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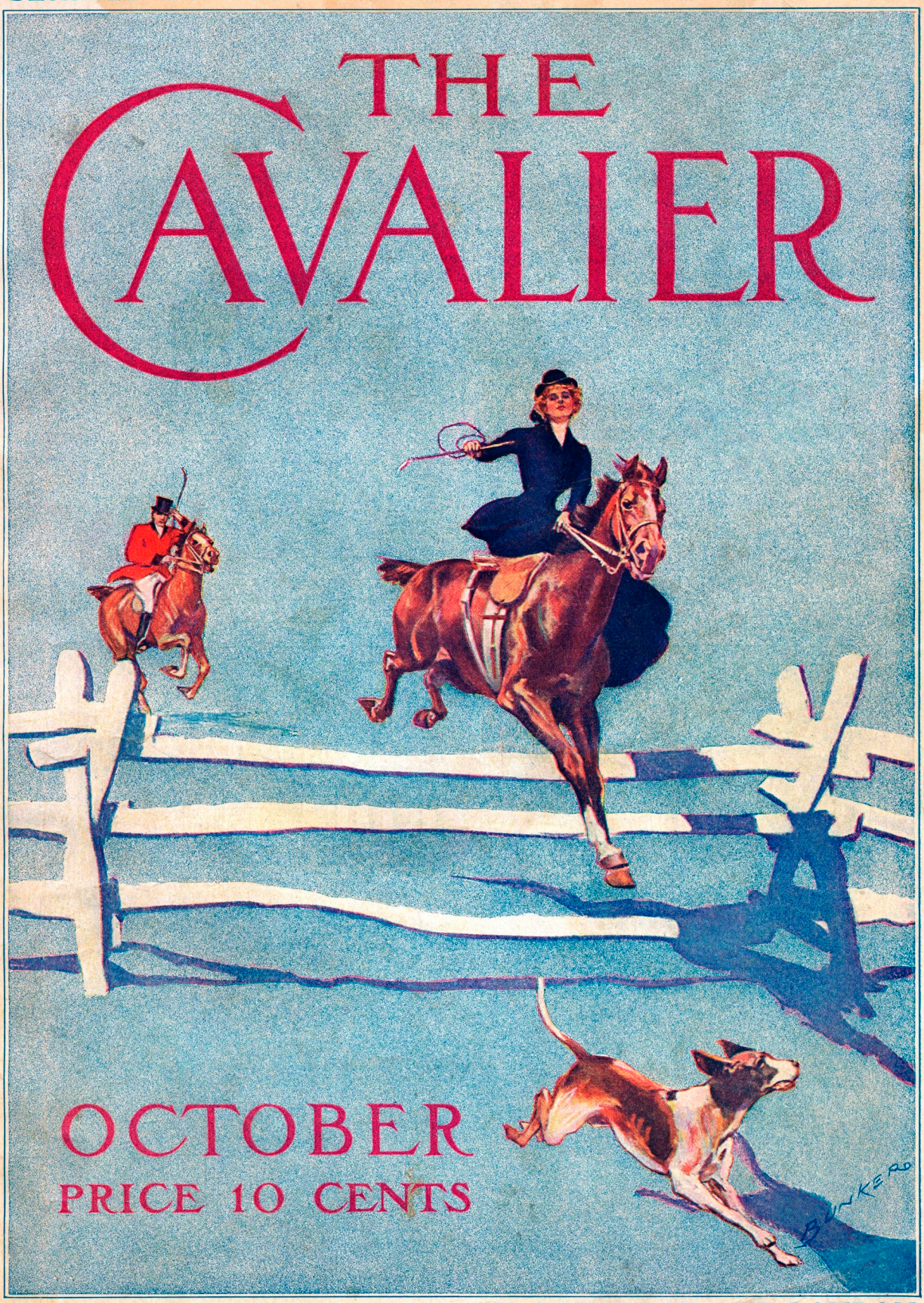

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THE CAVALIER

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THE CLEVERNESS OF CARDILLAC.

BY ROBERT BARR,

Author of "A Woman Intervenes," "Tekla," "Young Lord Stranleigh," Etc., Etc.

A SERIAL STORY.

CHAPTER I.

THE LETTER THAT WAS A JOKE.

VICTOR DE CARDILLAC had remained motionless so long that, in the gathering darkness, he seemed but a carved stone figure on the bridge. He was leaning forward, arms folded on top of the parapet, gazing steadily at the swirling water below, which at last became invisible save for the quivering reflection of yellow lights from the windows of the palaces on either bank.

It is doubtful if in all Paris there was to be found another whose thoughts were more bitter than those of the young man who leaned against the parapet that July evening. It was not so much the loss of all his money, which was little enough to begin with, nor the waste of his time, which was of no particular value, nor even his disappointment at not getting a place in Paris, nor his chagrin at being kept uselessly loitering round the doors and in the antechambers of the great without ever receiving a message or a word from the nobleman he sought, that wrought up this young man of twenty-four to the dangerous pitch in which we find him. That afternoon, at four o'clock, he had discovered that the letter which lured him to Paris had been but a joke, and, carrying it about in his pocket for nearly four months, he, a Gascon, had never seen the point of it.

The rigid, motionless posture of Cardillac was caused by the intensity of his thoughts as he cast his mind over the past few months and meditated savagely on the fool's errand which had brought him to Paris, on the weeks and weeks of humiliating dangling at the Luynes Palace, on the final stinging insult of the jocular letter.

The rise of Charles d'Albert of Luynes had been bewilderingly rapid, even for France, where favoritism, and not merit, was the elevating power. As a boy, Luynes had come up from the south, from Aix in Provence, had obtained a place as page in the service of the Comte de Lude, had attracted the attention of Henri IV, who made young Luynes companion to his weakly son, Louis.

Over the infantile mind of the young Dauphin, Luynes attained complete ascendency. When Louis was nine years old that great king, his father, was assassinated, and the widowed queen, Marie de Medicis, an Italian woman, became ruler of France as regent. Marie became the most detested of the foreigners who from time to time had governed France. She appointed as her prime

minister a worthless Florentine named Concini, and together these two Italians, woman and man, tyrannized the land for seven years.

All this time Charles d'Albert, the suave, sport-loving, plebeian young man from the south, was unknown to the world. No one paid the slightest attention to the influence he had obtained over the lad who, some day, would be king as Louis XIII, nor realized what this influence might mean in the future. The Italian man and the Italian woman seemed securely entrenched in absolute power. Concini swaggered about Paris with a retinue of fifty swordsmen to guard him, as if he were king in name as well as reality, when suddenly the unknown struck, and struck with finality.

Concini was shot dead in the midst of his fifty protectors, in the courtyard of the Louvre, and no defender drew a sword, as indeed would have been useless when their chief lay prone on the pavement. The queen-mother was deported from Paris and imprisoned in the royal château at Blois. Louis XIII, proclaimed king, set his sole favorite, D'Albert, in the saddle of power, as worthless and arrogant as the man he had eliminated, but French, nevertheless. If we must be ruled by scoundrels, let us choose our own.

The affair was bewildering in its speed and completeness; no one had time to hedge. If courtiers had but guessed what was going to happen, sycophant place-hunters might have made friends with this unheeded young man while he was in obscurity. As it was, D'Albert found himself under obligations to no one, except the assassin, and him he paid in gold and protection.

Then began a balmy period for poverty-stricken Provence. Up to Paris came troops of cousins, second cousins, fortieth cousins, and each of them got a place under the patronage of Charles d'Albert of Luynes.

It was at this time that the old Lord of Cardillac, poor of purse but proud of pedigree, looking about for a position that his son, aged twenty-four, might fill with profit, remembered that Charles d'Albert had been sent years before by his father to Bordeaux, and had stopped the night at Cardillac Castle. The Marquis of Cardillac had persuaded the youth not to blight his prospects by engaging in commerce and immuring himself in a provincial city like Bordeaux, but to journey north to Tours, at that moment occupied by the court. He had given the boy a letter to his friend, the Comte de Lude, which had secured him the post of page, and now it seemed that D'Albert, with whose name all France was ringing, was a man who believed that one good turn deserved another. Therefore old Cardillac caused his son to write to the new favorite, recounting these circumstances, and asking if Charles d'Albert of Luynes would counsel the young man to go to Paris, as the young man's father had counseled D'Albert himself to visit Tours. In due time the reply came:

> Paris by all means. It is a delightful city, where young men enjoy themselves and become rich. I long to embrace the founder of my fortune. LUYNES.

This letter appeared to be cordial enough, and on the strength of it young Cardillac went to Paris. If the truth be told, he was rather elated to possess so intimate a communication from the most powerful man in France, and in the certainty of an early appointment he refused to give up the letter to any underling, demanding immediate admittance to the presence of Charles d'Albert of Luynes.

This pretense was ignored, and young Cardillac found himself left out in the cold, passed by and neglected, while his purse was running lower and lower, and his costume, which never compared with the brilliancy of Paris wear, was becoming shabbier and shabbier. The anterooms of De Luynes were thronged all day by those eager for conference with the real ruler of the nation, and potent bribes passed to the hands of the servitors bespeaking their good-will in the matter of precedence. These menials the young man, who had no money to give them, found insolent and overbearing, and he made neither friends nor progress in his quest. Many times his too-ready right hand sought the hilt of his sword, but some element of country caution within him always intervened in time, and he never drew the weapon with which he was so expert, being well aware that if he once showed naked steel in that as-

semblage he would be quickly hustled out and never allowed to reenter.

An hour before we find Cardillac leaning over the parapet of the bridge, an old warder of the entrance hall, who had observed him there, day by day, for months, growing thinner and gaunter as time wore uselessly on, being from the country himself, and seeing plainly that the young man showed little knowledge of Paris, approached him and spoke.

"Sir, whence do you come?"

"From Cardillac, in Gascony."

"I am from Avignon. We are both of the south, although you live in the western border of France and I on the eastern. Sir, can I serve you?"

"I should be delighted if you did, but as a preamble I must honestly say that I possess no money to part with."

"I knew that before you spoke," replied the other. "You wish to see my master, perhaps?"

"It is for that purpose I have been here these many days."

"May I examine your credentials, for none get beyond this point who are not well provided with them? I may not be able to obtain admission for you, but I can at least give you some directions in the method of procedure, for you seem to be ignorant of the customs at court."

"Surely I am that, yet my credentials are the best that could be required, being no other than an invitation from De Luynes himself, asking me to Paris."

"Sir, will you show me the document?"

"With pleasure," and Cardillac handed the old man his precious letter. The official read it over slowly, then slowly shook his head as he returned it.

"I fear it will be of little use to you, sir. This document is not in the handwriting of M. de Luynes."

The young man started to his feet.

"A forgery!" he cried.

"No, not a forgery. A communication sent under command of my master, but written by one of his secretaries."

"To an honorable man, and I trust De Luynes is such, the obligation is the same."

"True, but there is much press of business since my master undertook the huge task which is before him. The moment he attained his present position there sprang up in all quarters of France, and here by the hundreds in Paris itself, people who said they had been of assistance to him during his years of nonentity. I presume you preferred a similar claim."

"But my claim was a just one."

"Sir, I fully believe you, but the others held their claims were just also, and they demand compensation now that M. de Luynes is in a position to requite."

"I demanded nothing," proclaimed the young man hotly, "but merely reminded him of the introduction and advice my father had given him, which put his foot on the first rung of the ladder. I then asked if he advised me to proceed to Paris, and this is his answer. Do you say it means nothing?"

"It is not for me to pass judgment," said the old man slowly. "The secretaries of M. de Luynes are very methodical. You may see at the top of the page the number 97, which means that ninety-six persons have received a similar letter previous to this one being sent to you. I advise you not to build upon the document. It is, indeed, nothing but a joke."

"Nothing but a joke?" cried the proud Cardillac. "Surely you yourself but jest. He would not dare!"

"Dare what?" asked the old man, lifting his eyebrows.

"Dare to jest with one of my name and house."

"I am ignorant of the standing of the house of Cardillac in Gascony," returned the ancient quietly, with nevertheless a trace of sarcasm in his tone, "but my master dares jest with representatives of the first families in France, and they have the courtesy to laugh heartily, even if the point is turned against them."

"If he turns the point of a witticism against me," cried Cardillac, "he'll meet the point of my sword in return."

"Tut, tut," cautioned the old man, "do not speak so loud!"

"Why should I not speak at the top of my voice, here or elsewhere? The castle of Cardillac has been in the possession of my family for fourteen generations, and this man is but the son of a corn-chandler in Aix, who had saved enough money to buy the insignificant property of Luynes, from which he now names himself. This man was destined to be a wine merchant in Bordeaux!"

"Sir," said the dignified official solemnly, "you are hot-headed and injudicious. I fear your career in Paris will be short."

"You would not say so if you knew how adept I am with the sword."

"Hush!" commanded the venerable. "You are attracting attention to us. If you refuse to take thought for yourself, at least show some consideration for me. You are in Paris for the purpose of advancing yourself. Day after day you have attended these assemblies. In that time how many friends have you made?"

"Not one."

"How many enemies, then?"

"Not one, either. I have spoken to none."

"Then, sir, you have most vilely misused both time and opportunity. Being a man well on in years, my own inclination leans toward the making of friends, but next to a friend an enemy is useful for one who wishes to mount the ladder. If you are so good a swordsman as you hint, why have you let all these weeks pass without proving it? A man's word goes for nothing here in Paris. I dare swear there are ten thousand swords within a mile of the court better than yours."

Cardillac drew himself up haughtily, but doubtless on second thoughts considered it better to make no remark. He saw that the old man loved to talk, and he expected to learn something from his garrulousness.

"You may shout your prowess from the housetops, and no one will believe you. They will laugh at you."

"No man laughs twice at me," said Cardillac, "and your master will yet learn that I have not forgotten his epistolary joke."

"There is Denarac, for instance, accounted a pretty swordsman. It happens that my master looks upon him with suspicion, for Denarac is supposed to favor the queen-mother, now residing in Blois, when he should be a loyal subject of our most gracious king, Louis XIII, whom God preserve. Now, Denarac is ready enough with his laugh, and if you crossed his path would doubtless favor you with his merriment. If thereupon you had issued your challenge, and run him through at the hour appointed, M. de Luynes would speedily have sent for you, instead of allowing you to cool your heels in his vestibule. If a man's sword is swift and sure, he needs no letter of introduction here in Paris."

"Sir, I am not a swashbuckler, swaggering round to find my enemies or friends. If a man insults me, why, that's a different thing. Let him then depend on his sword to defend him from the mistake made by his tongue."

"Well, young sir, good swords will be needed before long in this land of France. By the way, how stand you? For the queen-mother, or for your lawful king?"

"I trust I am for my lawful king, otherwise what should I do here in Paris?"

"There are many in Paris who hold a contrary opinion, but the people of France as a whole will never again allow themselves to be ruled by an Italian woman. The young king is a Frenchman, whatever else may be said of him."

"Only half French, I think. His mother is the Italian woman you speak of."

The old man looked critically at his younger *vis-à-vis* before he replied:

"But his father was Henri the Great, and the son is Frenchman enough to imprison his Italian mother."

"It was Luynes did that."

"Young man," said the guard with asperity, "for one so little versed in the ways of the world, you are overfond of contradicting."

For the first time during their conversation the young man laughed lightly.

"Perhaps I am," he said. "Go on. I think you have something to propose. I shall not contradict you again. I am too anxious for work to do, and will not again jeopardize my chance."

"I am a distant cousin of M. de Luynes. When there is any transaction to be carried through which requires secrecy, caution, and despatch, it is to me he entrusts its execution."

The old Provençal gave utterance to this statement with an air of gentle pride, not untainted by the boastfulness of the south. Cardillac, whose self-conceit had been grievously wounded by the revelation that the letter on which he had depended as a guide-post on the road to fortune was merely a trap to delude the gullible, looked his interlocutor up and

down with a somewhat critical regard, not unmixed with incredulity. The young man was shrewd, even if he had been taken in by the apparent cordiality of this bogus letter, and it seemed to him rather odd that the dictator of France should entrust his secret schemes to a garrulous old braggart who conversed about them with a stranger of whom he knew nothing.

It seemed to Cardillac that if the man in power had surrounded himself with country relatives so communicative as this official, he might soon expect a downfall as sudden and complete as his uprising. But shrewd as he was, the Gascon's face was characterized by the guilelessness of youth and the simplicity of the country, and the thoughts that passed through his mind cast some reflection on his amiable countenance. The old man saw the expression of disbelief that came into the younger's face.

"I see you do not believe me," he said, "but that is merely because you do not understand our situation here."

Up to this point the two had been standing together, conversing in rather low tones, except when Cardillac had been moved by anger on learning he had been hoodwinked by a letter. Now the old retainer drew him toward a corner of the hall that was deserted, and the two sat down on a bench far apart from the rapidly lessening throng in the waiting-chamber.

"Properly to understand the situation, you must know the manner of man my cousin Luynes is. You must estimate the effect of his upbringing and his education."

"I understand," interrupted Cardillac, "that he has had little education and no upbringing, while by birth he is a peasant."

The old man indulged in the superior smile of one who knows, but is indulgent to youthful ignorance and youthful hotheadedness.

"We should judge education by its results. Look you what a life my cousin has led. As you yourself have several times pointed out, he is a man of no family; therefore, coming to court in a menial position, he is entirely unheeded by those above him and around him. He comes, as you say, from the peasant class —a class in which each individual is remarkable for his keen judgment of his fellows; a class whose livelihood depends on well-laid plans, unwaveringly carried out. Always he is unheeded, mind you that, and before this unaccounted lad, this youth, this growing man, there passes continually the pageant of the court of France. In his mind, wax to receive and marble to retain, the human items of this procession are noted, estimated, and set down at their proper value, for he has seen them and heard them at unguarded moments. He knows thoroughly the pawns with which he will yet play the game of life when the proper moment arrives, and look you how he struck, my Lord of Cardillac. The foolish queen, drunk with seven years of unquestioned power, France groaning under her tyrannical sway, tightens her grip upon the unfortunate land."

"How?"

"By sending her strongest partizans here, there, and everywhere, to suppress ruthlessly the slightest attempt at revolt. That strong man, the Duc d'Epernon, is made governor of the impregnable castle of Loches; his crafty son is promoted to the archbishopric of Toulouse. The father is sent west, the son is sent south, and so it is in other quarters of the realm. Her powerful champion in Paris is the Duc de Montreuil, who is so rich that he does not wish a distant governorship, but desires to remain in Paris. If you had asked the most prominent and most well-informed ambassador and impartial onlooker how stood the government of France, he might have told you quite honestly that never before did a government possess such a grip on the country. To all the world, inside or outside of Paris, the regency seemed as solid as the Pyramids of Egypt; to all the world, that is, except one man—Charles d'Albert of Luynes, the peasant's son. With a wave of his wand the whole system collapsed like a house of cards."

"With the shot of a musket, you mean," corrected Cardillac grimly.

"My young sir, the sound of the musket was but the trumpet-blast before the walls of Jericho. A musket-shot—an assassination, if you like to call it so—but brings confusion, unless the after-plans are perfected. Like armed warriors

springing from the ground, as in the classic fable, that portion of the army on which Luynes knew he could depend emerges from the forest and masses itself around the castle of Blois. That checkmates D'Epernon in his strong tower at Loches. Blois stands between him and Paris, and his strength is nullified. He dare not march to the succor of the queen."

