, this wine has not the novelty of charm to you that it has to others unrelated to its famous grower, but yet no one could get enough of such a drink, and, in honor of our new-formed friendship, you must drink my health in one small glass of the famed wine of Pantinelli."

He poured out a brimming glass and set it down in front of Luigi di Folengo, who sat shaking like a leaf, his drooping eyelid fluttering with strong excitement.

"I am to play to-night, with my friend the Doctor here, a game for very high stakes, so I must keep my head clear, but to-morrow you may think of me as steeped in Pantinelli's generous vine-juice."

As the Prince spoke the last sentence he took from the table drawer a handsome gold-mounted revolver, which he held up to the light so that glittering rays darted from its polished barrel as he said to the trembling Luigi, "I wish also to present you this pistol, with which I have never missed a shot, and which has sent more than one of my enemies down the long road."

While Fabriano spoke the man's eyes anxiously searched the room for a means of escape, and finally came back to the calm face of the Prince. He glanced from the heavy amber liquor before him to the shining weapon with which Fabriano lovingly toyed, and then, with a quiet heroism which Hardy could not help but admire, he raised the glass to his lips and drained it.

He sat there for a minute or two, gazing stupidly at the empty glass. Then, of a sudden, he began to tremble violently; his teeth chattered, and great beads of perspiration stood upon his forehead. On his lips there came a yellowish foam, and he started to his feet, clawing at his breast as if it were on fire, while a hoarse, cackling noise came from his throat. Doctor Hardy knew that the man must be suffering horribly, and, guilty as he believed him to be, could only pity.

Rocking to and fro, Folengo threw himself upon the floor, where he lay writhing and twisting in his death agony. His face turned black, and his eyes started from his head, like those of a strangled man. After that he lay quite still.

Doctor Hardy stooped and felt for the man's heart. There was not the trace of a beat. He turned to the Prince, who had sat through the whole scene with a smiling face, and said, "You are amply avenged, Prince Fabriano. That man died the most terrible death I have witnessed in twenty years of practice."

Fabriano, still smiling strangely, poured out two more glasses of the wine which the dead man had just drunk. "So be it with all assassins!" he said. "Drink to the downfall of my enemy!"

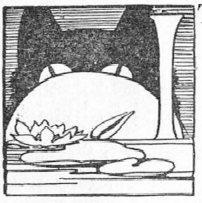
"No, thank you!" answered Hardy, drily, thinking the ghastly deed was being carried too far, "life has still a few attractions."

"Oh, as you will," replied the Prince carelessly. "Then I must drink alone," and he emptied the glass.

"But you are missing something choice," he continued, wiping his lips. "That wine has been in my cellars for fifty years. The stuff our late friend sent is safely locked away for analysis, together with a poisoned dagger and an infernal machine, both of which, I believe, I owe to him or his followers. If you were coroner in this case, what would your verdict be — death from a guilty conscience, supplemented by a vivid imagination? Come, I believe it's my first deal this evening."

Flying the Flume.*

BY BAILEY MILLARD.



IT was one of the noisest places in all California. They called it Sierra Springs, and it stood on a bench half way up Eight-Dollar Mountain. The noise came from the brawling, sprawling Wild River, that made much ado about very little down there below the bench. It also came from the winds that would be blowing harshly at all hours through the pines and from the sawmill where the saws screamed through the big logs and where planks and slabs were always falling with heavy thumps and thuds.

But Martha Capp liked the noises. She liked the sawmill, too, and most of all she liked the flume. She loved to see the lumber from the mill shoot by her down the long waterway as she sat on the bank. The flume ran to the railroad at Red Cañon, twenty miles away. From the flume she would look up to the great peaks upon which the tall, dark pines were roughly etched.