"And yet," said Cardillac, deeply interested in this exposition of Luynes's mentality—"and yet, when I came up to Paris from Bordeaux, more than two months ago, I sat on my horse and saw the young Archbishop of Toulouse marching at the head of five hundred men on his way to Loches to reenforce his father's garrison. This junction you were unable to prevent."

Again the indulgent smile illuminated the gentle countenance of the veteran.

"The young archbishop, thank God, may have five hundred men or five thousand, but he does not possess the brains of his father. Luynes had a messenger ride hot-haste to Toulouse from Blois. Arriving at the southern city, he, being a man of Loches, born and brought up there, had no difficulty in persuading the archbishop that he came from the Duc d'Epernon, his father, with orders, verbal because he dare not trust them to writing, asking the archbishop to bring to Loches all the men he could gather round him, and thus we have imprisoned the archbishop and his five hundred men."

"Imprisoned? Surely that is not the word to use."

"They are as safely imprisoned in Loches as if we had them in the Bastile. What now think you is the key to the whole situation?"

"I do not know," replied Cardillac.

"Why, it is Paris; it is turbulent, uncertain Paris. Luynes and the young king must make sure of Paris, and the rest of the country may go hang, as has always been the case. What the archbishop should have done, since his father dare not move, was to march his five hundred men from Toulouse direct to Paris, rousing the country as he came along, gathering recruits at every village, and before he reached the gates of Paris he might have had anywhere from ten thousand to fifty thousand men at his back; and Paris, always ready for a fight, would have welcomed him with open arms. But look you at the situation now. There are D'Epernon and his son, with all their men, in Loches Castle, out of which they dare not move. They know the castle is impregnable, and once they leave it to fight in the open Luynes has double their number of men at Blois waiting to meet them. Since then he has stationed five thousand men at Tours, within striking distance of Loches, and now, if the Duc d'Epernon dare leave that fortress these men of Tours will not attempt to fight him, but will instantly occupy the town and castle he has abandoned, and that without taking a single man away from Blois, where they guard the imprisoned queen.

"And look you now at the craft of Luynes's treatment of the queen. Instead of placing her here in the Bastile, where she might at any time be rescued by an uprising in Paris, he moved her, just as if she were on a chess-board, down to Blois, as near as possible to her principal supporter, D'Epernon, at Loches. Thus Paris is tranquil. An insurrection here could not help the queen. They cannot get her person, and a mob rarely fights long without some center to rally round. Thus we have the queen herself imprisoned in Blois; her favorite, Concini, always hated by the people, is dead; her only general with brains and knowledge of strategy holds the strongest castle in France, and his very strength is his weakness, because he dare not leave it and allow it to fall into our hands. If he leaves it, he is crushed in the field by our superior numbers; if he stays there, he is nullified."

"It seems to me," said Cardillac, "that there can be no other outcome than civil war."

"You but voice the general opinion," replied the old man complacently, "but those who hold that opinion do not know De Luynes. He has decided that there shall be no civil war; he holds with Sully the belief that France's salvation rests with the plow and the cow. For the first time in the history of France, there comes to the head of its government a man with the intellect and knowledge of a peasant, who nevertheless knows every twist and

turn of nobility's mind—of the minds of those who have hitherto ruled this kingdom. He plays politics as he would play a game of chess, with the broad lands of France for his chess-board. He regards the peasants, quite rightly, as producers; he regards the nobles, and quite rightly, too, as the spenders. His theory is that France needs but tranquillity to become prosperous. For barely three months he has been in the saddle, and what already is the condition of affairs? All over France the nobles, like D'Epernon in Loches, are hemmed up in this fortress or that, each with his handful of men. They cannot spend money, even if they had millions at their disposal, for it is only in Paris that fortunes are lost or won in a day. In France, then, peasants are producing wealth which nobles cannot spend. It needs only a few years of this condition, and France becomes the most wealthy and prosperous country in the world."

"A civil war will soon dissipate the prosperity and the wealth."

"You speak truly, but, as I told you, Luynes has determined there shall be no civil war."

"How can one man, and that man, as you admit, peasant-born, be assured that civil war will not break out?" cried Cardillac, with some impatience. "The aristocracy for centuries have been the governing body, just as the peasants have been the working body of the state. It is never the peasants who bring about a civil war. They, poor wretches, are ever content if allowed to till their lands in peace, even though the exactions of the tax-gatherer become almost unbearable. It is always some proud and rebellious noble who lights the torch of civil war, and the unhappy peasant, who is but a slave, must perforce follow to victory or to destruction, as the case may be."

"Sir, it astonishes me that one who can speak so sanely of the causes of turbulence should yet possess a mind biased by the prejudices of his class to such an extent that he is unable to give proper weight to the epoch-making change that has taken place in the government. Your underestimate of M. de Luynes, your apparent lack of sufficient foresight to appreciate what will happen with a peasant in supreme power, your contempt for the hardy working class from which he springs, and this inappreciative habit of mind being common to the whole nobility of France, M. de Luynes is thus providentially granted exactly the opportunity he requires. All he needs in addition is time. Every day that passes strengthens him, and when the aristocracy has awakened to its error Charles d'Albert de Luynes will be in a position to crush every member of it back into the ranks of the proletariat from which the ancestors of the aristocracy originally sprung, if he chooses to do so."

"Well, he has his work cut out for him," said Cardillac, with an incredulous smile, "and you seem to forget that while Charles d'Albert of Luynes may, and doubtless will, inherit the corn traffic of his father, he has not inherited the crown of France, even though, for the moment, the queen-mother is his prisoner."

"The crown of France," said the elder solemnly, bowing his gray head at the mention of this insignia, "rests on the head of its rightful heir, Louis XIII, whom God preserve, who in two months' time will be seventeen years old, who is infirm in body, and whose mind is what M. de Luynes has made it. For a dozen years De Luynes has been his constant companion, his only playmate, the one person on earth who has invariably been kind to him, and who was furthermore appointed by Henri IV, whose memory young Louis reveres. The crown, you say? How could the crown be placed to better advantage for M. de Luynes than where it is? If it were offered to him, he would refuse it as that strong man Cæsar did. No. The safety of the aristocracy lies in the ambition of Charles d'Albert of Luynes. The stupidity of the nobles would cause their downfall, were it not for M. de Luynes's determination to leave the ranks of the peasantry and join the ranks of the aristocracy. He will found a house able to hold up its head among the proudest seigneurs of France."

Cardillac laughed scornfully, which seemed to irritate his elderly, loquacious friend.

"Look you, young sir, De Luynes is betrothed to the daughter of the Duc de Montbazon, one of the heiresses of France, whose father is among the few

who guess in what direction the wind is blowing. The king has promised De Luynes the estate of Maille, on the Loire, seven miles below Tours—an estate which surrounds the most noble feudal castle in France. Laugh now, my Gascon lad."

"I hope you do not use the word Gascon otherwise than as a term of compliment and honor," said the young man with some asperity.

"No—oh, no," responded the elder in haste.

"In like manner, when I employ the word Provençal, it is to bestow upon my phrase the quality of admiration."

The old gentleman bowed profoundly.

"It requires, then, the vivid imagination of a Provençal poet to see anything of stability in the position of Charles d'Albert of Luynes. The place he occupies was produced by a musket, and is supported by a prison. Of the former twin rulers of France, one is in the grave, the other in a cell. What a musket has done, a musket can do. He who lives by the sword shall die by the sword, and it is the fashion of prisons to release a victim that it may embrace that victim's jailer."

The elder set his hand lightly on the younger's shoulder with a gesture that was fatherly.

"My eloquent lad," he said, "Gascony has produced poets which rival those of Provence. You and I are of the south, and understand each other, yet I find it difficult to convey to your mind a true comprehension of the case. M. de Luynes has put no one in prison."

"You hold me gullible indeed," cried the young man angrily, shaking the hand from his shoulder. "All France knows that Marie de Medici, the queen-mother, has been imprisoned in Blois this two months past."

"The Château of Blois is not a prison, but a palace. It has ever been the favorite residence of the kings of France. Louis XIII has bestowed upon his mother the most beautiful and the most luxurious house he possesses, and that there may be no diminution in the state to which she has been accustomed he has furnished her with retinue, with guards of honor, forming a pageant equal to that which surrounded her here in Paris."

"A pageant of jailers and spies!"

"Nonsense, my over-emphatic young friend! All courts are permeated by spies, and, in a manner, every court is a prison, with the king its chief inmate. But, look you, Marie de Medici was never rightful Queen of France. The power which she grasped so tenaciously was at best but a regency—a holding in trust of what rightfully belonged to her son—and this she clung to long after its true purpose was past. Marie de Medici has made no protest against her change of residence, and, indeed, why should she? Blois is a delightful place, Touraine one of the most charming provinces in France, and the château, as I have hinted, is even more luxurious than the Palace of the Louvre."

"If what you say is true," commented Cardillac, "why, then, all these military preparations by De Luynes of which you boasted a while since? Why is an army stationed at Blois and another at Tours?"

The elder man shrugged his shoulders.

"Yes, and still another, that I have not mentioned, ready to pounce on D'Epernon the moment he quits his shelter at Loches. All this is simply M. de Luynes's precautions taken against disturbance—precautions rendered necessary by the fact that others beside yourself may imagine the queen a prisoner. If such a delusion should cause activity among the queen's partizans, we on our part must be ready to convince them of their error by annihilating them. Our good-will toward Marie de Medici is shown by our generous conduct to her. See what the Queen of England did thirty years ago to another Mary, she of the Scots, whose head rolled from the block. She was a real queen, while Marie de Medici was merely a regent, and at the last practically a usurper. Oh, no, M. de Cardillac, there is no queen imprisoned in France. Indeed, the remarkable thing about this change of government is that it has furnished but one prisoner."

"And who is he?"

"I must not mention names, and, indeed, I exaggerate when I call her a prisoner, for she is merely sent to a convent, where I trust she will receive many advantages that will be of benefit to her if she follow the example set before her

by the noble ladies who are sisters of the order."

"Ah, another woman in jail! I am getting much insight into the character of De Luynes. He is a brave fighter with women, and holds his place through the favor of an imbecile boy."

"My impetuous friend, you are skirting dangerously near to treason, if indeed you have not already trespassed upon perilous ground. Imbecility and royalty are not to be mentioned in the same sentence. M. de Luynes is as brave as you are, and so you will find if you ever encounter him in anger."

"Nothing would give me greater pleasure."

"Then I shall see that you are given an early opportunity of meeting him and making your words good."

"Again I say, nothing would give me greater pleasure, and I shall remind you of your promise if you are not the braggart you have hinted that I am. Indeed, I doubt if you have any influence at all with the usurper De Luynes, the man of practical jokes and insincere letters."

"Ah, you haven't forgotten that yet! It seems to rankle. But, bless you, you should have seen him when he caused to be congregated in the courtyard some thirty-five men who held similar letters to yours. They thought he was about to receive them in audience, but he merely appeared at the grotesque gathering among the curtains of one of the windows, and laughed until I thought his sides would split. The king, too, was highly amused at the spectacle."

Cardillac gritted his teeth, and his lips compressed to a thin line. His tormentor was watching him closely, but when the old man spoke it was in the suavest accents of the south.

"Pardon me," he said. "I spoke thoughtlessly. It is perhaps the case that you were one of the thirty-five?"

"Sir, you need no pardon. The honor of providing mirth for his majesty and the favorite was not vouchsafed to me, and, truth to tell, I find it difficult to credit that this pair should be so heartless; therefore I fall back upon my first suspicion, that you know little either of the king or De Luynes."

"In that case, sir, I must present to you proof of their confidence in me. You seem of a doubting nature for one so young. Know, then, that I was given charge of the queen-mother's cavalcade from Paris to Blois, with a hundred soldiers under my command."

"Again, I have only your word for that," objected the unconvinced De Cardillac.

The other raised his eyebrows, and spread out his hands with a little gesture of protest.

"I thought so clever a young man as you would credit me because the truth or falsity of what I have stated is so easily ascertained. The cavalcade departed from Paris on the last day of April, in the most open manner, and practically all Paris was there to see. It was a gala occasion, for the queen-mother was as unpopular as her favorite. My name is Tresor. If you make inquiry, all your misgivings will be dispelled, for there are thousands who saw me riding at the head of my troop.

"But, aside from this public mission, M. de Luynes entrusted me with a private work of some delicacy, which was, without attracting attention to detach from the queen-mother's *entourage* the only capable lady in waiting she possessed, to deliver her to the care of the strictest convent in France—a convent worthily presided over by a lady of the blood royal—and to overtake the procession before my absence was detected. That I accomplished successfully, and M. de Luynes complimented me by saying I was the only person he knew who could have done so."

"And what was the object of immuring a young lady in the cloisters?"

"The object was twofold. Those who surround the queen-mother are as stupid as herself; all of them are frivolous, most of them are beautiful, so there was no objection on the part of M. de Luynes that these butterfly nonentities should share the queen's exile, if you choose to call it so, at Blois. This young woman of whom I speak, besides being beautiful, is capable, and if your conjecture that the queen-mother is a prisoner was true, you will easily see that we did not wish to place beside her one with ingenuity enough to help her to escape. The second reason was that this girl's father appears to be an important partizan of the queen-

mother. She is his only daughter, on whom he very foolishly dotes, which is a mistake if a man wishes to take an active part in French politics. Until he learns the fate of his daughter we hold him helpless. He knows she is in our power, so he pretends affection for the new *régime*, and dare not openly take part with the supporters of Marie de Medici."

"And the truth of this later narrative I suppose I may learn by asking all Paris?"

"No," returned the old man, with the utmost suavity. It seemed impossible to anger him. "No, this, as I told you, was a secret mission; but, if you have the courage to question him, I shall indicate to you a man who can authoritatively corroborate my statements."

"Who is that man?"

"His name is M. Charles d'Albert de Luynes, whom you have expressed a desire to meet on terms of hostility. I shall be pleased to put you in a position to ask your questions at the point of the sword, if — my former proviso — you have the courage."

"When?"

"To-night, at half past ten o'clock."

"Where?"

"If I am permitted to preface my answer by a few words of explanation, you will then comprehend more accurately than you do now the manner of man you will meet, and if this knowledge causes you to avoid the encounter, I, for one, should be the last to dub you coward, for I warn you M. de Luynes is probably the bravest man in Paris, as well as one of its most skilful swordsmen."

"Go on," commented Cardillac shortly.

"Aside from this bravery and skill, which, if I understood rightly, you share with him, he possesses another quality which you hold in common. He is deeply distrustful of what is said to him by any except his immediate friends and confidantes. It is therefore his habit to learn for himself, at first hand, what the ever-changing opinions of Paris are regarding current events, and has therefore committed himself to a practise which all his friends who know of it, and they are few, consider highly dangerous. Have you ever met M. de Luynes?"

"Never."

"It would not much matter if you had. It is doubtful if you would recognize him in the circumstances at which I hint, for he disguises himself with some care. In one disguise or another he wanders about Paris alone at night, visiting taverns, wine-shops, cafés, mixing with the people wherever men congregate, feeling thus with his own finger and thumb the pulse of Paris. Consequently no one has acquired such knowledge as M. de Luynes of the capital of France. Never in its history has Paris been so quiet as since my master came into power, and this tranquillity is not understood even by the police. But in whatever quarter of the city an insurrection is brewing, it is discovered that troops have silently taken possession of the street before the hour at which the outbreak was to have occurred, and more than one unfortunate wretch has been flung into the Seine because of the unjust suspicion that he has betrayed his comrades. You are of good family, a southerner, and therefore a man of honor, so I trust you with this secret in the utmost security, knowing you will not betray my confidence. M. de Luynes is as merciful as he is expert and brave with his weapon, so I know I am not sending you to your death. He will merely run you through the arm."

Cardillac squared back his shoulders, and a smile of derision curled his mustached lip, but he said nothing. Tresor took no notice, but continued in level tones:

"If you examine the rear of these premises you will find that a narrow lane divides the grounds of our palace from the backs of the opposite houses. Midway up the lane on your left is a door in the wall. At half past ten o'clock to-night I open that door, step out, and look up and down the lane. If the way is apparently clear, M. de Luynes will emerge and walk off to the right. There are numerous back entrances on the right hand of the lane, in one of which you may conceal yourself. In coming up with M. de Luynes, I ask you not to accost him if there is any one in sight. I advise that the conference be amicable, but if you are determined to receive a lesson in the use of the blade, then encounter him in fair fight, and you will be satisfied."

"*Monsieur,* your confidences rather astound me, for we are not even acquaintances."

"We are both of the south, nevertheless," replied M. Tresor ingratiatingly. "You fear that I am leading you into a trap?"

"Sir, I fear nothing."

"No; fear was not the word I should have used. I have not won your confidence as you have won mine. You apprehend, then, that I am laying a trap for you? I shall not protest, because that would be useless, but I venture to point out that if I desired your harm I have but to give the word and cause you to be arrested on this bench, or when you leave the palace, or at your own lodgings, and you would disappear instantly from human knowledge. I do not need to entrap you, M. de Cardillac, for you are now, and have been ever since you entered, entirely at my mercy. That, of itself, should quell your doubts. If it does not, then do not attend the rendezvous."

"I will think it over," said Cardillac, as he rose from the bench.

The hall was now deserted. It was after five o'clock; there would be no further audience that day, and the hangers-on, the disappointed applicants for place, for favor, for power, for money, had taken their dejected departure for their own homes. Cardillac was the last man out, and with bowed head, pondering on what had been said to him, he wandered to the bridge, and, resting his arms on the parapet, gazed down at the water until the late darkness of a midsummer night obscured his surroundings. Hunger would have tormented him had he allowed his mind to dwell upon it, but the rankling insults of the supposedly humorous letter obliterated all thoughts of anything else. Aside from this, there was scant use of his dwelling on the theme of hunger, because there was not a coin in his pocket with which to satisfy his craving.

Darker and darker grew the summer night, and at last the bells of Notre Dame, farther up the river, tolled the hour of ten. In thirty minutes, if what Tresor had said was true, this low-born night-walker would issue from his postern door, and Cardillac wished a word or two in private with the perambulating humorist. The young man drew himself up, and turned toward the direction of the palace.

"I shall run my blade through his jocular heart," he muttered.

CHAPTER II.

THE ENCOUNTER IN THE DARK.

CARDILLAC, alertly on his guard, walked cautiously the length of the lane, and satisfied himself that no one else was lurking within its limits. He scrutinized the one door on the left-hand side that led to the palace grounds, and also examined with care the half-dozen or more entrances that communicated with the smaller houses ranged along the right hand side. The alley was not as dark as he had expected, for the numerous lights in the upper stories of the rear of the palace threw a dim radiance upon the uneven cobblestones that paved the farther side of the narrow thoroughfare, which in some measure mitigated the obscurity of that portion of the lane which ran along the foot of the palace wall.

Into the embrasure formed by one of the recessed doorways on the right-hand side Cardillac felt his way with noiseless care. Silently he tried the door itself, but found it barred or locked. He now placed his back against it, assured that if any treachery were intended the door could not be opened suddenly without his shoulders giving him some hint of the unfastening within. Stealthily he drew his sword from its scabbard, placing the latter under his left arm, holding the blade in a horizontal position ready for instant attack or defense. In the gloom of his ambush he was invisible to any passer-by, yet his eyes, now accustomed to the murk, could see the postern door dimly on the opposite side of the way. His only danger, as he fancied, was that some person with a key might attempt to enter from the lane the house at his back, and the young man smiled grimly as he thought of that person's astonishment as he met the point of a sword.