Sometimes Martha had a companion there by the waterway, Serena Hazlitt, a girl with magnificent red hair that hung in two great braids down her back, looking, as Martha had said to her mother, "like two big sticks of molasses candy." Serena had the soft complexion and the kind of blue eyes that go with auburn hair. Martha's hair was jet black and her skin and eyes were dark. The two girls were in the same class at school, and while they were always friendly enough, they often found themselves in positions of rivalry. Martha had "spelled down" Serena on three occasions when they were the last of the line to remain standing. But Serena had been chosen Fairy Queen at the church festival, much to the chagrin of the Capp family, who had confidently counted upon Martha getting the most votes. Then, too, Serena's buckskin was just a little faster than Martha's white pony.

"I wouldn't let that red-headed thing beat me every time I rode to school," had been the taunt of Martha's sister Annie.

"Don't care if she does," Martha had replied. "I don't like racing, and don't let Kittie out. If it does 'Renie any good let her beat. I can spell her down, anyway."

"But she gloats over it so when she rides past you," persisted Annie. "I'd get a long switch and give Kit a good cut when she tried to get by."

That was precisely what Martha had done, but Serena's light-footed buckskin had glided past her slower horse so easily that the dark girl had almost given up the idea of ever beating in the school race. It was deeply mortifying to her to see the buckskin pass so swiftly and to hear Serena's challenge, "Why don't you come on? Your horse is a little slow, ain't she?" But Martha hid all her disconcerting thoughts under a placid little face that showed nothing of self-distrust.

"Oh, I don't care to race," she always said; "it's kind of dangerous on these high cañon roads."

"That's right, Marthy," her father would say. "The roads is too narrer, an' you might git throwed down a thousand feet there at Clift Pint."

At Cliff Point, the very next day, Serena would probably dash past Martha, both horses at their top speed. But Martha kept all knowledge of such matters from her father and mother.

"I don't care," she would say. "Maybe some day we'll have a horse that will beat that dirty little buckskin all hollow. And, anyway, Serena Hazlitt got two marks for bad deportment last month, and I didn't get any."

But when they sat on the bank by the flume, looking down into the gliding water, all thoughts of rivalry between the two girls were put aside. They placed pine-cone men on big chip boats and sent them down to the bay, or listened to the swish of the water as their hazel wands bent in the fleeting stream. Then a great piece of pine lumber would whisk by, making a long yellow flash in the bright sunlight. Sometimes, when a mill-man had an errand down at Red Cañon, he would sit on a box on two of these large timbers, nailed side by side, and go gliding past Martha and Serena, shouting, "Hello, girls! Want a ride?" But he would

be going too fast to permit of any jumping on or off his raft, and all they could do would be to giggle and shout, "Good-bye! Pleasant voyage!" while they whirled their hats.

"Flying the flume" is what the lumbermen called this method of navigation. It was a swift and easy means of reaching Red Cañon, and was safe enough as long as the voyager kept his place on the raft and there were no limbs or timbers projecting low over the flume ahead.

Sometimes a whole party of men would fly the flume, one behind the other, each on his own little raft, and once, when a millman had been crushed by a log in the yard and killed, a coffin had been made and his body had been floated down on a raft, with a grim Charon in the form of the grizzled foreman sitting up behind.

Martha, who always wanted to "go somewhere," had longed to fly the flume, but there had never been any occasion, and even had one occurred her father would not have permitted her to make such an adventurous journey.

One day Martha and Serena were coming from the post-office when, near the blacksmith shop, they saw a little group of villagers about a pretty horse that had just been shod by the blacksmith. The animal had a smooth, cream-white coat, with large brown spots on it, and a long flowing mane and tail.

"What a lovely pinto!" exclaimed Serena. "Isn't he shiny?"

"A beauty," said Martha, "and he looks so intelligent. His eyes are almost human. How I should like to own him!"

"Come, Alexis," said the owner of the animal, who was a horse trainer, "do you like pretty girls?"

The man gave a side glance at Serena and Martha as he asked the question. Alexis bowed a decided affirmative.