The stillness was complete: all Paris seemed to be asleep, and one by one the lights in the upper stories of the great building opposite him were going out.

He stood there rigid, scarcely venturing to breathe deeply, and in his suspense it appeared that time had stopped or else the guardians of it in the various church-steeples had forgotten to mark its passing by the ringing of their bells.

Finally, however, the half-hour struck, and promptly to the moment the postern gate opened. The watcher recognized Tresor as he stepped across the threshold, looking up and down the lane. The old man made a slight motion with one hand, and Cardillac heard him whisper: "Sir, the way is clear."

A cloaked figure stepped out into the lane.

"God be with you!" ejaculated the pious Tresor in accents of the deepest respect.

The man in the cloak made no answer to the well-wishing so fervently expressed, but, keeping close to the wall, surrounded by its shadow, he moved off in the direction from which Cardillac had entered the lane.

This impatient young man emerged from under the porch, stepped across into the shadow, and followed swiftly but cautiously. Tresor had withdrawn into the grounds of the palace; the door was closed, but the old man put his eye to the little wicket in the panel, and if Cardillac could have seen his face he must have noticed that humble and ingratiating smile with which the man of Avignon had so often illumined his unimpassioned conversation of that afternoon.

Too intent on following the movements of his quarry to care who smiled and who did not, Cardillac kept the cloak in sight. It led him through devious and deserted ways, hitherto unknown to him. The man in front was evidently determined to avoid all public thoroughfares, preferring to run the risk of encounters with dangerous marauders who might be prowling about these dark, unpopular thoroughfares. Cardillac still carried his scabbard under his arm, so that it could not clatter upon the cobblestones and give warning to the pedestrian in advance. It was evident that the latter was doing the same, or, a most unlikely supposition, was unarmed, for he traversed the deserted streets with the silence of a ghost. Seeing the way in front broaden somewhat at a place where a lamp, hanging from an ornamental wrought-iron bracket fixed to the wall, formed an oasis of light in a desert of darkness, Cardillac strode rapidly forward, and overtook the pursued directly under the lamp, which cast its rays impartially on each of them.

"Son of a corn-chandler!" he cried. "Low-born scion of an ignoble race! I would bestow a favor upon you. Although a sword in the hand of a king may confer nobility on even the vilest, yet this blade in the hands of a gentleman, when run through your body, will give you a better death than your origin deserves. Do not thank me, sir, but stand on guard!"

This speech, which Cardillac had spent the evening in composing, proved too long for the occasion. It rolled from his tongue with all the fluency of his eloquent Gascony, but his antagonist answered not a word. The stranger turned to the right-about-face with the celerity of a soldier at the word of command. His sword was in his right hand, and his sheath fell with a metallic clank upon the stones. Without a sound, he thrust forth with the venom of a viper.

The young man was taken completely by surprise. He had struck a pose, picturesque to behold had there been any onlookers—a pose well-suited to the words he employed — but to avoid that vivid thrust he was compelled to abandon this attitude with such haste that legs and scabbard became intermixed, and he fell backward just in time to escape being empaled through the breast.

Nimble as a wildcat, Cardillac scrambled to hands and knees, unhooking as he did so the scabbard from his belt and flinging it clattering behind him on the stones. Erect once more, he tore the throat fastenings from his cloak, and allowed it to drop from him; then he felt the red-hot sting of a gigantic wasp in his left arm between the shoulder and the elbow. The second onslaught of his adversary had not proved so futile as the first.

"*Ventre Saint Gris!*" cried the young man, once more springing back as the other pressed him. "You've done just what Tresor said you would."

This remark seemed to increase his enemy's fury, but Cardillac's legs were

now firmly supporting his lithe body, unencumbered with cloak or scabbard, and the third angry lunge was easily parried.

"Stand back," he cried joyfully, "until I get the light in your face! I am going to reoccupy the ground I so hastily abandoned. Back, I say! Give way!" and as the other did not, he pricked him in the shoulder.

The man, who had not spoken since the encounter began, retreated a step.

"Another, if you please!" demanded Cardillac, somewhat breathlessly, but with politeness.

That which the man, with his back to the light, refused to do voluntarily, he, for the second time, did under compulsion. Another prick of the sword-point, which made him wince, caused him to take the step backward that had been required of him. Cardillac was playing with him, and seemed determined to convince his victim of the contest's hopelessness ere he brought it to a termination.

"I beg of you, sir, to favor me by taking a third step to the rear," panted the young man. "You must admit that my proposal is quite a fair one, which is to distribute the light above us into two equal shares. Your face is still covered with darkness, while mine is in plain sight. I am convinced that another retreating step will give me the equality which I lost when you treacherously set upon me after I gave you the warning to be on guard."

For the first time the defeated man spoke.

"You talk of treachery, you dog, and servant of a dog!" he gasped, and, bitter as were his words, his voice showed him to be approaching the last stages of exhaustion."

"Your language, sir, betrays your humble origin, but I will not cavil at it. The immediate point at issue between us is the third step backward. Take it, I beg of you, otherwise it is your throat you must guard, and remember that an incision there is a much more delicate operation than a touch on either shoulder."

"Stop! A parley—a parley! I wish a word with you, sir!"

"Not so," cried Cardillac. "A parley is all to my disadvantage, as well you know. The watch may interrupt us at any moment. Besides, you did me the honor to run me through the arm, and my sleeve is filled with blood. I have therefore on two counts not a moment to spare—to keep my promise to you, and run my blade through your treacherous heart."

"For the second time you speak of treachery. You are a cutthroat, or a cutpurse, which?"

"Neither, sir, but a more honorable adversary than you deserve. I implore you, sir, to compliment me by defending yourself with greater skill than you are doing. You seem determined to put upon me the taint of assassin that hangs over you. You are as helpless, sir, as if you were unarmed. I do not wish to kill you as you killed Concini."

As he spoke, the other's sword dropped ringing to the cobblestones. The man spread out his empty arms.

"I do not understand your language, sir, but finish your work as quickly as you please, and get back for your hire. Allow me one offer, however, that may reach your covetous or necessitous soul. I will take your own word for the amount, and pay you within half an hour double the sum that Luynes gives you for my murder. Furthermore, within the half-hour I shall supply you with one of the fastest horses in France. It is not yet midnight, and before daybreak you will have outdistanced all possible pursuers, and be free from the vengeance of De Luynes. Once beyond Loches, you are safe, if you take to the west.

"I do not underestimate the service I ask of you, nor the danger to which you would be committing yourself if you accept my offer, therefore double, treble, or quadruple the sum I will pay you. Of course, you make an enemy of De Luynes, that treacherous hound who dare not face his foes, but must use the musket or the blade of an assassin. But if you join the ranks of his enemies I will give you letters to D'Epernon in Loches. You must keep to the north side of the Loire, make a wide circuit around Blois, cross the river between there and Tours—for in either town De Luynes is strong—but once the river is crossed, make direct for Loches, and you are safe."

During this appeal, which was jerked

forth in detached phrases, as if the speaker's breath were well-nigh exhausted, the unarmed man stepped back two paces, and the light fell on his face. It showed Cardillac the pallid, haggard countenance of one at least fifty years of age. No disguise that a young man could have used was sufficiently subtle to simulate the expression of age, fatigue, and anxiety that met the Gascon's gaze as he stood there with sword lowered until its point touched the ground.

"There is a mistake here," he cried. "I am no assassin, nor the tool of an assassin, unless it be unconsciously. My name is De Cardillac of Gascony. Whom have I been fighting?"

"I am the Duc de Montreuil."

"But you came from the palace of De Luynes at half past ten to-night. Tresor saw you out by the postern door, and he blessed you with his benediction."

"That is true. De Luynes has done me a foul wrong. He has placed me in a position out of which I seem unable to extricate myself. My appointment with him to-night was for the purpose of making terms with him, but his conditions are such that I could not accept them. The emissary of De Luynes assured me safe conduct if I came in secret, unattended, entering and leaving by the back door. When you accosted and attacked me, I did him and you the injustice of thinking the encounter a planned assassination."

"I am not so sure that you are wrong," returned Cardillac, who had unfastened the cuff of his left sleeve, and, with a motion of the arm that caused him to grimace with pain, scattered the blood in crimson drops upon the pavement. "Tresor told me this afternoon that De Luynes would leave the postern gate alone at half past ten. He knew that the dictator had insulted me, and that I desired nothing on earth so much as to meet him sword in hand. He made this meeting inevitable by assuring me with that crafty smile of his that De Luynes would spare my life by running me through the arm. I have proved myself but a country imbecile in the hands of such a knave."

Cardillac staggered a little from weakness caused by hunger and loss of blood.

"You must come with me. It is but a step now to my house. My physician will attend to your wound."

"No, no—'tis but a scratch."

"I think," said the duke, "that my sword passed through your arm."

"It is nothing, I assure you. You merely proved yourself a rough surgeon, my lord, and your diagnosis was right. I needed a little blood-letting. 'Twill do me good. All that remains is for me to beg your pardon, and take myself off to my lodgings. I hope to make sure of M. de Luynes on the next occasion."

The nobleman thought his mind and body were beginning to wander, and that the young man was losing his grip on each.

"What are you looking for?" he asked, approaching him.

"My scabbard. I thought I had set it down here somewhere."

"'Tis there behind you, also your cloak."

The duke picked up his own discarded sword, and watched the young fellow narrowly, proffering no assistance. He was evidently still far from sure of him.

Cardillac attempted to secure his scabbard, but, stooping, fell forward on one knee.

With a slight laugh, he made the pretense that this attitude was intended, as, with uncertain hand, and a large consumption of time, he hooked the scabbard to the belt. Without getting up, he reached for his cloak, then, with a sigh, rolled over upon it and lay there.

The duke strode forward, and knelt by the side of the unconscious man. The hanging lamp shone down upon a youthful face of ghastly pallor; the parted lips were blue, the teeth clenched as if in agony, when oblivion overtook him. His lordship brought forth a small flask, but before attempting to administer the stimulant became aware of a sound that startled him.

He sprang once more to his feet, concealed the flask, and listened. Up the narrow lane came the measured tramp of men.

He turned as if to leave Cardillac to his fate — to the fate brought on by his own hot-blooded impetuosity— but marching men were coming down from the other end of the lane also, the two parties converging upon him. There flashed upon the nobleman's mind the king's recent edict against duels.

"Mille diables! Trapped, as I am a sinner!" muttered the duke. "Luynes has laid his plans well. If one treachery failed, the next was to succeed."

He wiped his red blade on the fallen man's cloak, thrust the sword into its sheath, and stood there awaiting the meeting of the two companies.

"I arrest you in the king's name!" cried the approaching officer. "Attempt no resistance!"

There were a dozen uniformed men in each squad. They came to a simultaneous halt, leaving between them a lamp-lit square of cobbled pavement, in the center of which one man lay prone and bleeding, while the other stood beside him.

(To be continued.)

THE OTHER FELLOW.

BY F. IRVING-FLETCHER.

A SHORT STORY.

"EXTREMELY pretty girl!" and MacMaster, across half the length of the dining-room, leveled his soft gray eyes at her again. She caught his glance and turned her face sharply away.

"The middle-aged lady with her must be a maiden aunt," he conjectured. "The tilted chair for some one—young or middle-aged—late in keeping his appointment.

"Really, now," he said to himself, recovering from her look of rebuke, "I've never seen a girl to equal you, whoever you are! Never! in all my born days!"

"Pardon sir—" It was the waiter speaking.

MacMaster came to earth, paid his bill, and strolled out.

"Five hundred women I do not wish to know, and do. One I would like to know, and can't."

In such genial, expansive humor, superinduced by a good dinner, MacMaster picked his way through the congested hotel corridors, and passed into the street. A clock struck eight as he turned into the avenue and commenced to walk leisurely up-town.

He was enjoying a fine cigar, had his left hand pushed jauntily in his coat-pocket, while his right clicked a cane on the asphalt irregularly. A number of fashionable folk knew him under the electric lamps for MacMaster. Every now and then he acknowledged a bow or exchanged a greeting, and at least once every two minutes some man would insist on shaking his hand and whispering: "I hear you've made a great killing, old man," or, "Why didn't you put a chap next?" All which MacMaster pooh-poohed in reply.

What a lot of people knew him, to be sure! What a lot of people do know one, when one makes a "killing." It was converting him into a philosopher. A week ago he could not have borrowed his club dues. Now he was besieged on every hand by friends, who overwhelmed him with cordiality, and knew, every blessed one of them, that he would "make good" in the end. Still, MacMaster, who had pyramided Union and miraculously gone short at the top figure, clearing more than two hundred thousand dollars on the operation, fell to wondering what his reception would be if his calculations on the long side, and another man's on the short side, had not rimed with the ticker. Friendship would not have availed him much in such a contingency, of course, but would it have lasted through it? It was not comforting to speculate about that. It is a rare thing for friendship to measure the same in any extreme, he reflected, and here his reasoning ceased coincident with another dig in the ribs, and a "How

d'you do, old man! Goodness, but aren't you the original *Foxy Quiller!*"

Everybody he ever knew seemed to be taking the air to-night. It was a charming evening, after an unusually humid day, that had been thunder-showered into cool and bracing submission at five, and made ready and dry under foot for strollers at six. Hansoms flashed up and down and across, and the glaring wash of lights flooded the avenue at every few yards.

To MacMaster the world was very amusing just now. When one has money one has time to be amused. A little while ago and what now amused him would have been a bore. The life and activity, the gay, inconsequential chatter, the lights, the laughter, the mad, merry bustle of this after-dinner time would have made him envious, perhaps, but not happy.

At Fifty-Ninth Street he turned back. A fellow clubman passed him, escorting a good-looking girl. It occurred to MacMaster that she was not as handsome as the girl he had seen scarcely an hour before. *His* girl wasn't merely good-looking; she wasn't even pretty or theatrically stunning; he decided that she was approximately perfect. Yes, he rather liked the girl he had seen at dinner. He suspected, perhaps, that she had something of the oneness for him which a particular girl is supposed to have for a particular fellow. Some real chestnut hair would make a better setting for his apartment than all those pen-and-ink conceptions, with puckered mouths and *retroussé* noses that looked reproachfully down on him from his bachelor walls. It was a pleasant fancy.

It was half past nine when he entered his club, where he met Beebee and Van Cortlandt, and Moreton, and others. They gathered round him like so many flies round a sugar-bowl, and showered on him vigorous congratulations, well sprinkled with expletive emphasis. When, finally, he was able to get away, he stole into the reading-room, in search of one of those delightfully roomy chairs, whose soft, capacious depths would seem to have been especially designed for retiring dispositions. Such a disposition was not usually his, but, somehow, to-night he sought such a chair and pushed it up close to the window, the better to see the life and movement on the avenue outside, the better to insure his aloofness within.

Several men had turned involuntarily at his entrance, as if to speak, but he had given them no encouragement, brushing past with an abrupt "Good evening," and the faintest suggestion of a smile. He told himself he was very tired of it all, as he snuggled still farther into his chair, and threw his legs over one of the arms. Delightful thing about those chairs—no matter at what angle you sat, they were comfortable, and every change of position proved to be more comfortable.

Two hundred thousand dollars! That was what it represented to him, this spectacular rise and fall in a railroad stock. Only it wasn't judgment, nor shrewdness. What won't people ascribe to a man who hits it right at hazard? Judgment! Shrewdness! *Balderdash!!* He knew better than that. (Oh, how he longed to sleep for just a little while!) He knew it was not judgment, nor shrewdness, nor anything like either of them. It had been luck in the first place—sheer gamester's luck. Months ago a treacherous market had beached him high and dry, and when he started in to pyramid Union with a bare few thousand dollars, he knew that a few points' recession, as he builded, would wipe out everything. And he shuddered to think how near that had been when, with a hundred thousand-dollar profit, he broke faith with himself and remained in the market.

Nor was it shrewdness that made him turn bear just before the slump came—not shrewdness, indeed, but a timely word from the master of the situation, a casual over-coffee pointer of ten words: "Sell at the opening, Mac, and cover twenty points below." So he had sold his holdings and gone short heavily and shared the spoils of a bull panic. (Now he was off.) Two hundred thousand dollars. Tidy, very tidy! (Would he never go to sleep?) But two hundred thousand dollars' profit meant a loss somewhere. Some one had suffered. There was the Other Fellow, of course. There always is.

It is the irony of stock speculation that some one inevitably pays. But what had

he to do with the Other Fellow? Had he, too, not played the losing rôle? Still, the thought was insistent, and in his drowsiness he fancied he saw the wraith of the Other Fellow come to torment him in his dreams. Two hundred thousand dollars—*and what a wonderful girl that was!*

An attendant, tiptoeing near, switched off the light just behind MacMaster, who was asleep.

II.

ELEVEN o'clock was well past when he woke. Something had wakened him, something that presently came through the partly open window again to prevent him finishing a horrible dream-drama of a stock panic in which he and the Other Fellow reversed positions. Ugh! it was unpleasant to think that some poor devils had gone deeper than mere dreaming. Again the sound through the open window. He got up and rubbed his eyes, but could not quite make out the figures in altercation outside.

"Say, youse, git up if yer going ter!"

It sounded inhuman and compassionless enough to be a policeman's voice. MacMaster dashed out.

There were a dozen men round now, and MacMaster pushed his nose in curiously. It was something a trifle more pathetic than a fight.

"Well, I guess it's the patrol for yours!" and No. 057 straightened pompously.

"Don't do it, officer. I'm a gen'leman. Once a gen'leman, you know, always a gen'leman!" and the crowd, all but MacMaster, thought it a joke.

The man looked like a gentleman, in spite of his condition, though his features were seamed with lines of dissipation.

The officer remarked: "Ain't his first offense, looks like to me," and proceeded to investigate a packet of letters, which he had taken from the man's pocket.

"Find anything?" MacMaster stooped quickly to pick up something white, which No. 057 had dropped. He read it curiously and turned pale. *The Other Fellow!*

"I've got it, officer, and if you don't mind, I'll look after him."

No. 057 replaced the letters, and then looked hard at MacMaster. He had no objections, but guessed the job was "tougher'n might be imagined." A hansom was hailed and the man lifted heavily into it. MacMaster gave the cabby instructions where to drive, and himself climbed in beside his charge.

At the touch of the whip, the jaded horse pitched dutifully into his stride, the drowsing panorama of the gleaming avenue thinning to an occasional white shirt-front or a calcium headlight, as the deserted forties rolled gradually behind. Here and there a lighted window, flooding a few feet of frontage, discovered a convivial clubman sauntering leisurely homeward, or within the reflected radius of a lamp an officer twirling his night-stick.

For a brief space, forgetful of the sleeping man at his elbow, the murmuring silence of it all fell on MacMaster's spirit like a hush. Yet, in his heart was something of hatred and disgust for that Janus-like fatality which never smiles but it frowns, which never makes but it unmakes, never builds but it wrecks, which ruins one man that it may prosper another. And he remembered with a sting of shame how miserably human that two hundred thousand had made him.