"Do you like them when they disobey their mothers?" The horse shook his head, his mane switching about very prettily.

"What's your age?" Alexis pawed the ground five times with his right fore foot.

"You never lie about your age?" The horse said "no," in the same manner as before.

"Can you waltz? Let's see." The man whistled "Love, I will Love You Ever," and the horse waltzed about in the road.

"Do you see any little girl that you would like to make friends with?" Alexis went over to Martha. "Don't be afraid, my dear," said the horse trainer. "He is very gentle." The horse stuck out his head toward Martha and pinched her sleeve between his lips. The girl was not in the least taken aback and stood stroking the horse's head as her father came up. He was talking with Mr. Hazlitt, Serena's father.

"Hello," said Mr. Capp. "He's pretty friendly, ain't he? You'd like to own him, eh?" he said in reply to a faint remark made by Martha. "What do you want for a hoss like that?" Mr. Capp inquired of the trainer.

"Well, horses don't bring very much now — bicycles are running them out and feed's high — I'll let him go dirt cheap, though I do hate to part with him. Say a hundred dollars."

"Oh, sho!" replied Mr. Capp, "I can git four good hosses for that."

"But there are few that know so many tricks, and he's a first-class saddle-horse — safe, gentle — any lady can ride him — and he can go fast. Wait a minute."

The man threw a saddle on Alexis's back, tightened the cinch, grasped the bridle rein, and, leaping upon his back, made a flying gallop over to the mill and back again, scattering the sawdust with which the road was covered.

"He's a good goer," observed Mr. Hazlitt, "and he seems to be sound. He's wuth the money. I'd buy him myself if I needed another hoss."

Mr. Capp examined Alexis all over, with particular attention to his teeth. "He's 'bout seven year old, I should say," was his remark on finishing the dental inspection.

"Only five," said the trainer. "Ain't you, my pretty?"

The horse pawed five times on the ground. "And you love the ladies?" (A bow.) "And like bad boys?" (A decided "No.")

"Ain't he cute?" remarked Mr. Capp. "Wal, I'll give you seventy-five for him."

The trainer looked injured.

"One hundred or nothing," he said quietly. "And he knows lots of other tricks. He can stand on his hind legs, twist a faucet and turn on the water, open gates, and lots of things."

Mr. Capp looked again at the horse, very critically, Martha urging him to buy it. Meanwhile Serena was eyeing her with a dark-green look. She was very envious of Martha for her chance of the possession of the beautiful animal.

"I didn't tell you he was part Arabian, did I?" said Alexis's owner. "Well, you saw how he could go. He's good in a buggy, too, and he will stand anywhere. You can try him if you want to. He's dirt cheap at that figure."

"I dunno but he is," mused Mr. Capp, still looking at Alexis, "and I like a pinto."

"Don't let them buy him — don't," pleaded Serena, pulling at her father's coat. "I want him so bad — so bad. Tell the man you'll take him, won't you, Pa?"

"Oh, we got hosses 'nough. Of course, we might sell or trade and keep this feller. I like a pinto. They ain't common, and he's sound as a dollar."

Standing on the side of the horse opposite to Mr. Capp, Serena's father looked closely at the animal and did not turn away until his neighbor said with a sigh:

"Wal, I'd like to own him, but money's pooty tight — pooty tight; and I got plenty ways to spend it."

"That's jest my fix, too," said Mr. Hazlitt.

"If either of you gents wants him, send me word," called the trainer as the two men walked away toward the store. The girls remained until the horse trainer rode off. They heard him say that he was going to Red Cañon. Martha walked sadly home.

"And I wanted him so bad — but he cost so much," she said to her mother. "He's worth ten such slow pokes as old Kit."

Later in the afternoon Mr. Capp returned home. Then began a teasing and cajoling that would have softened the heart of a graven image. Mr. Capp was well-to-do and he was really sorry now that he had not purchased the horse.