Twenty minutes farther up-town they pulled up at a select apartment-house, facing the park. MacMaster's companion was asleep and not susceptible to words or prodding until after several minutes of both, when he opened his eyes, and then opened them a shade wider, in the semiconsciousness of a man who realizes at once the shame of his predicament and the futility of trying to do anything. Only his splendid strength of arm and shoulder enabled MacMaster to pilot the man safely to the elevator and out of it. He had hardly bargained for this, but felt that he must see the thing through. He would have left him at the door, but for the man's sudden relapse into helplessness.

In answer to MacMaster's ring, the door opened, and a maid retreated quickly, to which he attached some significance. This, then, was not an unusual occurrence. A second later, a refined young woman faced the two men, with flushed and questioning face.

Still retaining his hold on the arm of the man at his side, MacMaster began to

stammer a confused excuse for his appearance. Fortunately, at this juncture, the cause of the whole miserable affair struggled free and staggered gropingly to his room. Hat in hand, MacMaster turned to go, then stopped, the light of discovery in his eyes.

Before him was the same wistful, questioning face. Some resentment was there, too. But it was not its expression that made him pause. As he would have gone, she had come out of the shadow and into the light, and MacMaster's eyes were startled into recognition of the girl who had rebuked him at dinner that evening.

For her, the discovery had come earlier—when first she had seen him, in fact — and something in her eyes now told him that she remembered, and the flush of shame and regret burned in his cheeks. It was only a momentary resurrection, however, that immediately gave way to a suspicion of resentment in her, and apprehension in him. It was evident that she did not understand.

"I'm afraid, madam," he said, "there is some mistake."

"Oh! I suppose Mr. Marbury alone is to blame, but—"

He knew now, from the reproach in her voice, that she did not understand.

"I do not know Mr. Marbury," he assured her.

The card he handed her she took mechanically, her mind working rapidly, yet unsuccessfully, for a solution. Then, realizing her mistake, she commanded rather than invited him into the dining-room. He would not sit down.

"I think that instead of hating and despising you, as I wanted to," she said, her head bent in mortification, "I owe you thanks, Mr. MacMaster. Mr. Marbury was to have met my aunt and me for dinner and taken us to a theater afterward, and I wanted to blame you just now. I am grateful to you," she added, her head still averted.

"Nothing, madam, I assure you. It might have been much worse!"

Something in the way he said it, or perhaps in the look that accompanied it, caused her to look up, a deeper questioning in her eyes.

"You—you *know,* then?"

She had inferred quite a different meaning to that which he had meant to imply, and it required the brief narration of that evening's experience to explain how he had learned that her husband had been caught in the panic.

"I, myself, was a little more fortunate," he added, "and what I did tonight was merely a matter of sentiment as a result of that. Nothing, I assure you."

"I am sure I am very grateful to you," she repeated.

"If I could possibly—"

"Oh, no, thank you very much!" she answered quickly, intuitively arresting what she knew must have hurt her pride, and MacMaster understood.

As he passed out, she gave him a scarcely audible "Good night," and he was glad to have been spared a profusion of thanks, which spoil half the little kindnesses men do. And was it not enough that he had done this much for her?

III.

OUTSIDE again, he decided not to return to the club, and instructed the cabby to take him home. There he spent the only really sleepless night of his life. Financial worries had often kept him awake of late, but this night it was something that affected the heart and not the pocket that kept him awake till daylight, and threatened to worry him indefinitely.

At nine he entered his club for breakfast. Over his first cup of coffee he glanced at a morning paper, and, although the shock of a piece of gruesome news there momentarily unnerved him, he continued to read just as if it were quite in conformity with the little chapter of events that had lately overtaken him.

Alongside the graphic account of a stock-market panic ran a familiar story:

BANK CASHIER A SUICIDE.

Wyllis Marbury, cashier of the Eclectic Trust Company, Fifth Avenue branch, committed suicide early this morning at his home, in the Aeneid Apartments, Central Park West, by cutting the arteries of both wrists. Mr. Marbury, who usually took his breakfast about half past seven, failed to appear this morning, and his wife, fearing he had overslept himself, went to his room to waken him. She called him by name, but

receiving no answer, opened the door and found her husband, bleeding profusely from both wrists, at the point of death. He was unconscious and apparently within but a few minutes of the end. A doctor was hastily summoned, who, in turn, sent in a hurry call for the ambulance, which rushed the dying man to a hospital, where he died half an hour later.

Mr. Marbury had been cashier of the Eclectic Trust Company nearly four years, and the reason assigned for his act is that he suffered in the recent stock panic. He leaves a young widow, who is the daughter of a well-to-do Denver family, and a very attractive woman. The marriage, which was bitterly opposed by the bride's parents, and which proved to be a very unhappy one, took place two years ago. There are no children.

MacMaster pushed his coffee away in favor of a cigar. Last night's experience and this had been a little too much for him. Except for a fortune lost and made again, MacMaster's thirty years had been colored with little of anything outside the routine of an easy-going existence. Prone to follow the lines of least resistance, he had found the world tolerable enough, and its problems easy of solution. The way of his life had been smooth, and the rough places few and far apart. And the manifold worries that lie in the path of even an ordinary mortal had never touched him.

His exploit of the previous evening was a departure that must ultimately have made him apprehensive for his sanity, but for the coincidence of that meeting. Some vestige of romance remaining to him he felt that that had been providential, though to what end he did not know. None, as yet, of course, but he knew as a man does know at least once in his lifetime, that this sentiment of his was not the infatuation of an hour, but an acquisition of the heart that would matter always. Nor did he feel any shame in indulging it. Perhaps he considered this little tragedy, in detail at his elbow, excuse enough, if one were needed, and he regretted deeply, of course, the pathetic, sordid side of the miserable business, but he was concerned just now about the woman—the girl.

A faculty, suddenly developed, for putting two and two together, made him linger unusually long over his cigar. What if the evening papers should have a blacker chapter? It had happened before. It was, in fact, a not uncommon sequel where a bank cashier was concerned. The speculation was not a pleasant one, but he could not help conning it over in his mind as a probability.

However, when he left the club a few minutes later he resolved to forget the matter. It was none of his business, and there was a limit even to generous impulses. But his walk down the avenue showed him clearly that he could not put Mrs. Marbury out of his mind, and so, because it concerned her, he found himself resuming the speculative train of thought which he had just left off. Why, if such a thing proved to be true on investigation, should he hesitate to hush it up and spare the woman? He could well afford it, if it were this side ten thousand. There might be no occasion for such a step, of course, but at least he could be sure on the point. In any event, she would never know, and was he not under a sort of moral financial obligation to the Other Fellow?

Mechanically he crossed the road and entered the Eclectic Trust Building. It was just ten. He wanted to see the president. Yes, it was urgent. He told himself that he must do this thing at once, or he would change his mind and regret it later. He reflected that, if he should magnanimously hush up a shortage, ultimately he would probably regret that, too; but, after all, it would be a consoling regret and not one of self-reproach. The tension of indecision was over.

Just one hour later, the check certification completed, he walked out of the Eclectic Trust Building. He had paid seven thousand dollars to silence a dead man's crime, and, incidentally, to spare a woman the humiliation of her husband's shame.

"For the sake of the Other Fellow!" he told himself sadly. "For one of him—poor beggar!"

But it wasn't for the Other Fellow. MacMaster knew that.

IV.

Two years passed. Two years of such vicissitudes for MacMaster as he had not known during the whole of thirty years before. It had been his resolve, after his successful *coup* in the stock market,

to devote his time to some less precarious pursuit than following the variations of the ticker, but having broken faith with himself once, he much more easily reversed a self-imposed decision now. So, he had gone back, lured by a fascination as irresistible as that which attracts the murderer back to the scene of his crime.

And this time every tide ran counter to him, until he was reduced to that extremity where only physical ability to fight remained to him—and the will to fight is no good without the motive power of money down there on the Street. His biggest venture prospered for a few months, and it really seemed as if his fondest hopes would blossom into a high credit rating, but after a brief and unfortunate career, the firm of MacMaster & Melvin, stock-brokers, went to the wall for a million, and MacMaster's personal fortune was caught in the wreckage.

The junior partner, who was the floor man, had over-speculated for the house, which would not have mattered if his judgment had been right. When it was all over, MacMaster realized for the second time in his life what a three-thousand-dollar isolation means. Only this second experience was vastly different. On that former occasion, a sudden rebound of fortune had lifted him to his lost altitude again, and his transition from one extreme of fortune to the other had been as refreshingly brief as a cold plunge followed by a rub-down. His present immersion, however, was a lasting one, and the figurative consolation of a towel a meager prospect.

Nor was the time ripe for a repetition of that pyramiding exploit which had once served him so well. In any case, his nerve was gone, and so the fatality of chance must be against him. He had, too, to live down the stigma of having suspended after being but a few months in business, and the strain of this calamity had made him indifferent and resigned to the futility of effort. Human failure may be the spring-board of human success, but some failures are as quicksand, and afford so insecure a footing that no man can leap therefrom to safety. Such was MacMaster's predicament one brief year after his meteoric success in a stock deal.

For a month or two after this, stunned by the suddenness of his losses, and without aim or hope, he remained impotently inactive—a piece of human flotsam at the mercy of any tide. It was only the realization of the ignominious prospect ahead that finally roused him from his lethargy and revivified his spent energies. Only the fear of a crowning humiliation stimulated his indifferent efforts.

He must do something, and at once. Having an extended acquaintance—inevitably some degree less cordial than heretofore—he calculated that he could build up a comfortable connection with bond-buyers and he found little difficulty in securing promises of support. But it was a hard road. Times were unsteady, confidence impaired, and money not to be got out of some people with a derrick. Still, he paid office rent and made a living. It was the hardening process, and perhaps the result would be finely tempered human steel.

This condition obtained in the affairs of MacMaster at the time of a visit from Mrs. Marbury. Late one afternoon, in his office, a hen-coop affair, twenty times removed from a hen-coop's customary location—late one afternoon he was thinking, as he usually did once every twenty-four hours, of Mrs. Marbury, thereby proving presently a popular truism. Perhaps, too, he may have given a passing thought to the seven thousand dollars his sentiment for her had cost him, though he had never regretted it. It is human to remember the good we have done when fortune forsakes us, and, after all, it was a pleasing reflection, this, if a sad one: That seven thousand dollars had been so little to him once that he had given it away to satisfy a sentiment. Ah! but the sentiment had lasted and been a solace often. Goodness! but what a goodly thing life had been two short years ago, and what a wretched travesty on happiness to-day.

It was four o'clock. The office-boy said "Good night," and slammed out, and MacMaster began to pull at one more contemplative pipeful before going home. A rainstorm was on, and gradually his spirit took on the grayness of the window view. He was tired of this grueling struggle, this ceaseless fight for a bed and a meal. Wearied a thou-

sand times more terribly by the memory of a contrast. Hating to go home to four blue-papered walls and a pair of bilious curtains! To a boarding-house supper of nondescript dishes where ice-water and bread alone are plentiful—where the salt crawls out of the castor a grain at a time and the pepper tumbles out in a heap.

His pipe went out, and he lighted it again. It was quite dark.

"What a finish!" he reflected, and pricked up his ears.

Some one had entered. He thought at first it might be Begbie—Philip Avery Begbie, the night-school law graduate, who kept his wife and the baby and his wife's mother on practically nothing a year, and who, for downright optimism, had *Micawber* strung to the yardarm—but it wasn't. It was a woman.

V.

MACMASTER'S hand reached over and turned on a tiny electric bulb which, suspended from the ceiling, was conveniently regulated by trifling ingenuity and a piece of string so as to hang over the curtain of his desk. Then he got up.

"Mr. MacMaster, I presume?" she asked, and took the chair which he placed for her at the side of his desk.

At first he had not known her, but when the light fell on her face, he started with pleasurable surprise, and hoped it was not too late to shake hands, and how glad he was the rain had kept him at the office unusually late, and was she quite sure that she had not got wet?

Then he, too, sat down, and covertly looked at her with genuine admiration in his eyes, and wondered whether this brief respite from a life that was all rain and gray skies could really be true.

She was just a trifle older. The impress was there of what she had passed through. Her transition from girlhood to womanhood was complete. Yet, if anything, MacMaster thought she was even more beautiful than he remembered. Seeing her as closely as this, surely no man could forget those wonderful eyes of hers. Her hair was as soft in hue as sylvan shadows, and she had a complexion like a bisque doll.

"There is a little matter I wish to speak to you about, Mr. MacMaster," she said, at last, not looking up. "You remember that?"

He held in his hand a second time the memorandum bearing the imprint of a stock-exchange house, which would have refreshed his memory of a pathetic episode, if he had ever forgotten it. It was addressed to Guy Marbury, and very brief:

"Your 500 Union were closed out to-day, your promised check for additional margins having failed to reach us.

He handed it back to her without comment.

"Mr. MacMaster," she said, looking at him very intently, "when that awful thing happened, I went home—to Denver, where I lingered between life and death for more than a year as a result of a nervous breakdown. Then, while I was convalescing, I made a discovery which, in my weakened condition, threatened to kill me. I found letters from my husband's brokers acknowledging in all twelve thousand dollars, and I know he never could have lost that amount."

She seemed to have expected an exclamation of surprise at this, but MacMaster was silent. He was wondering where the relevancy of all this came in, unless, in an inexplicable way, she had learned something. He was beginning to fear for the secrecy of his part in the affair. What could Marbury have been thinking about to keep such damning evidence?

"I cannot rest till I find out about this," she said. "Can you help me?"

"I?" he repeated in genuine surprise. "What on earth could have put such an idea into your head, Mrs. Marbury?"

"Oh, you never can tell why a woman guesses some things, and it's equally impossible to explain how she guesses right nine times out of ten. I saw the president of the Eclectic to-day, who would commit himself no further than to say that Mr. Marbury's affairs had been satisfactory. Just enough, you see, to make me doubt it. Instinctively, I know there is something wrong somewhere, and I know that Mr. Marbury had no friend whose regard would run to that amount. Mr. MacMaster," she continued, her gloved hand on the desk-shelf, "I cannot explain my conviction that you know something about this mat-

ter no more than I can rid myself of the conviction that you do. At any rate, there can be no harm in my asking."

Just behind the inkwells was a receipt, signed by the president of the Eclectic Trust Company, for seven thousand dollars. He had fished it out from an old file an hour before, for the mere exhilaration of seeing this evidence of his lost prosperity.

"I fail to see," he answered evasively, and as though there had been no lapse in which each had tried, mentally, to probe the other's thoughts—"I fail to see the use of it. Seven thousand dollars is a lot of money—begging your pardon," he added quickly, fearing he had inadvertently said too much.

"Not now," she replied. "I have inherited a deal of money recently, which urges me more particularly to get at the bottom of this matter."

MacMaster's face was an inscrutable blank, but his brain was busy. The struggle within—the fight for that seven thousand dollars was on.

What, after all, was the honor of a dead man compared with the necessity of a living one? And had he not done enough? Had he not mercifully spared the woman at a crisis when it was most urgent that she should be spared? What longer need for the maintenance of secrecy now? The good had been done then—permanent good so far as the man was concerned, and the disclosure could not hurt the woman now. She even suspected the truth—knew it, in fact, and far from being dismayed by it, was anxious to have her suspicions conclusively confirmed or disproved.

She had, too, the means to pay without inconvenience to herself, and surely the restitution of money that was really his, could not diminish the good it had done nor detract from the spirit in which it had been given. Might he not, indeed, interpret this opportunity as in itself sufficient justification for claiming what justly belonged to him? He had not sought it. It had come to him in his hour of need.

The other half of his reasoning is not written here. It found expression in his decision. He could break faith with himself, but not where a woman was concerned.

"Mrs. Marbury," he said in tones that implied it was shock that had delayed his answer, "do you realize the gravity of what you are trying to do? You are trying to prove that your husband was—my dear Mrs. Marbury, I would really forget this matter, if I were you," he concluded.

"But—"

He had pulled out the other desk-shelf and rested his arms on it.

"Candidly, Mrs. Marbury, no. I am gratified that you can think such a thing of me, but I have done nothing to deserve it."

He was thankful at that moment for a chance to get away from the scrutiny of her unconviction. Begbie was at the door.

"Oh, busy? 'Scuse me," said Begbie.

"No, wait a second, Beg!" shouted MacMaster, and excused himself to his visitor, after insisting that she take his chair to escape the draft.

After a few minutes' conversation with Begbie the other side of the door, he returned.

"An old friend, Mrs. Marbury, who is eternally offering me the simple entertainment of home-cooking! A comrade in dis—"

He cut the word in half and watched to see if it was too late. It was. All that she had merely seen before, she now noticed at a glance—a cheap roll-top, a couple of chairs, a batch of bond statistics on a table too rickety to play cards on, and no ornamentation whatever except for a pretty *Rosalind* presiding over a Shakespeare calendar on the wall.

Not until now had she noticed the absence of a carpet on the floor; not until this moment—when the unhappy relief of a discovery on her part and a slip of the tongue on his claimed her admiration for the one and her sympathy for the other—had she noticed the absence of anything. So this was what he had come to, this man whose phenomenal haul in the stock market two years ago had made gossip for Manhattan and copy for the newspapers!

"You were saying, Mr. MacMaster," she prompted, affecting not to observe his confusion.

"Ah, yes," he answered. "To revert to that—er—unpleasant topic, I think I

have a solution, Mrs. Marbury. Quite probable that he may have operated two accounts. Often done, you know, and perhaps the other one was more profitable. Very likely solution, and you really must let the matter end there."

But she *knew* the solution now, and listening to these evasions and untruths, she cudgelled her brain for another solution. And gradually the memory of his attempted flirtation with her long ago, the tragic coincidence of their first meeting, her accidental discovery just now of something she had half suspected, and MacMaster's generous silence, even in his hour of need, all these surely indicated one of two things—it was either a piece of incomprehensible quixotism, or else, perhaps something which she was more than ready to believe and might not be unwilling to return.

Recovering quickly from her momentary abstraction, she got up.

"Then you really know nothing about it?"

"Candidly, Mrs. Marbury, no."

"On your honor, Mr. MacMaster?"

MacMaster stood up to his full height, and perjured himself admirably.

"As a gentleman, Mrs. Marbury."

She looked unconvinced, but pressed him no farther.

"I'm afraid," he continued, imperiling the fragile constitution of the little green baize folding-table by leaning upon it, "that you'll have to let the matter drop."

"I'm afraid so," she agreed, and then, impulsively, either from admiration, or swayed by that indefinable something which is as ancient as the world, "and thank you, so much!"

"I've done nothing to deserve thanks, Mrs. Marbury. It is I who am grateful to you for this visit. This is history, you know, for a lone bachelor like me!"

"Oh, well, it's been equally pleasant for me, Mr. MacMaster," she replied, looking beyond him. "You bachelors fancy you're the only lonely people, you know!"

MacMaster smiled.

"So?" he asked.

Perhaps Mrs. Marbury regretted that confession of hers, because, between a man and a woman, loneliness, according to all the rules of the game, should be man's plaint exclusively—at least, in the initial stages. Still, she had evidence enough of MacMaster's magnanimity to feel sure that he would not misunderstand her now, and then, after all, she did not much care which way he might take it, because she *was* lonely, horribly lonely—and lonelier far for knowing MacMaster. Besides, that woman is a tactician who abandons her first line of defense. How else is a man to know that his assiduities are not unwelcome?

Something of all this must have communicated itself to MacMaster, for where there is an affinity of sentiment, the mind is more receptive to telepathic influence. An irresistible impulse now made him walk round the table to within a few feet of where Mrs. Marbury stood.

"My dear Mrs. Marbury," he said, and then, all that he had rapidly rehearsed in the first flush of hope rushed in upon him with such bewildering impetuosity that he could not for the life of him go on. Only the faintest suggestion of a smile from this splendid creature before him ever could have restored him to remembering.

"My dear Mrs. Marbury," he said, once more breaking through that immortal hiatus, and this time required no prompting, "I suppose it is only consistent with the tragic coincidence which first threw us together, that I should once again transcend the ordinary by losing my head."

Quite a famous period for him, he thought, but his words took on a stern simplicity after this, for sincerity rarely rounds its periods.

"You surely must have divined something from my confusion, Mrs. Marbury. Do you know, that during the past two years I have learned to grow very fond of a little woman who, ages and ages ago, rebuked me for a flirt!"

Esmé Marbury's piquant head was averted, and she was tracing with her dainty foot pothooks where the carpet ought to have been, but there was no sign of resentment in her face—only the suffusion of a glad surprise.

"Go on, Mr. MacMaster," she said.

"Oh! this is that moment of my life that most men have," he resumed, carrying off his embarrassment tolerably well, "when I want to be impassioned, and

can only be colorless and trite. But if I thought that you believed, as I do, that it is something more than mere chance that has brought us a second time together, I would not hesitate—"

"Please don't, *Mister* MacMaster!" she laughed lightly, with playful emphasis on the prefix.

"Dearest of all women!" he exclaimed, taking her two hands suddenly in his.

"But you did not finish what you were saying," she faltered somewhere in his coat.

He was silent a moment, then he said:

"Inasmuch as I love you, Esmé, I never shall—I shall tell it to you always!"

THE LADY OF THE ECCENTRIC SPELLING.

BY REBECCA LANE HOOPER.

A SHORT STORY.

ARCHIBALD HILTON HOWARD looked like a somewhat dissipated matinée idol, but he was only a mild lady-killer, who danced faithfully at buds' balls. He was interesting to behold—even his enemies admitted that. His mouth was "adorable"—at least, all the buds said so. In repose it looked as if it would say something a wee bit shocking the next time it opened. Alas! it only indulged in commonplace ravings over some fair one's attractions.

There was a monotonous sameness to the ravings themselves, but the objects changed often enough to suit the most fastidious. Archibald was always engrossed with some specific heart interest, and although no glittering generality can cover all cases, his attitude toward women can best be illustrated by an entirely unsupposable case. If a cat, having fascinated a bird, should, instead of killing and eating the bird, give it a friendly pat and say, "There, there, we've had our fun, my dear; now, run and play"—it would typify Archibald's attitude toward girls. It sounds harmless; but it wasn't, because the bird, once fascinated, had far rather be eaten than dismissed.

Archibald's general method of fascination was this: At the precise instant when everybody had given up expecting him to appear at a given function, he stood framed in its doorway for one correct moment. Vivid and insistent was his glance, as he picked out a new victim, and she, no matter who she was, gazed into his eyes for an eternal instant. Authorities are quoted as saying that this instant was the most remarkable in the whole acquaintance; that neither could again live up to its soul-stirring magnetism. The moment passed, the two apparently forgot each other; but well they knew that when Archibald had gossiped meditatively with his hostess, and displayed a suspiciously general interest in his fellow women, they would be introduced in what would seem a natural, but which was a fatal manner.

This introduction over, they retired without parley to a cozy corner, artfully arranged to look unstudied by the scientific hostess, and from this nook vibrations of interest could be felt all over the room. After half an hour's conversation, properly punctuated by breathless pauses and intoxicated silences, both would rise with flushed faces, and Archibald would rush out to write—oh, the deliciousness of it every single time!—the first letter. Then, almost before the

ink was dry on the first letter, occurred the first call, and in between all the telephoning, there was motoring, lunching, theater and opera going; enough events to last an ordinary pair two years at least. Finally, having begun their acquaintance at the wrong end, they would quietly simmer down to being bored with each other. If she was a society girl, the affair took longer than if she was artistic or musical, for in the latter case she was more intense, and all would be over in a week.

One day, as Jim Beardesley entered a Subway train, he saw Archibald riding forward in the corner of one of the coveted seats that go crossways of the train. Archibald always had the best, Jim reflected, as he surveyed him with an anticipatory grin. Outwardly, he disapproved of Archibald, but inwardly he gloried in him. He loved to be shocked by Archibald, and drew him out with this end in view. For instance, when properly goaded by Jim, Archibald would remark:

"Now, Jim, what's the harm in my kissing Edna in the conservatory? She likes it, and that's what conservatories are for. Besides, I rarely kiss a girl I'm not interested in."

Kiss a girl! Kiss a girl! Jim had never dared kiss a girl. Jim put his girl on a pedestal, and it is too bad, but true, that most girls hate pedestals; and while the men kneeling before them are blindly worshiping, they go off with some less worthy, but more ardent lover.

This particular day Archibald was eagerly devouring some very large dark-blue handwriting on some very small light-blue note-paper. Moved by Jim's hungry glances, Archibald paused, and threw him some verbal crumbs.

"This time, Jim, her name is Eleanor. You know I get round to an Eleanor about once in so often. I wish you could see her eyes. Great big, brown, melting, soulful eyes—limpid and liquid, with ineffable shadows in 'em. Why, I could look at those eyes for—for two days. I am more than daffy on her handwriting. I can't show you any of it, but you can see by glancing at this page hastily how it slants all sorts of ways, as if she were so excited she couldn't write straight. But her spelling is her greatest charm. She spells the simplest words in the hardest and most delightful way."

"The reform spelling that Messrs. Roosevelt, Carnegie, and Brander Matthews tried to foist upon us?" inquired Jim.

"Nothing so obvious as the Teddy-Andy-Brandy variety," replied Archibald, as he pointed out the word "fiew," with his two carefully manicured thumbs over the words that came after and before. "Few," he explained.

"I call that plain illiteracy," said Jim, irritated at being kept in the hall, as it were, by Archibald's thumbs.

"Illiteracy? Not at all. It is eccentricity, originality, individuality, personality." As he hurled each noun at Jim, Archibald dug his fist in Jim's knee, and in the effort to make himself heard above the Subway roar, the veins in his forehead stood out as if he were leading the cheering at a college ball game.

"Eccentricity! Originality! Individuality! Personality!"

"Yes, it was just exactly like a Breck-a-co-ex yell, and, like Minerva from the brow of Jupiter, revolt tremendous sprang up full grown in the quiet bosom of Jim Beardesley. What right had Archibald to have so much money, and so many, many girls? Jim had money, but he had not inherited it, and he knew its value. He had no girls, and he thought he knew their value, too.

He longed to take his lucky friend and roll him across the street—it was slushy up-stairs on Broadway—and pound him and whack him and put him all wet in a damp, hideous room, with steel engravings of important looking people nobody had ever heard of on the walls, and cane-seat chairs, and a Brussels carpet from which everything had been worn but the last threads. He wanted to shove him his meals through the window, meals that should consist of pale, tired apple-pie, cold mutton, and boiled tea. In short, he hated Archibald, as we can only hate those whom we dearly love. He would strategize, and get even with Fate, in the shape of Archibald.

"Come to my rooms and dine with me," he said.

"Can't," said Archibald. "Dining with the Hyslops. They have a niece

visiting there, who, from all accounts, must be the belle of Buffalo." A predatory gleam lit up Archibald's eye.

"But I've got something at home I want you to see."

"No — confound it — what do you mean?"

"Call off that dinner date and come along and find out," said Jim, trying to look rakish. He tipped his hat at a slight angle and gazed at Archibald.

"Something very nice?" inquired Archibald slowly and insinuatingly.

"Far too many people think so," replied Jim grimly, trying to leer like the man he had seen on the stage last night.

II.

"WELL, I'd never have believed it of you," said Archibald delightedly. "Jimmie, Jimmie! This is the best ever. Hallo, let's get out here and telephone."

He skipped into a telephone-booth, where he was presently murmuring confidentially "pressing business engagement" into Mrs. Hyslop's disappointed ear.

"Now, come on, Jimmie boy. We'll take this taxicab. I can't wait much longer for your surprise."

Jim jumped into the automobile hansom after Archibald, who told the chauffeur not to spare his horse. They arrived almost at once at Jim's, and rode up silently in the elevator.

Just as Jim unlocked his door, his man Thomas was laying covers for one. Jim bowed gravely to Thomas, who was apparently as serene and unruffled as usual, and signed to Archibald to follow him into his bedroom. Archibald could not imagine what was going to happen. Jim switched on the light silently, and seizing Archibald by the shoulders, marched him up in front of his cheval-glass.

"What's this for?" inquired Archibald.

"That's what I brought you here to see."

"You said you were going to show me something fascinating."

"Many people think you are. But you can see for yourself how wrong they are."

Archibald made for Jim, but Jim dodged hastily behind the cheval-glass, from the other side of which he remarked:

"Archie, my boy, many women have tried to reform you in vain. Your case is one that requires a man, and that man is myself." He sauntered airily out into the other room.

"Covers for two, Thomas," he said.

Archibald followed him sulkily.

"I suppose you think your actions are amusing. They are childish in the extreme. You have made me miss a good dinner and an entirely new girl," he said vindictively.

"Thomas's dinners are as good as Mrs. Hyslop's any day, and, besides, you haven't time to go dining with everybody when you're going to be married to-morrow," said Jim, eating his favorite soup with approval.

"Are you crazy?"

"Don't interrupt. You have eaten the frosting off nearly all the cakes in the bakery. Now, you've got to eat a cake. You will marry the lady of the eccentric spelling to-morrow, or my name is not James Beardesley, Esquire. Where does she live?"

"Boston."

"And spells like that?"

"They take her spelling psychologically there. Her father wrote a book on it."

"We take the midnight train for Boston."

"Jim, are you sure you are feeling all right in your head?"

"Never better," replied Jim. He was getting even with Fate. "Have you forgotten how you cut me out with Martha Harriman five years ago, and then dropped her in a week?"

"Martha Harriman—Martha Harriman!" muttered Archibald thoughtfully. "Oh, yes, she had red hair and lived in Chicago, didn't she?"

"She had black hair—blue-black—the color of a summer night, and lived in Baltimore," said Jim, as he wrote busily on a telegraph-blank. "'Arrive Boston Friday morning. Marry me in the afternoon. Archibald Hilton Howard.' There, address it," he said, passing it over to Archibald.

Archibald smiled with irritating superiority. "Certainly, I'll address it; but do you suppose she'll marry me, you

fool? But I'm game." They sent the telegram, and then saf down to finish dinner.

"Perhaps you don't realize that this is your bachelor dinner," said Jim politely to Archibald.

"Certainly, I realize it," replied Archibald.

After dinner Jim packed his bag carefully and went with Archibald to his rooms, where Archibald packed his bag carefully, and then they drove to Forty-Second Street in great spirits and a hansom, and climbed on the midnight train in high glee.

"Why, I shall laugh for a week at this," said Archibald from the upper berth.

Jim writhed excitedly in the lower. "So shall I. But you won't feel so much like laughing to-morrow."

"You mean the laugh will be on you," murmured Archibald. "She of the queer spelling doesn't take the affair any more seriously than I, even if she does live in Boston."

III.

ELEANOR BERGEN had met Martha Harriman in London during the previous summer, and such a warm friendship ensued that a week ago Martha had left the luxurious Harriman home in Baltimore to visit Eleanor in the pompously luxurious Bergen home in Beacon Street.

That night, after a cool and windy evening at the Authors' Club, which Eleanor always attended as the heroine of her father's book on queer spelling, she and Martha had waxed confidential as they sat on the floor in their kimonos, sipping chocolate before Martha's bedroom fire.

"Yes, I was in love with a New York man, and I let a silly youth come along and break it up," sighed Martha. "You know, Eleanor, one of the fascinating kind that takes you off your feet for a week, and then lets you down so suddenly that it hurts. Have you ever known any one like that?"

"I'm not quite sure," replied Eleanor, thinking of course of Archibald. "What became of the first man, Martha?"

"Oh," said Martha, sighing some more, "he didn't really care, either, for after I had the violent affair I never saw the other man again. It was five years ago, but I'd rather stay single all my life than marry any one else. Oh, Eleanor, if I could ever live up to the way he looked at me!"

"It is terrible, this being in love," said Eleanor with a shudder.

There was a knock at the door, and the maid brought in a telegram. Eleanor's hand shook as she tore it open. She read it slowly. It fluttered to the floor. She sat with a white, drawn face.

"What is it, my dear?" asked Martha, when the tense pause had been as long as her curiosity could stand.

Eleanor spoke jerkily.

"I wrote to a man in New York day before yesterday that I'd marry him any time—half as a joke, you know—and now he's taken me seriously and wants me to marry him to-morrow."

"To-morrow! Do you love him?"

"I should think I did love him. I was serious while I was pretending not to be; but I never thought he was, not for a moment. I don't feel as if he were now, and yet—look at that." She picked up the telegram and handed it to Martha. Martha read it.

"Eleanor!" she gasped.

"What is it?"

"There can't possibly be two Archibald Hilton Howards, can there? And Archibald Howard is the very man that broke up my affair with Jim Beardesley!"

This information started the ball of conversation rolling so fast that it rolled noisily all the rest of the night, despite repeated thumpings on the wall from the room of Eleanor's papa.

The next morning at nine precisely the telephone rang.

"That's he," said Eleanor's glance to Martha.

It was indeed Archibald, who asked Eleanor if she'd lunch with him at the Standish, and said they could settle the details of the wedding during luncheon.

Eleanor replied that she would be there at one, and asked demurely if she might bring the maid of honor with her.

"Quite wifely and appropriate," replied Archibald, "because I happen to have the best man here. I'll have a table reserved for four, and let us trust

that the mushroom patties are as good as they were of yore."

"Of yore" was two weeks ago.

Dressed not in their third best, nor in their second best, but in their new and first best, two much-befluttered damsels drove up to the ladies' entrance of the Standish at a quarter after one, and went into the library, where two laughingly nervous New Yorkers awaited them.

When Mr. James Beardesley and Mr. Archibald Hilton Howard beheld one Miss Martha Harriman, the two men lost what little self-possession remained, especially Mr. James Beardesley. He forgot his mischievous errand in Boston, and, indeed, the very existence of Archibald and his affairs, as he surveyed Martha, whose hair was still the color of a summer night.

Martha, surprised as she was, found that his way of looking at her had improved with time; that it was even more satisfactory than ever; which is odd, too, considering that it had been perfection before. But then we are dealing with infinities.

Eleanor was saying mechanically to Archibald: "I never for one moment thought you were serious."

Archibald was asking: "Do you really care?"

To this question the remark, "I never for one moment thought you were serious," seemed a good reply.

In fact, the two remarks were all they could make, so they repeated them over and over again, more and more eloquently.

Martha Harriman was dimly conscious of this duet, and she thought it would do no lasting harm to break in upon it, for Jim's conversation had suddenly declined into admiring and appealing looks, which were pleasant to the point of being disconcerting.

"I thought we were asked here to luncheon, Eleanor," said Martha. "It is now nearly two o'clock."

"Most wedding breakfasts occur *after* the ceremony," said Jim, as he and Martha led the way to the dining-room.

In his excitement at seeing Martha again, Jim had forgotten his private interview with the orchestra leader, in which that worthy had been instructed to play the wedding-march as soon as Jim and his party were seated at the table in the corner. Jim made such an impression on the leader that he was even better than his word, and the moment Martha and Jim appeared in the doorway the well-known strains broke forth. Four much embarrassed and blushing people finally reached their table in the remote distance.

"Well, that was a strange coincidence, wasn't it?" said Jim, wishing the orchestra would keep their eyes on the music, and not on his table.

"It looks to me like a premeditated coincidence," said Archibald savagely. "Don't you know that Miss Bergen lives here in Boston, and that you are making her very conspicuous?"

Jim turned toward Eleanor. "Can you read ordinary spelling?" he asked respectfully.

"She reads mine," put in Archibald.

"I'd like to try her on a little of mine," observed Jim, and he wrote on the back of his card:

A. H. Howard is serious about wanting to marry you, although he doesn't look it.

Eleanor had no difficulty in reading the message or in tearing it up, and said distantly that she thought some people were interfering.

Jim looked at her with mock disapproval.

"You have disappointed me, Miss Bergen," he said. "I thought you would talk as originally and delightfully as you spell. Inasmuch as your remarks savor of the commonplace, you will pardon me if I converse entirely with Miss Harriman on my left. Of course, I do not wish to talk to her any more than she does to me; but I know you and Mr. Howard want to settle a few last points before going to the church. Meanwhile, the rest of us will lunch seriously."

That luncheon! They were not in sight of the end at half past five, and nothing had been settled; but then, what cared they for the speeding hours?

"Why should we pay any particular attention to the flight of time?" asked Jim. "Time is always flying, but we aren't always doing this."

"If anybody's going to be married to-day, some one ought to do some

hustling," said Archibald over the frozen pudding at a quarter of six. "Personally, I can't see what a maid of honor and best man are for unless to arrange details for the happy pair."

"Let's all be married and get it over, just as if it were an awful bore," said Jim, as the four of them started to walk across the Common, in the general direction of Eleanor's.

"You had to come to Boston to find out how bright you were, didn't you?" said Archibald jealously.

He had never known Jim to be so funny, and Jim hardly knew himself. He felt like an enchanted being. It was the accumulated wit of five years.

"We will purchase seats for any old show that's displaying its ancient bones in town to-night," said Jim, as he and Archibald deposited Martha and Eleanor safely in Beacon Street.

IV.

THE two girls rushed up-stairs into Martha's room and shut the door. Then they sat down, side by side and hand in hand, on the best chintz bedspread, which is never meant to be sat upon in any house.

"I simply cannot decide whether Archibald is serious or not," said Eleanor, after a long pause.

"Don't talk to me about Archibald," said Martha. "I can't think of anything but how happy I am. Oh, you dear thing. It is all your doing, asking me up here."

"What is all my doing?"

"We—he loves me—Jim does, and he has all the time, and, my dear, oh, how I love you!" rapturously embracing Eleanor. Eleanor drew away.

"Of course, I'm glad you are enjoying your visit, Martha, dear; and I congratulate you, and am happy in your happiness, and all that, but what am I to do? I love Archibald—I love him—I love him!"

"Eleanor," said Martha, "I will be unselfish and give you my unprejudiced advice, even while I am disposed to think of nothing but my own happiness. Archibald Howard is as serious now as he ever can be. Of course, he could never be as delightfully serious as Jim."

Eleanor thought Jim was the most frivolous man she had ever seen. He had treated her spelling lightly, too. She managed to keep quiet, because she wanted Martha's advice, and Martha certainly spoke with a gravity that fitted the occasion.

"If you really care for Archibald Howard, marry him without any scruples at all. He's the kind that will never fall in love until he is married. And think what you'll be saving other girls from. You'll rescue a hundred or so annually from broken hearts. You'll be doing more for your sex than any woman extant. It is your duty to become Mrs. Howard as soon as possible."

"If you think it's my duty, I'll do it," said Eleanor, delighted.