"I should 'a-liked to seen Marthy ridin' on him," he said to his wife.

"Well, we could sell Kittie," suggested Mrs. Capp.

Martha overheard their talk and broke in:

"Yes, she's an old poke and she's balky. She balked with me the other evening on the hill."

"Wal, I s'pose it's too late now," said her father.

"No, it isn't; he's gone to Red Cañon. He must be nearly there by this time. It's two o'clock. We could telephone."

"All right — we'll do it."

"Come on, then." Martha flew ahead of her father to the store where the telephone was, full of excitement and trepidation. She feared the man might have left the main road at Brooks's and not gone to Red Cañon after all.

Serena saw Martha go to the store, and she tripped after her. She heard Mr. Capp talking to the telephone girl at Red Cañon, and heard him say:

"All right — tell him when he gits there that I'll take the horse. What's that? Yes, me — I'm Silas Capp, you know. Tell him I'll take him. Yes, the horse. I'll pay him his price — one hundred. Jest tell him to call me up when he gits there. Good-bye."

Serena ran to her father and told him the news.

"We can get him yet," she said. "It isn't too late. They haven't talked with the man over the 'phone. He's to call them up when he gets to Red Cañon. We can get him yet."

"How?" asked her father, to whom the telephone was something vague.

"Why, come with me, if you don't want the Capps to get him. Come on, Pa." And Serena fairly bundled her father out of the house, while her mother said, "Oh, you impetuous little thing!"

When Serena and her father reached the store, Martha was sitting on a cracker box awaiting the tinkle of the telephone bell and the call from the horse trainer. Serena whispered to her father:

"They haven't heard from that horseman yet. Our chance is as good as theirs."

Great was Martha's surprise and indignation when Serena called up Red Cañon and asked if the horse trainer had arrived there yet. She saw Serena's satisfied smile when the answer came, and could have bitten her when she heard her say:

"All right. Tell him Mr. Hazlitt will take the horse he was looking at here at the price he named — one hundred dollars. Tell him to call us up as soon as he comes. I'll wait."

Serena hung the receiver on the hook and smiled again as she glanced at Martha, sitting on the cracker box. Neither of the girls spoke during the half-hour of waiting. Their fathers had both gone home, leaving them there to receive the calls from the horseman. But when that important individual reached Red Cañon he did not go to the telephone. He merely sent word by a messenger to the telephone office to ring up the Sierra Springs agent and tell him to say to Mr. Capp and Mr. Hazlitt that he would keep the horse there ready for them until the next morning. If either gentleman wished the animal all he had to do was to bring or send the money. He could not give them any further time, for he was in a hurry. The one who placed the money in his hands first should have the horse. When the agent told Serena and Martha this they stared at each other.

"Well," said Martha, "I think that's unfair. We made our offer first."

"Oh," said Serena, "it's fair enough. He'd said what he'd do."

"I know he did," replied Martha, "and it's mean of him."

The girls ran home and told their fathers. Mr. Capp had the money ready, but he did not wish to drive twenty miles to Red Cañon and back again.

"Let me go," said Martha. "I can ride Kit down and Alexis back. Kit leads all right."

"Wal," said Mr. Capp, "you're a great wheedler anyway, Marthy. But suppose Hazlitt gets there first?"

"He won't," grimly replied Martha, shutting her teeth very tight. She took the money hastily, saddled Kittie and was away down the cañon as fast as her "slow poke" could go.

She had not gone three miles before she heard hoofs beating behind her, and soon Serena shot past with a little cry of triumph, to which was added, "You might as well go back, Martha. That horse is ours!"

Martha, much dejected, let Kittie fall into a jog-trot. Her eyes were downcast and there were tears in them. That beautiful pinto horse would have to be given up and all because of her old "slow poke."

Of a sudden her face lighted up and determination spread itself over it. The flume! It ran straight and swift. It was shorter

than the road and a much quicker route. A mile below there was a station where she might get upon a raft and start on the flying trip. It did not occur to her that she had never taken a flume journey. She would dare anything for that horse. She struck Kittie smartly with her switch and soon she was at the flume station, where the water ran slower for a little way in an almost level space. She knew the mill-man there and he agreed to take care of her horse. He also nailed the planks together for a raft, and in ten minutes after she reached the station she was ready for the journey.

"Sit straight up, Marthy, on this seat I've made for you and be careful not to move to one side or the other. You'll get there on time, I guess, if the other girl ain't got too big a start."

Martha took her position aboard the raft and, full of a strange new excitement, she saw herself and her odd craft move slowly at first and then gather speed. Her hair, which she always wore in curls, swept back from her head and her skirt blew in the wind, while her hat would have gone had not the elastic band slipped down upon her neck.

"Good-bye!" yelled the mill-man when she had made a turn. She waved her hand to him, but could not speak. Swiftly the raft glided down the flume, whizzing past great rocks and trees that almost grazed her shoulder. Often she could have reached out and touched the trunk of a pine, and sometimes soft branches scraped her side, though she ducked her head to avoid violent contact. Sometimes she caught glimpses of the road, but she saw nothing of Serena. She held her breath in awe when she flew along in the places where the flume was bracketed upon the side of a steep, high cliff, and she dared not look down to where the river lay like a mere ribbon below her.

On and on she sped, and, though she had never traversed this route before, it seemed to her that she must be nearing the end, when she caught sight of a dust cloud down the road. Gaining upon it she saw that it enveloped Serena and her horse. The flume ran on a gentle decline here, and when Martha overtook her rival, which happened to be where road and flume came near together, the girls could distinguish each other very plainly. Martha gave a shout and cried:

"Good-bye, Serena!"

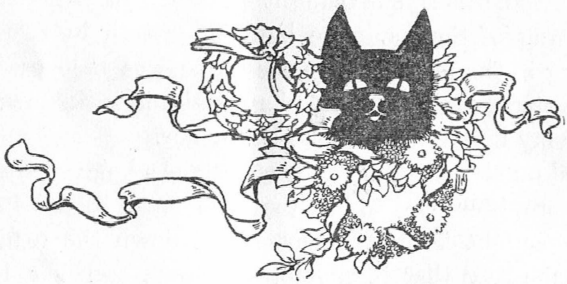
"You mean thing!" retorted her auburn-haired adversary. "You don't race fair — but I'll beat you yet!"

A sharp cut of her whip put an exclamation point to her sentence, and her horse bounded forward, ahead of Martha's raft.

Just at that point a steep pitch in the flume began, taking the raft suddenly and swiftly far below the level of the road and out of sight among the trees. The straight pine trunks seemed to fairly fly past the girl upon the scudding timbers, as telegraph poles race backward toward the traveller by railroad express, and they reeled off the miles so rapidly that the calmer water of the flume station at Red Cañon soon came in sight.

Barely had Martha given the horse trainer the money for the beautiful pinto and taken a receipt when in a whirl of dust the panting and perspiring Serena rode up. The defeated girl threw her pony almost upon its haunches as she came to a stop, a glow of jealous rage upon her face. But it cleared instantly, and she said with almost her customary cordiality:

"You had to fly a flume to beat me, Martha; next time you'd better saddle a cyclone!"



The Face in the Mirror.*

BY RICHARD BARKER SHELTON.

IT was Caverley's intention to select a present for her birthday — no ordinary, conventional little gift, but something which would show her that the selection had required time and search, something you couldn't see lying in shop-windows or advertised in the back of magazines, something to bring the color to her cheeks and the sparkle to her eyes and cause her to exclaim, "You've rummaged all over town for it, haven't you, you dear old boy?"

To this end he spent many afternoons in queer places — pawnbrokers' shops, curio stores and musty basements, where odd volumes or first editions might be brought to light. But his search was for a long time in vain. He could find nothing to suit his needs, for the things he found out of the ordinary would not gratify her taste, and the things which would suit her taste were too ordinary.