Wise Martha knew that all you had to do is to dangle the word "duty" at a Bostonian, and they do it. This is the main difference between them and the rest of the world, and is perhaps one of the serious dangers that threaten Boston.

Archibald and Jim bought seats for the theater, and then went back to the hotel to telephone Eleanor and Martha, and invite Mr. Bergen to accompany the quartet to the theater. Mr. Bergen declined, which was lucky, as they hadn't bought a seat for him. The evening's program being thus arranged, Archibald retired into one brown study, and Jim into another. When these two brown studies had been separated by a wall of blue tobacco-smoke, Archibald sauntered over and looked at himself in the mirror.

"Admiring Mr. Howard?" inquired Jim, peering curiously through the haze.

"I thought I'd like to see how I look when I'm serious," replied Archibald, gazing at himself impersonally. "I have never been serious for more than two minutes before in my life. I don't know how this happened, or just when, but it's Eleanor for me from now on, and nobody but Eleanor. I shall positively not leave this village until she says she'll marry me."

"I thought I overheard her saying it a number of times during luncheon," said Jim. "But I suppose you can't trust a person who spells like that." Jim strolled up to another mirror.

"Admiring your witty friend?" asked Archibald.

"No," said Jim. "I'm looking at the

man Martha Harriman loves." There was an unintentional quaver of emotion in his voice.

"That break in your voice can best be mended by drinking their two healths," announced Archibald.

Thus it came to pass that shortly afterward Martha Harriman, whose hair was the color of a summer night, made room on her pedestal for Jim Beardesley to climb up and marry her, and that the quondam lady-killer developed into a delightfully domestic person, who worshiped at his own hearthstone the lady famous in psychological circles for her remarkable spelling.

THE WILD GEESE.*

BY STANLEY J. WEYMAN,

Author of "The Long Night," "A Gentleman of France," "Under the Red Robe," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

COLONEL JOHN SULLIVAN returns to his home in the southwestern part of Ireland, in a ship which is a smuggler. Blown into Skull Haven, a lawless part of the coast, her cargo is seized under the captain's nose by the inhabitants, under pretext that revenue must be paid. Among the looters are members of the colonel's family. He meets his ward, Flavia McMurrough, on whose account he has come home. Neither she nor her brother has any liking for the colonel, though they have to receive him. Flavia's favorite mare is stolen from her brother. The colonel promises to recover it, if they restore his cargo to the French skipper. This he does, and receives only the curtest thanks from Flavia. Meanwhile Flavia's brother and a suitor of hers, Luke Asgill, are planning to get the colonel out of the way. That night the colonel sees unmistakable signs of an impending insurrection in a game they play, which is called the lady's kerchief.

CHAPTER IX.

EARLY RISERS.

IT was plain—whatever was obscure—that the play of the lady's kerchief was a cover for something more serious. Those who had taken part in it had scarcely deigned to pretend. Colonel John had been duller than the dullest if he had not seen in the white shreds for which the men had scrambled, and which they had affixed with passion to their coats, the white cockade of the Pretender; or found in Uncle Ulick's couplet—

> The spoke that is to-day on top
> To-morrow's on the ground,

one of those catchwords which suited the taste of the day, and served at once for a passport and a sentiment.

But Colonel John knew that many a word was said over the claret which meant less than nothing next morning; and that many a fair hand passed the wine across the water-bowl — the very movement did honor to a shapely arm—without its owner having the least intention of endangering those she loved for the sake of the king across the water.

Consequently, he knew that he might be wrong in dotting the i's and crossing the t's of the scene which he had witnessed. Such a scene might mean no more than a burst of high spirits; in nine cases out of ten it would not be followed by action, nor import more than that singing of "'Twas a' for our rightful king!" which had startled him on his arrival. In that house, in the wilds of Kerry, sheer loyalty could not be expected. The wrongs of the nation were too recent, the high seas were too near, the wild geese came and went too freely—wild geese of another feather than his. Such outbursts as he had wit-

* This story began in THE SCRAP BOOK—Second Section—for August, 1908.

nessed were no more than the safety-valves of outraged pride.

Colonel John leaned upon such arguments; and disappointed and alarmed as he was by Flavia's behavior, he told himself that nothing was seriously meant, and that with the morning light things would look more cheerful.

But when he awoke after a feverish and disturbed sleep, the faint, grisly dawn that entered the room was not of a character to inspirit. He turned on his side to sleep again, but in the act he discovered that the curtain which he had drawn across the window was withdrawn. He could discern the dark mass of his clothes piled on a chair, of his hat clinging like some black bat to a white-washed wall, of his valise and saddle-bags in the corner—finally, of a stout figure bent, listening, at the door.

An old campaigner, Colonel John was not easily surprised. Repressing the exclamation on his lips, he rose to his elbow and waited until the figure at the door straightened itself, and, turning toward him, became recognizable as Uncle Ulick. The big man crossed the floor, saw that he was awake, and, finger on lip, enjoined silence. Then he pointed to the clothes on the chair, and brought his mouth near the colonel's ear.

"The back door!" he whispered. "Under the yews in the garden! Come!" And leaving the colonel staring and mystified, he crept from the room with a stealth and lightness remarkable in one so big. The door closed, the latch fell, and made no sound.

Colonel John reflected that Uncle Ulick was no romantic young person to play at mystery for effect. There was a call for secrecy, therefore. The O'Beirnes slept in a room divided from his only by a thin partition; and to gain the stairs he must pass the doors of other chambers, all inhabited. As softly as he could, and as quickly, he dressed himself. He took his boots in his hand; his sword, perhaps from old habit, under his other arm; in this guise he crept from the room and down the dusky staircase. Old Darby and an underling were snoring in the cub, which in the daytime passed for a pantry, and both by day and night gave forth a smell of sour corks and mice; but Colonel John slid by the open door as noiselessly as a shadow, found the back door—which led to the fold-yard — on the latch, and stepped out into the cool, dark morning, into the sobering freshness, and the clean, rain-washed air.

The grass was still gray-hued, the world still colorless and mysterious, the house a long, black bulk against a slowly lightening sky.

Colonel John paused on the door-step to draw on his boots, then he picked his way delicately to the leather-hung wicket that broke the hedge which served for a fence to the garden. On the right of the wicket a row of tall Florence yews, set within the hedge, screened the pleasaunce, such as it was, from the house. Under the lee of these he found Uncle Ulick striding to and fro, and biting his finger-nails in his impatience.

He wrung the colonel's hand and looked into his face. "You'll do me the justice, John Sullivan," he said with a touch of passion, "that never in my life have I been overhasty? Eh? Will you do me that?"

"Certainly, Ulick," Colonel John answered, wondering much what was coming.

"And that I'm no coward, where it's not a question of trouble?"

"I'll do you that justice, too," the colonel answered. He smiled at the reservation.

The big man did not smile. "Then you'll take my word for it," he replied, "that I'm not speaking idly when I say you must go."

Colonel John lifted his eyebrows. "Go?" he answered. "Do you mean now?"

"Aye, now, or before noon!" Uncle Ulick retorted. "More by token," he continued with bitterness, "it's not that you may go on the instant, that I've brought you out of our own house, as if we were a couple of rapparees or horse-thieves, but that you might hear it from me, who wish you well, instead of from those who may be 'll not put it so kindly, nor be so wishful for you to be taking the warning they give."

"Is it Flavia you're meaning?"

"No; and don't you be thinking it," Uncle Ulick replied with a touch of heat. "Nor the least bit of it, John

Sullivan! The girl, God bless her, is as honest as the day, if—"

"If she's not very wise!" Colonel John said, smiling.

"You may put it that way, if you please. For the matter of that, you'll be thinking she's not the only fool at Morristown, nor the oldest, nor the biggest. But the blood must run slow, and the breast be cold, that sees the way the Saxons are mocking us, and locks the tongue in silence. And sure, there's no more to be said but just this—that there's those here you'll be wise not to see! And you'll get a hint to that end before the sun's high."

"And you'd have me take it?"

"You'd be mad not to take it!" Uncle Ulick replied, frowning. "Isn't it for that I'm out of my warm bed, and the mist not off the lake?"

"You'd have me give way to them and go?"

"Faith, and I would!"

"Would you do that same yourself, Ulick?"

"For certain."

"And be sorry for it afterward?"

"Not the least taste in life!" Uncle Ulick asseverated.

"And be sorry for it afterward," Colonel John repeated quietly. "Kinsman, come here," he continued with unusual gravity. And taking Uncle Ulick by the arm, he led him to the end of the garden, where the walk looked on the lake and bore some likeness to a roughly made terrace. Pausing where the black masses of the Florence yews, most funereal of trees, still sheltered their forms from the house, he stood silent. Here and there on the slopes which faced them a cotter's hovel stood solitary in its potato-patch or its plot of oats. In more than one place three or four cottages made up a tiny hamlet, from which the smoke would presently rise. To English eyes, the scene—these oases in the limitless brown of the bog—had been wild and rude; but to Colonel John it spoke of peace and safety and comfort, and even of a narrow plenty. The soft Irish air lapped it; the distances were mellow; memories of boyhood rounded off all that was unsightly or cold.

He pointed here and there with his hand, and with seeming irrelevance. "You'd be sorry afterward," he said, "for you'd think of this, Ulick. God forbid I should deny that even for this too high a price may be paid. But if you play this away in wantonness — if that which you are all planning come about, and you fail, as they failed in Scotland three years back—it is of this, it is of the women and the children under these roofs that will go up in smoke, that you'll be thinking, Ulick, at the last! Believe me or not, this is the last thing you'll see! It's to a burden, as well as an honor, you're born where men doff caps to you; and it's that burden will lie the black weight on your soul at the last. There's old Darby and O'Sullivan Og's wife—and Pat Mahony and Judy Mahony's four sons—and the three Sullivans at the landing, and Phil the crowder, and the seven tenants at Killabogue—it's of them, it's of them"—as he spoke his finger moved from hovel to hovel—"and their like, I'm thinking. You cry them and they'll follow, for they're your folks born. But what do they know of England or England's strength, or what is against them, or the certain end? They think, poor souls, because they land their spirits and pay no dues and the justices look the other way, they think the Protestants are afraid of them! While you and I, you and I know, Ulick," he continued, dropping his voice, "'tis because we lie so poor and distant and small, they give no heed to us! We know! And that's our burden."

The big man's face worked. He threw out his arms. "God help us!" he cried.

"He will, in His day! I tell you again, as I told you the hour I came, I, who have followed the wars for twenty years, there is no deed that has not its reward when the time is ripe, nor a cold hearth that is not paid for a hundredfold!"

Uncle Ulick looked somberly over the lake. "I shall never see it," he said. "Notwithstanding, I'll do what I can to quiet them—if it be not too late."

"Too late?"

"Aye, too late, John. Anyway, I'll be minding what you say. But you must go, and this very day that ever is."

"There are some here that I must not be seeing?" Colonel John said shrewdly.

"May be."

"And if I do not go, Ulick? What then, man?"

"Whisht! Whisht!" the big man cried in unmistakable distress. "Don't say the word! Don't say the word, John, dear."

"But I must say it," Colonel John answered, smiling. "To be plain, Ulick, here I am and here I stay. They wish me gone because I am in the way of their plans. Well, and can you give me a better reason for staying?"

What argument Ulick would have used remains unknown. Before he could reply, the murmur of a voice near at hand startled them. Uncle Ulick's face fell, and the two turned with a single movement to see who came.

They discerned, in the shadow of the wall of yew, two men, who had just passed through the wicket into the garden.

The strangers saw them at the same moment, and were equally taken by surprise. The foremost of the two, a sturdy, weather-beaten man, with a square, stern face and a look of power, laid his hand on his cutlas—he wore a broad blade in place of the usual rapier. The other, whom every line of his shaven face, as well as his dress, proclaimed a priest—and perhaps more than a priest—crossed himself and muttered something to his companion. Then he advanced.

"You take the air early, gentlemen," he said, the French accent very plain in his speech, "as we do. If I mistake not," he continued, looking with an easy smile at Colonel John, "your Protestant kinsman, of whom you told me, Mr. Sullivan? I did not look to meet you, Colonel Sullivan; but I do not doubt you are man of the world enough to excuse, if you cannot approve, the presence of the shepherd among his sheep. The law forbids, but—" Still smiling, he finished the sentence with a gesture in the air.

"I approve all men," Colonel John answered quietly, "who are in their duty, father."

"But wool and wine that pay no duty?" the priest replied, turning with a humorous look to his companion, who stood beside him, unsmiling. "I'm not sure that Colonel Sullivan extends the same indulgence to freetraders, Captain Machin."

Colonel John looked closely at the man thus brought to his notice. Then he raised his hat courteously. "Sir," he said, "the guests of the Sullivans, whoever they be, are sacred to the Sullivans."

Uncle Ulick's eyes had met the priest's as eyes meet in a moment of suspense. But at this he drew a deep breath of relief. "Well said," he muttered. "Bedad, it is something to have seen the world!"

"You have served with the King of Sweden, I believe?" the ecclesiastic continued, addressing Colonel John with a polite air. He held a book of offices in his hand, as if his purpose in the garden had been merely to read the service.

"Yes."

"A great school of war, I am told?"

"It may be called so. But I interrupt you, father, and, with your permission, I will bid you good morning. Doubtless we shall meet again."

"At breakfast, I trust," the ecclesiastic answered with a certain air of intention. He bowed, and they returned it, and the two pairs gave place to one another with ceremony, Colonel John and Ulick passing out through the garden wicket, while the strangers moved on toward the walk which looked over the lake. Here they began to pace up and down.

With his hand on the house door, Uncle Ulick made a last attempt. "For God's sake, be easy and go!" he muttered, his voice unsteady, his eyes fixed on the other's as if he would read his mind. "Leave us to our fate! You cannot save us—you see what you see, you know what it means. And for what I know, you know the man. You'll but make our end the blacker."

"And the girl?"

Uncle Ulick tossed his hands in the air. "God help her!" he said.

"Shall not we, too, help her?"

"We cannot."

"It may be. Still, let us do our duty," Colonel John replied. He was

very grave. Things were worse than he had feared.

Uncle Ulick groaned. "You'll not be bidden?" he said.

"Not by an angel," Colonel John answered steadfastly.

"And I've seen none this morning, but only a good man whose one fault in life is to answer to all men, 'Sure, and I will!'"

Uncle Ulick started as if the words stung him. "You make a jest of it!" he said. "Heaven send we do not sorrow for your wilfulness. For my part, I've small hope of that same." He opened the door and, turning his back upon his companion, went heavily, and without any attempt at concealment, past the pantry and up the stairs to his room.

To answer "Yes" to all comers and all demands is doubtless, in the language of Uncle Ulick, a mighty convenience, and a great softener of the angles of life. But a time comes to the most easy when he must answer "No," or go open-eyed to ruin. Then he finds that from long disuse the word will not shape itself, or, if uttered, it is taken for naught.

That time had come for Uncle Ulick. Years ago his age and experience had sufficed to curb the hot blood about him. But he had been too easy to dictate while he might, and to-day he must go the young folks' way—seeing all too plainly the end of it.

Often in the Swedish wars had Colonel John seen a fair countryside changed in one day into a waste, from the recesses of which naked creatures with wolfish eyes stole out at night, maddened by their wrongs, to wreak a horrid vengeance on the passing soldier. He knew that the fairest parts of Ireland had undergone such a fate within living memory. Therefore, he was firmly minded as one man could be that not again should the corner of Kerry under his eyes, the corner he loved, suffer that fate.

Yet, when he descended to breakfast, his face told no tale of his thoughts, and he greeted with a smile the unusual brightness of the morning. Nor as he sunned himself, and inhaled with enjoyment the freshness of the air, did any sign escape him that he marked a change.

But he was not blind. Among the cripples and vagrants who lounged about the entrance, he detected six or eight ragged fellows, whose sunburnt faces were new to him and who certainly were not cripples. In the doorway of one of the two towers that fronted him across the court stood O'Sullivan Og, whittling a stick and chatting with a sturdy idler who had a sea-faring air. The colonel could not give his reason, but he had not looked twice at these two before he got a notion that there was more in that tower this morning than the old plows and the broken boat which commonly filled the ground floor, or the grain which was stored above. Powder? Treasure? He could not say which or what; but he felt that the open door was a mask that deceived no one.

And there was a stir, there was a bustle in the court; a sparkle in the eyes of some as they glanced slyly and under their lashes at the house, a lilt in the tread of others as they stepped to and fro. Some strange change had fallen upon Morristown and imbued it with life.

He caught the sound of voices in the house, and he turned about and entered. The priest and Captain Machin had descended, and were standing with Uncle Ulick warming themselves before the wood fire. The McMurrough, the O'Beirnes, and two or three strangers—grim-looking men who had followed, a glance told him, the trade he had followed—formed a group a little apart, yet near enough to be addressed. Asgill was not present, nor Flavia.

"Good morning, again," Colonel John said. And he bowed.

"With all my heart, Colonel McMurrough," the priest answered cordially. And Colonel John saw that he had guessed aright. The speaker no longer took the trouble to hide his Episcopal cross and chain, or the ring on his finger. There was an increase of dignity, too, in his manner. His very cordiality seemed a condescension.

Captain Machin bowed silently. The McMurrough and the O'Beirnes looked darkly at the colonel. They did not un-

derstand. It was plain they were not in the secret of the morning encounter.

"I see O'Sullivan Og is here," the colonel said, addressing Uncle Ulick. "That will be very convenient."

"Convenient?" Uncle Ulick repeated, looking blank.

"We can give him the orders as to the Frenchman's cargo," the colonel said calmly.

Uncle Ulick winced. "Aye, to be sure! To be sure, lad," he answered. But he rubbed his head, like a man in a difficulty.

The bishop seemed to be going to ask a question. Before he could speak, Flavia came tripping down the stairs, a gay song on her lips. Half-way down, the song, light and sweet as a bird's, came to a sudden end.

"I'm afraid I am late!" she said. And then—as the colonel supposed—she saw that more than the family party were assembled. The bishop and Captain Machin were there also, and the strangers—and, above all, that he was there. She descended the last three stairs silently, with a heightened color, moved proudly into the middle of the group, and curtsied, till her knee touched the floor, before the ecclesiastic.

He gave her his hand to kiss, with a smile and a murmured blessing. She rose with sparkling eyes.

"It is a good morning!" she said as one who, having done her duty, could be cheerful.

"It is a very fine morning," the bishop answered in the same spirit. "The sun shines on us as we would have him shine. And after breakfast, with your leave, my daughter, and your brother's leave, we will hold a little council. What say you, Colonel Sullivan?" he continued, turning to the colonel. "A family council? Will you join us?"

The McMurrough uttered an exclamation so unexpected and strident that the words were not articulate. But the bishop understood them, for, as all turned to him, "Nay," he said, "it shall be for Colonel Sullivan to say. It's ill, arguing with a fasting man," he continued genially; "and by your leave, we will return to the matter after breakfast!"

"I am not for argument at all," Captain Machin said. It was the first time he had spoken.

CHAPTER X.

A COUNCIL OF WAR.