He had wellnigh given up further search and decided to go back to a little shop uptown and purchase an hour-glass of quaintly carved ivory — he hadn't the faintest idea to what use she could put it — when a lucky chance changed his plans.

He was passing an auction-room, where a red flag flaunted over the sidewalk and a shabby man with leathern lungs bawled forth an announcement that the entire stock of treasures inside would be sacrificed at auction at 2.30, and in the same breath he invited the passersby to step in and inspect it. More from idle curiosity than anything else, Caverley went within. There was the usual array of vases and chinaware, statuettes and rather glaring lamps. He wandered about, while a little man with a high-pitched voice trotted beside him, telling wonderful tales about every article before which Caverley made a momentary pause.

"Delft, sir, genuine Delft," the little man was saying as he held up some hideous blue plates, when Caverley interrupted him with an exclamation of surprise. His eye had fallen on a silver hand-mirror, and he picked it up and examined it carefully.

"The very thing," he said to himself; then turning to his self-appointed guide, "How much?"

Everything was to be sold at the auction, the man explained — still, if the gentleman desired it very much and found it inconvenient to come in the afternoon —

"I do," said Caverley shortly. "How much?"

How much did he think it worth to him? Caverley named a price and the other made haste to take him up. A few moments later, with his purchase in his pocket, he was hurrying up the street.

It was a queer little mirror. The back was of oxidized silver, quaintly embossed — an impossible Cupid reaching out for a laurel wreath which completely surrounded him. Several sprays of laurel trailed from the ends of the wreath and these were twisted round and round to form the handle. A unique idea and rather a good bit of work, Caverley thought, as he examined the mirror carefully at his apartments. Assuredly it would bring the sparkle to her eyes, and assuredly she would tell him what a dear old boy he was to take so much trouble in her behalf. The Cupid was such a fat, contented-looking little god, that he laughed aloud! Symbolical, too, it seemed to him, for theirs had been a contented affair of the heart. Surely it was the very thing for a present to her.

For some time he sat turning the mirror about in his hands, making jocular comments now and then to the enwreathed Cupid. Then suddenly he sat bolt upright with a strange expression on his face. He had glanced into the mirror and the reflection he beheld there was not that of his own features. He could scarcely believe his sight. He looked again. The face he beheld was one from which he shrank; a strong, firm face it might have been at some time, but now it was disfigured by hideous scars. He laid the mirror on a nearby table and sprang from his chair. He knew it was weakness, but for the life of him he could not help walking over to the glass on his shaving table and glancing into it. It

was his own face that met his gaze, and he was heartily ashamed of the sigh of relief he gave as he saw it.

He returned to his chair and picked up the mirror. Again he glanced into it. This time it was his own square, clean-shaven face which looked back at him.

"Well, I am a skittish fool," said he, and turned the mirror over. The Cupid favored him with the smile which was its perpetual attribute, and at that Caverley laughed easily and put the mirror in a drawer.

Some evenings later he again looked at the mirror. As he turned it about he was aware that the same face was looking back at him — the face with the scars and the eyes which seemed to be half reproachful, half pleading.

"Good Lord!" said he, and laid the mirror down rather suddenly. Then, thoroughly at odds with his childishness, he picked it up again. This time, as he peered into it, he saw the reflection of his own face.

"This," he announced to the Cupid, "is a clear case of indigestion. Take Thingummy's pills, you know." Yet he was aware, with a strange feeling of awe, that he regarded the mirror in a new and not altogether pleasing light.

"You're not quite so much the article I wanted as I took you to be," he observed, as he banged the drawer shut.

But some sort of morbid fascination about the mirror caused him to take it often from the drawer. He came to look upon it with loathing, and each time that uncouth face peered back at him he felt creepy sensations of alternate warmth and chill, yet so strong was the spell it cast over his better senses that he was unable to keep his mind from it.