THE meal had been eaten, stolidly by some, by others with a poor appetite, by Colonel John with a thoughtful face. Two men of family, but broken fortunes, old Sir Donny McCarthy, of Dingle, and Timothy Burke, of Maantrasna, had joined the party—under the rose, as it were, and neither giving nor receiving much welcome. Now old Darby kept the door, and the bishop the hearth; whence, standing with his back to the glowing peat, he could address his audience with eye and voice. The others, risen from the table, had placed themselves here and there where they pleased. The courtyard, visible through the windows, seethed with a rabble of peasantry, frieze-coated or half bare, who whooped and jabbered, now about one of their number, now about another. The Irish air was soft, the hum of voices cheerful, nor could anything less like a secret council, less like a meeting of men about to commit themselves to a dark and dangerous enterprise, be well imagined.

But no one was deceived. The courage, the enthusiasm that danced in Flavia's eyes, were reflected more darkly and more furtively in a score of faces within the room and without. To enjoy one hour of triumph, to wreak upon the cursed English a tithe of the wrongs, a tithe of the insults, that their country had suffered, to be the spoke on top, were it but for a day, to die for Ireland if they could not live for her. Could man own Irish blood, and an Irish name, and not rise at the call?

If there were such a man—oh! cowardly, mean, and miserable he seemed to Flavia McMurrough. And much she marveled at the patience, the consideration, the arguments which the silver-tongued ecclesiastic presently brought to bear upon him. She longed to denounce him, to bid him begone, and do his worst.

But she was a young plotter, and he

who spoke from the middle of the hearth with so much patience and forbearance was an old one, proved by years of peril, and tempered by a score of failures—a man long accustomed to play with the lives of men. He knew better than she what was at stake, to win or lose; nor was it without forethought that he had determined to risk much to gain Colonel Sullivan. To his mind, and to Machin's mind, the other men in the room were but tools to be used. But this man—for among soldiers of fortune there is a camaraderie, so that they are known to one another by repute from the Baltic to Cadiz—was a coadjutor to be gained. He was one whose experience, joined with an Irish name, might well avail much.

Colonel John might refuse. But, in that event, the bishop's mind was made up. Flavia supposed that if the colonel held out, he would be dismissed—and so an end. But the speaker made no mistake. He had chosen to grip the nettle danger, and he knew that gentle measures were no longer possible. He must enlist Colonel Sullivan, or—but it has been said that he was no novice in dealing with the lives of men.

"If it be a question only of the chances," he said presently—"if I am right in supposing that it is only that which withholds Colonel Sullivan from joining us—"

"I do not say it is," Colonel John replied very gravely. "But to deal with it on that basis. While I can ever admire, reverend sir, the man who is ready to set his life on a desperate hazard to gain something which he sets above his life, I take the case to be different where it is a question of the lives of others. Then I say the chances must be weighed—"

"However sacred the cause and high the aim?"

"I think so."

The bishop sighed, his chin sinking on his breast. "I am sorry," he said. "I am sorry."

"That we cannot see alike in a matter so grave? Yes; so am I."

"No. That I met you this morning."

"I am not sorry," Colonel John replied, refusing to see the other's meaning. "For— Hear me out, I beg. You and I have seen the world, and can weigh the chances. Your friend, too, Captain Machin"—he pronounced the name in an odd tone—"he, too, knows on what he is embarked, and how he will stand if the result be failure. It may be that he already has his home, his rank, and his fortune in foreign parts, and will be little the worse if the worst befall."

"I?" Machin cried, stung out of his taciturnity. "Let me tell you, sir, that I fling back the insinuation!"

But the colonel proceeded as if the other were not speaking. "You, reverend sir, yourself," he continued, "know well on what you are embarking, its prospects, and the issue for you, if it fail. But you are, by your profession and choice, devoted to a life of danger. You are willing, day by day and hour by hour, to run the risk of death. But these, my cousin there"—looking with a kind eye at Flavia—"she—"

"Leave me out!" she cried passionately. And she rose to her feet, her face on fire. "I separate myself from you! I, for my part, ask no better than to suffer for my country!"

"She thinks she knows, but she does not know," the colonel continued, unmoved by her words. "She cannot guess what it is to be cast adrift—alone, a woman penniless, in a strange land. And yet that, at the best—and the worst may be unspeakably worse—must be her fate, if this plot miscarry! And, then, The McMurrough and his friends yonder"—he indicated the group by the window—"they, also, are ignorant—"

The McMurrough sprang to his feet, spluttering with rage. "Speak for yourself!" he cried.

"They know nothing," the colonel continued, quite unmoved, "of that force against which they are asked to pit themselves, of that stolid power over sea, never more powerful than now!"

"The saints will be between us and harm!" the eldest of the O'Beirnes cried, rising in his wrath. "It's speak for yourself, I say, too!"

"And I!"

"And I!" others of the group roared out with gestures of defiance.

And one, stepping forward, snapped his fingers close to the colonel's face. "That for you! That for you!" he cried. "Now, or whenever you will, day or night, and sword or pistol! To the devil with your impudence, sir; I'd have you know you're not the only man has seen the world! The shame of the world on you, talking like a schoolmaster while your country cries for you, and 'tis not your tongue but your hand she's wanting!"

Uncle Ulick put his big form between Colonel John and his assailant. "Sure, and be easy!" he said. "Sir Donny, you're forgetting yourself! And you, Tim Burke! Be easy, I say. It's only for himself the colonel's speaking!"

"Thank God for that!" Flavia cried in a voice which rang high.

They were all round him now, a ring of men with dark, angry faces, and hardly restrained hands. But the bishop intervened.

"One moment," he said, still speaking smoothly, and with a smile. "Perhaps it is for those he thinks he speaks?" And the speaker pointed to the crowd which filled the forecourt. "Perhaps it is for those he thinks he speaks?" he repeated in irony—for of the feeling of the crowd there could be no doubt.

"It is on their behalf I appeal to you," Colonel John replied. "For it is they who foresee the least, and they who will suffer the most. It is they who will follow like sheep, and they who, like sheep, will go to the butcher! Aye, it is they," he continued with deeper feeling, and he turned to Flavia, "who are yours, and they will pay for you. Therefore," raising his hand for silence, "before you name the prize, sum up the cost! Your country, your faith, your race—these are great things, but they are far off, and can do without you. But these—these are that part of your country, that handful of your race, which God has laid in the palm of your hand, to cherish or to crush, and—"

"The devil!" Machin ejaculated with violence. Perhaps he read in the girl's face some shadow of perplexity. "Have done with your preaching, sir, I say! Have done, man! If we fail—"

"You must fail!" Colonel John retorted. "You will fail! And failing, sir, his reverence will stand no worse than now—for his life is forfeit already! While you—"

"What of me? Well, what of me?" the stout man cried truculently. His brows descended over his eyes and his lips twitched.

"For you, Admiral Cammock—"

The other stepped forward a pace. "You know me?" he cried.

"Yes, I know you."

There was silence for an instant, while those who were in the secret eyed Colonel Sullivan askance, and those who were not gaped at Cammock.

Soldiers of fortune, of fame and name were plentiful in those days, but seamen of equal note were few. And with this man's name the world had lately rung. An Irishman, he had risen high in Queen Anne's service; but at her death, incited by his devotion to the Stuarts, he had made a move for them at a critical moment. He had been broken, being already a notable man; on which he had entered the Spanish marine, and been advanced to a position of rank and power. In Ireland, his life was forfeit; Great Britain counted him renegade and traitor. So that to find himself recognized, though grateful to his vanity, was a shock to his discretion.

"Well, and knowing me?" he replied at last, with the tail of his eyes on the bishop, as if he would gladly gain a hint from his subtlety. "What of me?"

"You have your home, your rank, your relations abroad," Colonel Sullivan answered firmly. "And if a descent on the coast be a part of your scheme, then you do not share the peril equally with us. We shall suffer, while you sail away."

"I fling that in your teeth!" Cammock cried. "I know you too, sir, and—"

"Know no worse of me than of yourself!" Colonel Sullivan retorted. "But if you do indeed know me, you know that I am not one to stand by and see my friends led blindfold to certain ruin. It may suit your plans to make a diversion here. But that diversion is a part of larger schemes, and the fate of those who make it is little to you."

Cammock's hand flew to his belt; he took a step forward, his face suffused

with passion. "For half as much, I have cut a man down!" he cried.

"Maybe, but—"

"Peace, peace, my friends," the bishop interposed. He laid a warning hand on Cammock's arm. "This gentleman," he continued smoothly, "thinks he speaks for our friends outside."

"Let me speak, not for them, but *to* them," Colonel Sullivan struck in impulsively. "Let me tell them what I think of this scheme, of its chances, of its certain end!"

He moved, whether he thought they would let him or not, toward the window, but he had not taken three steps before he found his progress barred. "What is this?" he exclaimed.

"Needs must with so impulsive a gentleman," the bishop said. He had not moved, but at a signal from him The McMurrough, the O'Beirnes, and two of the other young men had thrust themselves forward. "You must give up your sword, Colonel Sullivan," he continued.

"Give up—do you mean that I am a prisoner?" the colonel cried, retreating a pace, and evincing perhaps more surprise than he felt. He had not drawn, but two or three of the young men had done so, and Flavia, in the background by the fire, was white as paper—so suddenly had the shadow of violence fallen on the room.

"You must surrender!" the bishop repeated firmly. He, too, was a trifle pale, but he was used to such scenes, and he spoke with decision. "Resistance is vain. I hope that, with this lady in the room—"

"One moment!" the colonel cried, raising his hand. And as The McMurrough and the others hesitated, he whipped out his sword and stepped two paces to one side with an agility no one had foreseen. He now had the table behind him and Uncle Ulick on his left hand. "One moment!" he repeated, raising his hand in deprecation and keeping his point lowered. "Do you consider—"

"We consider our own safety," Cammock answered grimly. And signing to one of the men to join Darby at the door, he drew his cutlas. "You know too much to go free, sir."

"Aye, faith, you do," The McMurrough chimed in with a sort of glee. "He was at Tralee yesterday, no less. And for a little, we'll have the garrison here before the time!"

"But, by the powers," Uncle Ulick cried, "ye shall not hurt him! Your reverence!"—the big man's voice shook—"Your reverence, this shall not be! It's not in this house they shall murder him, and him a Sullivan! Flavia, speak, girl," he continued, the perspiration standing on his brow. "Say ye'll not have it. After all, it's your house! And there shall be no Sullivan blood spilt in it while I am standing by to prevent it!"

"Then let him give up his sword!" Cammock answered doggedly.

"Yes, let him give up his sword," Flavia said in a small voice.

"Colonel Sullivan," the bishop interposed, "I hope you'll hear reason. Resistance is vain. Give up your sword, and—"

"And *presto!*" Cammock cried, "or take the consequences!" He had edged his way, while the bishop spoke, round Ulick and round the head of the table. Now, with his foot on the bench, he was ready at a word to spring on the table and take the colonel in the rear. It was clear that he was a man of action. "Down with your sword, sir," he cried flatly.

Colonel John recognized the weakness of his position. Before him the young men were five to one, with old Sir Donny and Timothy Burke in the rear. On his flank the help which Ulick might give was discounted by the move Cammock had made. He saw that he could do no more in the present. Suddenly as the storm had blown up, he knew that he was dealing with desperate men who, from this day onward, would act with their necks in a noose, and whom his word might send to the scaffold. They had but to denounce him to the rabble who waited outside; and, besides the bishop, one only there, as he believed, would have the influence to save him.

Colonel John had confronted danger many times; to confront it had been his trade. And it was with coolness and a clear perception of the position that he

turned to Flavia. "I will give up my sword," he said—"but to my cousin only. This is her house, and I yield myself"—with a smile and a bow—"her prisoner."

Before they knew what he would be at, he stepped forward and tendered his hilt to the girl, who took it with flaccid fingers. "I am in your hands now," he said, fixing his eyes on hers and endeavoring to convey his meaning to her. Surely, with such a face, she must have, with all her recklessness, some womanliness, some tenderness.

"Hang your impudence!" The McMurrough cried.

"A truce, a truce," the bishop interposed. "We are all agreed that Colonel Sullivan knows too much to go free. He must be secured for his own sake," he continued smoothly. "Will two of these gentlemen see him to his room, and see, also, that his servant is placed under guard in another room."

"But," the colonel objected, looking at Flavia, "my cousin will surely allow me—"

"She will be guided by us in this," the bishop rejoined with asperity. "Let what I have said be done."

Flavia, very pale, holding the colonel's sword as if it might sting her, did not speak. Colonel Sullivan, after a moment's hesitation, followed one of the O'Beirnes from the room, the other bringing up the rear.

When the door had closed upon them, Flavia's was not the only pale face in the room. The scene had brought home to more than one the fact that here was an end of peace and law, and a beginning of force and rebellion. The majority, secretly uneasy, put on a reckless air to cover their apprehensions. The bishop and Cammock, though they saw themselves in a fair way to do what they had come to do, looked thoughtful. And only Flavia—only Flavia, shaking off the remembrance of Colonel John's face and Colonel John's existence—closed her grip upon his sword, and in the ardor of her patriotism saw with her mind's eye, not victory nor acclaiming thousands, but the scaffold, and a death for her country. Sweet it seemed to her to die for the cause, for the faith, to die for Ireland!

True, her country, her Ireland, was but this little corner of Kerry beaten by the Atlantic storms, and sad with the wailing cries of seagulls. But if she knew no more of Ireland than this, she had read her story; and naught is more true than that the land the most down-trodden is also the best beloved. Wrongs beget a passion of affection; and from oppression springs sacrifice. This daughter of the wind-swept shore, of the misty hills and fairy glens, whose life from infancy had been bare and rugged and solitary, had become, for that reason, a dreamer of dreams and a worshiper of the ideal Ireland, her country, her faith. The salt breeze that lashed her cheeks and tore at her hair, the peat reek and the soft shadows of the bogland—aye, and many an hour of lonely communing—had filled her breast with such love as impels rather to suffering and to sacrifice than to enjoyment.

For one moment she had recoiled before the shock of impending violence. But that had passed; now her one thought, as she stood with dilated eyes, unconsciously clutching the colonel's sword, was that the time was come, the thing was begun—henceforth she belonged not to herself, but to Ireland and to God.

Rapt in such thoughts, the girl was not aware that the others had got together and were discussing the colonel's fate until mention was made of the French sloop and of Captain Augustin. "Faith, and let him go in that!" she heard Uncle Ulick urging. "D'ye hear me, your reverence? 'Twill be a week before they land him, and the fire we'll be lighting will be no secret at all at all by then."

"May be, Mr. Sullivan," the bishop replied. "May be. But we cannot spare the sloop."

"No, and we'll not spare her!" The McMurrough chimed in. "She's heels to her, and it's a godsend she'll be to us if things go ill."

"And an addition to our fleet, anyway," Cammock said. "We'd be mad to let her go—just to make a man safe we can safe a deal cheaper!"

Flavia propped the sword carefully in an angle of the hearth and moved forward. "But I do not understand," she said timidly. "We agreed that the

sloop and the cargo were to go free if Colonel Sullivan—but you know!" she added, breaking off and addressing her brother.

"Is it dreaming you are?" he retorted contemptuously. "Is it we'll be taking note of that now?"

"It was a debt of honor," she said.

"The girl's right," Uncle Ulick said. "And we'll be rid of him."

"We'll be rid of him without that," The McMurrough muttered.

"I am fearing, Mr. Sullivan," the bishop said, "that it is not quite understood by all that we are embarked upon a matter of life and death. We cannot let bagatelles stand in the way. The sloop and her cargo can be made good to her owners—at another time. For your relative and his servant—"

"The shortest way with them," some one cried, "and the surest!"

"For them," the bishop continued, silencing the interruption by a look, "we must not forget that some days must pass before we can hope to get our people together. During the interval we lie at the mercy of an informer. Your own people, you know, but the same cannot be said of this gentleman—who has very fixed ideas—and his servant. Our lives and the lives of others are in their hands, and it is of the last importance that they be kept secure and silent."

"Aye, silent's the word," Cammock growled.

"There could be no better place than one of the towers," The McMurrough suggested, "for keeping them safe, bedad!"

"And why'll they be safer there than in the house?" Uncle Ulick asked suspiciously. He looked from one speaker to the other with a baffled face. He was sure that they meant more than they said.

"Oh, for the good reason," the young man returned. "Isn't all the world passing the door up-stairs? And what more easy than to open it?"

Cammock's eyes met the bishop's. "The tower'll be best," he said. "Draw off the people, and let them be taken there and a guard set. We've matters of more importance to discuss now. This gathering to-morrow, to raise the country—what's the time fixed for it?"

But Flavia, who had listened with a face of perplexity, interposed. "Still, he is my prisoner, is he not?" she said wistfully. "And if I answer for him?"

"By your leave, ma'am," Cammock replied with decision. "One word. Women to women's work! I'll let no woman weave a halter for me!"

The room echoed low applause. And Flavia was silent.

CHAPTER XI.

A MESSAGE FOR THE YOUNG MASTER.

JAMES McMURROUGH cared little for his country, and nothing for his faith. He cared only for himself; and but for the resentment which the provisions of his grandfather's will bred in him, he would have seen the Irish race in purgatory and the Roman faith in a worse place before he would have risked a finger to right the one or restore the other.

Once embarked, however, vanity swept him onward. The night which followed Colonel Sullivan's arrest was a night long remembered at Morristown — a night to uplift the sanguine and to kindle the pride; nor was it a wonder that the young chief, as he strode among his admiring tenants, his presence greeted with Irish acclamations and his skirts kissed by devoted kernes, sniffed the pleasing incense and trod the ground to the measure of imagined music. The triumph that was never to be intoxicated him.

His people had kindled a huge bonfire in the middle of the forecourt, and beside this he extended a gracious welcome to a crowd of strong tenants. A second fire, for the comfort of the baser sort, had been kindled outside the gates and was the center of merriment less restrained; while a third, which served as a beacon to the valley, glowed beside the ruined tower at the head of the lake. From this last the red flames streamed far across the water, and now revealed a belated boat shooting from the shadow, now a troop of countrymen, who, led by their priest, came limping along the lake-side, ostensibly to join in the services of the morrow, but in reality to hear and to do something toward shaking off the grip of the cursed Saxon!

In the more settled parts of the land, such a summons as had brought them from their rude shielings among the hills, would have passed for a dark jest. But in this remote spot, the notion of overthrowing the hated power by means of a few score pikes did not seem preposterous either to these poor folk or to their betters. Cammock, of course, knew the truth, and the bishop.

But the native gentry saw nothing hopeless in the plan. That plan was first to fall upon Tralee, in combination with a couple of sloops said to be lying in Galway Bay, and afterward to surprise Kenmare. Masters of these, they proposed to raise the old standard, to call Connaught to their aid—to cry a crusade. And, faith, as Sir Donny said, before the castle tyrants could open their eyes, they'd be seeing themselves driven into the salt ocean!

So, while the house-walls gave back the ruddy torchlight, and the barefooted, bareheaded colleens damped the thatch, and men confessed in one corner and kissed their girls in another, and the smiths wrought hard at the pike-heads—so the struggle depicted itself to more than one.

And all the time Cammock and the bishop walked in the dark in the garden and talked in low voices, debating much of Sicily and Naples and the cardinal and the Mediterranean fleet, and at times laughing at some court-story. But they said, strange to tell, no word of Tralee, or of Kenmare, or of Dublin Castle, or even of Connaught. They were no visionaries. They had to do with greater things than these; and in doing them, knew that they must spend to gain. The lives of a few score peasants, the ruin of half a dozen hamlets—what were these beside the diversion of a single squadron from the great pitched fight, already foreseen, where the excess of one battle-ship might win an empire, and its absence might ruin nations?