When her birthday came, Caverley took her the hour-glass and made no mention of the mirror. Indeed, he spoke of it to no one, for he felt an intense disgust at his own actions regarding it. Yet every night he brought it out and turned it about until the face he had come to hate stared back at him. Then with a curse he would throw it into the drawer and pace the room until he was tired out.

In time he discovered that the mirror must be held in a certain position for the face to appear. Otherwise it gave normal reflec-

tions. His discovery gave him a certain courage. It took away some of the weirdness of the thing, and suggested the prosaic course of inquiring into the origin of the curio. He sought the manager of the auction room, who, with a smile and bow, professed entire ignorance of the source whence the mirror had come. Caverley, taking out a twenty-dollar note, clipped it in two with his pocket scissors, and handed one half to the auctioneer.

"This half is now useless to me," he said, "but it will be worth twenty dollars to you when you discover who sold you the mirror."

Some weeks passed and Caverley studied the mirror in a practical way. He noted that it was of unusual thickness, and this aroused his suspicions.

"I'll take it to pieces," said he, and this he proceeded to do. It took considerable time and patience to work the back loose without damaging the glass, but, by dint of perseverance, he managed it. Back of the glass, he found a shallow metal pan. He attacked this, and in a few moments had separated it from the mirror proper. The pan removed, the whole matter was plain. Set slantwise beneath the bevelling on the right-hand side was an ambrotype of the face he knew so well. The picture extended perhaps a third of the distance across the mirror, and was covered with a thick plate of glass, so that looking squarely into the mirror, reflection was normal, but by sloping it to the right until the ambrotype was horizontal, the face with the scars appeared.

Caverley took the ambrotype to the light and stood looking at it for some time.

"Whoever you are," said he, "you're not an attractive chap, but I'd double that twenty to find out about you."

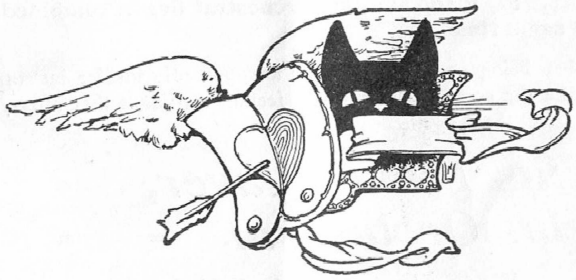
The matter was rapidly slipping from his mind when one day the manager of the auction-room called on him and brought with him an elderly gentleman whom Caverley judged rightly to be a lawyer.

"That mirror," the elderly gentleman said when the matter on which they had called was broached, "was the property of a client of mine, a Miss Damon. It was sold, after her death, with a lot of other personal property not disposed of in her will. There's a queer story about it, but I don't know that I can tell it correctly, for it was told to me in fragments whenever my client cared to

mention the subject, which, I can assure you, sir, was seldom indeed. As well as I can piece these bits together it was something like this:

"Many years ago her family lived in the South and there she met a young physician, who became greatly attached to her. It seems an epidemic of smallpox broke out, and the doctor risked his professional reputation in getting the Damons away and through the lines of the 'shot-gun quarantine' which had been established. He remained there and eventually came down with the disease, which left him with horrible scars. Upon his recovery, he wrote Miss Damon telling her of this and she replied in a letter filled with expressions of deepest sympathy; scars of the skin, she wrote, could not mar the soul, and bade him come to her, but, somehow, the letter miscarried and he never received it. He waited for the answer through several trying months and then wrote her saying he should go abroad to bury himself somewhere in Europe. She was right, he said, to consider him as one dead. He sent the mirror at the same time. There wasn't much to tell, and I fear I have hardly done it justice," the lawyer concluded.

Caverley, with great patience, put the mirror together again, and that evening he took it to the lady for whom he had bought it, and told her the story. And she, being a sympathetic little woman, wept.



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