And one other man, and one only, because his life had been passed on their wider plane, and he could judge of the relative value of Connaught and Kent, divined the trend of their thoughts and understood the deliberation with which they were ready to sacrifice their pawns.

Colonel Sullivan sat in the upper room of one of the two towers that flanked the entrance to the forecourt. Bale was with him, and the two, with the door doubly locked upon them and guarded outside by a sentry whose crooning they could hear, shared such comfort as a pitcher of water and a gloomy outlook afforded. The darkness hid the medley of odds and ends which littered their prison; but the inner of the two slit-like windows that lighted the room admitted a thin shaft of firelight that, dancing among the uncovered rafters, told of the orgy below. Bale crouched in the splay of the window, staring morosely at the crowd about the fire; while the colonel, in the same posture at the other window, gazed with feelings not more cheerful on the darkling lake.

He was much concerned for himself and his companion. But he was more gravely concerned for those whose advocate he had made himself—for the ignorant cotters in their lowly hovels, the women, the children, upon whom the inevitable punishment would fall. He doubted, now that it was too late, the wisdom of the course he had taken; and blaming himself for precipitation, he fancied that if he had acted with a little more guile his remonstrance might have had greater weight.

John Bale, as was natural, thought more of his own position. "May the fire burn them!" he muttered viciously, his ire excited by some prank of the party below. "The Turks were polite beside these barefoot devils!"

"You'd have said the other thing at Bender," the colonel answered, turning his head.

"Aye, your honor," Bale returned, "a man never knows when he is well off."

His master laughed. "I'd have you apply that now," he said.

"So I would if it weren't that I've a kind of a scunner of those black bog-holes," Bale said. "To be planted head first 's no proper end of a man, to my thinking; and if there's not something of the kind in these ragamuffins' minds, I'm precious mistaken."

"Pooh, man, you're frightening yourself," the colonel answered. But the room was dank and chill, the lake without lay lonely, and the picture which Bale's words called up was not pleasant

to the bravest. "It's a civilized land and they'd not think of it!"

"There's one, and that's the young lady's brother," Bale answered darkly, "would not pull us out by the feet. I'll swear to that. Your honor's too much in his way, if what they say in the house is true."

"Pooh!" the colonel answered again. "We're of one blood."

"Cain and Abel," Bale said. "There's example for it." And he chuckled.

The colonel scolded him anew. But having done so, he could not shake off the impression which the man's words had made on him. While he lived he was a constant and an irritating check upon James McMurrough. If the young man saw a chance of getting rid of that check, was he one to put it from him? Colonel John's face grew long as he pondered the question; he had seen enough of James to feel considerable doubt about the answer. The fire on the height above the lake had died down; the one on the strand was a bed of red ashes. The lake lay buried in darkness, from which, at intervals, the cry of an owl as it moused along the shore rose mournfully.

But Colonel John was not one to give way to fears that might be baseless. "Let us sleep," he said, shrugging his shoulders. He lay down where he was, pillowing his head on a fishing-net. Bale examined the door before he stretched himself across the threshold.

Half an hour after dawn they were roused. A sudden heavy trampling on the stairs awakened them. The door was unlocked, it was thrown open, and the hairy face of O'Sullivan Og, who held it wide, looked in. Behind him were two of the boys with pikes—ragged, savage, repellent figures, with drugget coats tied by the sleeves about their necks.

"You'll be coming with us, colonel, no less," Og said.

Colonel John looked at him. "Whither, my man?" he asked coolly. He and Bale had got to their feet at the first alarm.

"Sure, where it will be best for you," Og replied with a leer.

"Both of us?" the colonel asked in the same hard tone.

"Faith, and why'd we be separating you, I'd be asking?"

Colonel John liked neither the man's tone nor his looks. But he was far above starting at shadows, and he guessed that resistance would be useless. "Very good," he said. "Lead on."

"Bedad, and if you'll be doing that same, we will," O'Sullivan Og answered with a grin.

The colonel and Bale found their hats —they'd been allowed to bring nothing else with them—and they went down the stairs. Before the door of the tower waited two sturdy fellows, barefoot and shock-headed, with musquetoons on their shoulders, who seemed to be expecting them. Round the smoldering embers of the fire a score of figures lay sleeping in the open, wrapped in their frieze coats. The sun was not yet up, and all things were wrapped in a mist that chilled to the bone. Nothing in all that was visible took from the ominous aspect of the two men with the firearms. One for each, Bale thought. And his face, always pallid, showed livid in the morning light.

Without a word, the four men formed up round their prisoners, on which O'Sullivan Og led the way at a brisk pace toward the gate. Colonel John was following, but he had not taken three steps before a thought struck him, and he halted. "Are we leaving the house at once?" he asked.

"We are. And why not, I'm asking?"

"Only that I've a message for The McMurrough it will be well for him to have."

"Sure," O'Sullivan Og answered, his manner half wheedling, half truculent, "'tis no time for messages and trifles and the like now, colonel. No time at all, I tell you. Ye can see that for yourself, I'm thinking."

"I'm thinking nothing of the kind," the colonel answered, and he hung back, looking toward the house. Fortunately, Darby chose that minute to appear at the door. The butler's face was pale and showed fatigue; his hair hung in wisps; his clothes were ill-fastened. He threw a glance of contempt at the sleeping figures lying here and there in the wet. Thence his eyes traveled on and took in the group by the gate. He started, and

wrung his hands in sudden, irrepressible distress. It was as if a spasm seized the man.

The colonel called him. "Darby," he cried. "Come here, my man."

O'Sullivan Og opened his mouth; he was on the point of interposing, but he thought better of it and shrugged his shoulders, muttering something in the Erse.

"Darby," the colonel said gravely, "I've a message for the young master, and it must be given him in his bed. Will you give it?"

"I will, your honor."

"You will not fail?"

"I will not, your honor," the old servant answered earnestly.

"Tell him, then, that Colonel Sullivan made his will as he passed through Paris, and 'tis now in Dublin. You mind me, Darby?"

The old man began to shake—he had an Irishman's superstition. "I do, your honor. But the saints be between us and harm," he continued with the same gesture of distress. "Who's speaking of wills?"

"Only tell him that in his bed," Colonel John repeated with an urgent look. "That is all."

"And by your leave, it is now we'll be going," Og interposed sharply. "We are late already for what we've to do."

"There are some things," the colonel replied with a steady look, "which it is well to be late about." Then, without further remonstrance, he and Bale, with their guard, marched out through the gate and took the road along the lake—that same road by which the colonel had come some days before from the French sloop. The men with the firelocks walked beside them, one on either flank, while the pikemen guarded them behind, and O'Sullivan Og brought up the rear.

They had not taken twenty paces before the fog encircled the party; and henceforth they walked in a sea of mist, like men in a nightmare from which they cannot awake. The clammy vapor chilled them to the bone; while the unceasing wail of sea-gulls, borne off the lough, the whistle of an unseen curlew on the hillside, the hurtle of wings as some ghostly bird swept over them—these were sounds to depress men who had reason to suspect that they were being led to a treacherous end.

The colonel, though he masked his apprehensions under an impenetrable firmness, began to fear no less than that—and with cause. He observed that O'Sullivan Og's followers were of the lowest type of kerne, islanders in all probability, and half starved; men whose hands were never far from their skenes, and whose one orderly instinct consisted in a blind obedience to their chief. O'Sullivan Og himself he believed to be The McMurrough's agent in his more lawless business; a fierce, unscrupulous man, prospering on his lack of scruple. The colonel could augur nothing but ill from the hands to which he had been entrusted; and, worse, from the manner in which these savage, half-naked creatures, shambling beside him, stole from time to time a glance at him.

Some, so placed, and feeling themselves helpless, isolated by the fog, and entirely at these men's mercy, might have lost their firmness. But he did not; nor did Bale, though the servant's face betrayed the keenness of his anxiety. They weighed, indeed, the chances of escape; such chances as a headlong rush into the fog might afford to unarmed men, uncertain where they were. But the colonel reflected that possibly that was the very course upon which O'Sullivan Og counted for a pretext. And, for a second objection, the two could not, so closely were they guarded, communicate with one another.

After all, The McMurrough's plan might amount to no more than their detention in some secret place among the hills. Colonel John hoped so.

He could not but think ill of things—of O'Sullivan Og's silence, of the men's stealthy glances, of the uncanny hour. And when they came presently to a point where a faintly marked track left the road, and the party, at a word from their leader, turned into it, he thought worse of the matter. Was it his fancy—he was far from nervous—or were the men beginning to look impatiently at one another? Was it his fancy, or were they beginning to press more closely on their prisoners, as if they sought a quarrel? He imagined that he read in one man's eyes the ques-

tion, "When?" And in another's, the question, "Now?" And a third, he thought, handled his weapon in an ominous fashion.

Colonel John was a brave man, enured to danger—one who had faced death in many forms. But the lack of arms shakes the bravest, and it needed even his nerve to confront without a quaver the fate that, if his fears were justified, lay before them — the sudden violent death and the black bog water which would swallow all traces of the crime. But he did not lower his crest for a moment.

By and by the track, which for a time had ascended, began to run downward. The path grew less sound. The mist, which was thicker than before, and shut them in on the spot where they walked, as in a world desolate and apart, allowed nothing to be seen in front; but now and again a ragged thorn-tree or a bush, dripping with moisture, showed ghostlike to right or left. There was nothing to indicate the point they were approaching, or how far they were likely to travel; until the colonel, peering keenly before them, caught the gleam of water. It was gone as soon as seen, the mist falling again like a curtain; but he had seen it, and he looked back to see what Og was doing. He caught him also in the act of looking over his shoulder. Was he making sure that they were beyond the chance of interruption?

It might be so, and Colonel John wheeled about quickly, thinking that, while O'Sullivan Og's attention was directed elsewhere, he might possibly take one of the other men by surprise, seize his weapon, and make a fight for his life and his servant's life. But he met only sinister looks, eyes that watched his smallest movement with suspicion, a point ready leveled to strike him if he budged. And then, out of the mist before them, loomed the gaunt figure of a man, walking apace toward them.

The meeting appeared to be as little expected by the stranger as by Og's party. Not only did he spring aside and leave the track to give them a wider berth, but he went by warily with his feet in the bog. Some word was cried to him in the Erse—he answered—for a moment he appeared to be going to stop. Then he passed on, and was lost in the mist.

But he left a change behind him. One of the firelock-men broke into hasty speech, glancing, the colonel noticed, at him and Bale, as if they were the subjects of his words. O'Sullivan Og answered the man curtly and harshly; but before the words were off his lips a second man broke in vehemently in support of the other. They had all halted; for a few seconds all spoke at once. Then, just as Colonel John was beginning to hope that they would quarrel, O'Sullivan Og gave way sullenly, and a man ran back the way they had come, shouting a name. Before the prisoners could decide whether his absence afforded a chance of escape, he was back again, and with him the man who had passed in the bog.

Colonel John looked at the stranger, and recognized him; and, a man of quick wit, he knew on the instant that he had to face the worst. His face set more hard, more firm—if it turned also a shade paler. He addressed his companion. "They've called him back to confess us," he muttered in Bale's ear.

"The devils!" Bale exclaimed. He choked on the word and worked his jaw, glaring at them; but he said no more. Only his eyes glanced from one to another, wild and full of rage.

Colonel John said no more. O'Sullivan Og was addressing him. "There's no more to it," The McMurrough's agent said bluntly; "but you've come your last journey, colonel, and we'll go back wanting you. There's no room in Ireland from this day for them that's not Irish at heart! Nor safety for honest men while you're walking the sod. But—"

"Will you murder us?" Colonel John said. "Do you know, man," he continued sternly, "what you do? What have we done to you, or your master?"

"Done?" O'Sullivan Og answered with sudden ferocity. "And murder, say you? Aye, faith, and I would, and ten thousand like you, for the sake of old Ireland! You may make your peace, and have five minutes to that—and no more, for time presses, and we've work to do. These fools would have a

priest for you"—he turned and spat on the ground—"but it is I, and none better, know you are Protestants, and 'twould take more than that to make your souls!"

Colonel John looked at him with a strange light in his eyes. "It is little to you," he said, "and much to me. Yet think, think, man, what you do. Or if you will not, here is my servant. Spare his life, at least. Put him, if you please, on board the French sloop—"

"Faith, and you're wasting the little breath that is left you," the ruffian answered, irritated rather than moved by the other's calmness. "It's to take or leave. I told the men a heretic had no soul to make, but—"

"God forgive you!" Colonel John said—and was silent. He saw that remonstrance would not avail him. The man's mind was made up, his heart steeled. For a brief instant, something—perhaps that human fear which he had so often defied—clutched Colonel John's heart. For a brief instant human weakness had its way with him, and he shuddered—in the face of the bog. Then the gracious faith that was his returned to him; he was his grave, unyielding self again. He took Bale's hand and begged his forgiveness. "Would I had never brought you!" he said. "Why did I? Yet, God's will be done!"

Bale did not seem able to speak. His jaw continued to work; while his eyes looked sideways at Og. Had the Irishman known his man, he would have put himself out of reach, armed as he was.

"But I will appeal for you to the priest," Colonel John continued; "he may yet prevail with them to spare you."

"He will not!" O'Sullivan Og said naively.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SEA MIST.

THE priest looked at the two prisoners, and the tears ran down his face. He was the man whom Colonel Sullivan and Bale had overtaken on their way to Tralee. He was a merciful man, and with all his heart he wished that, if he could do no good, God had been pleased to send him another way through the mist.

"What can I do?" he cried. "Oh, what can I do?"

"You can do nothing, father," O'Sullivan Og said grimly. "They're heretics, no less! And we're wasting your time, blessed man." He whispered a few words in the priest's ear.

The latter shuddered. "God forgive us all!" he wailed. "And most, those who need it most! God keep us from high place!"

"Sure, and we're in little peril!" O'Sullivan Og replied.

Colonel John looked at the priest with solemn eyes. Nor did aught but a tiny pulse beating in his cheek betray he was watching, ready to seize the least chance, that he might save, at any rate, poor Bale. Then: "You are a Christian, father," he said gravely. "I ask nothing for myself. But this is my servant. He knows nothing. Prevail with them to spare him!"

Bale uttered a fierce remonstrance. No one understood it, or what he said or meant. His eyes looked askance, like the eyes of a beast in a snare—seeking a weapon, or a throat! To be butchered thus!

Perhaps Colonel John, notwithstanding his calm courage, had the same thought, and found it bitter. Death had been good in the face of silent thousands, with pride and high resolve for cheer. But here in the mist, unknown, unnoticed, to perish and be forgotten in a week, even by the savage hands that took their breath! Perhaps to face this he, too, had need of all his Christian stoicism.

"My God! My God!" the priest said. "Have pity on these two, and soften the hearts of their murderers!"

"Amen," said Colonel John quietly.

"Faith, and 'tis idle, this," O'Sullivan Og cried irritably. He gave a secret sign to his men to draw to one side and be ready. "We've our orders, and other work to do. Kneel aside, father; 'tis no harm we mean you. But you're wasting breath on these same. And you, say what prayer you will, if you know one, and then kneel or stand—it's all

one to us—and, God willing, you'll be in purgatory, and never a knowledge of it!"

"One moment," Colonel John interposed, his face pale but composed. "I have something to say to my friend."

"Play us no tricks, and we'll let you."

"If you would spare him—"

"'Tis idle, I say! But there, ye shall be having while the blessed man says three Paternosters, and not the least taste of time beyond!"

Colonel John made a sign to the priest, who, bowing himself on the wet sod, covered his eyes with his hand and began to pray. The men, at a sign from O'Sullivan, had drawn to either side, and the firelock-men were handling their pieces, with one eye on their leader and one on the prisoners.

Colonel John took Bale's hand. "What matter, soon or late?" he said. "Here, or on our beds, we die in our duty. Let us say—*In manus tuas—*"

"Popish! Popish!" Bale muttered, shaking his head. He spoke hoarsely, his tongue cleaving to his mouth. His eyes were full of rage.

"Into Thy hands!" Colonel John said. He stooped nearer to his man's ear. "When I shout, jump and run!" he breathed. "I will hold two." Again he lifted his head, and looked calmly at the threatening figures standing about them, gaunt and dark, against the curtain of mist. They were waiting for the signal. The priest was half-way through his second Paternoster. His trembling tongue was stumbling, lagging more and more. As he ended it—the two men still standing hand in hand—Colonel John gripped Bale's fingers hard, but held him.

"What is that?" he cried in a loud voice—but still he held Bale tight, that he might not move. "What is that?" he repeated. On the ear—on his ear, first—had fallen the sound of hurrying feet.

They strained their eyes through the mist.

"And what'll this be?" O'Sullivan Og muttered suspiciously. "If you budge a step," he growled, "I'll drive this—"

"A messenger from The McMurrough," Colonel John said. If he was human, if his heart, at the hope of respite, beat upon his ribs as the heart of a worse man might have beaten, he did not betray it, save by a light in his eyes.

They had not to wait. A tall, lathy form emerged from the mist. It advanced with long leaps, the way they had come. A moment, and the messenger saw them, pulled up, and walked the intervening distance, his arms drooping and his breath coming in gasps. He had run apace, and he could not speak. But he nodded—as he wiped the saliva from his parted lips—to O'Sullivan Og to come aside with him, and the two moved off a space. The others eyed them while the message was given. Quickly, O'Sullivan Og came back.

"Ye may be thankful," he said dryly. "Ye've cheated the pikes for this time, no less. And 'tis safe ye are."

"You have the greater reason to be thankful," Colonel John replied solemnly. "You have been spared a foul crime."

"Faith, and I hope I may never do worse!" Og answered hardily, "than rid the world of two black Protestants an' them with a priest to make their souls! Many's the honest man's closed his eyes without that same. But 'tis no time for prating! I wonder at your honor, and you no more than out of the black water! Bring them along, boys," he continued. "We've work to do yet!"

"*Laus deo!*" the priest cried, lifting his hands. "Give Him the glory!"

"Amen," the colonel said softly. And for a moment he shut his eyes and stood with clasped hands. "I thank you kindly, father, for your prayers!" he said. "The words of a good man avail much!"

No more was said. For a few yards Bale walked unsteadily. But he recovered himself, and, urged by O'Sullivan's continual injunctions to hasten, the party were not long in retracing their steps. They reached the road, and took it, but in the direction of the landing-place. In a few minutes they were threading their way in single file across the saucer-like waste which lay behind the hill overlooking the jetty.

"Are you taking us to the French sloop?" Colonel John asked.

"Ye'll be as wise as the lave of us, by and by!" Og answered sulkily.

They crossed the shoulder near the tower, and strode down the slope to the stone pier. The mist lay thick on the water. The tide was almost at the flood. Og bade the men draw in one of the boats, ordered Colonel Sullivan and Bale to go out to the bow, and the pikemen to take the oars. He and the two firelock-men took their seats in the stern.

"Pull out, you cripples," he said; "and there'll be flood enough to be bringing us back."

The men bent to the clumsy oars, and the boat slid down the inlet, and passing under the beam of the French sloop, which lay moored farther along the jetty. Not a sign of life appeared on deck as they passed; the ship seemed to be deserted. Half a dozen strokes carried the boat beyond view of it, and the little party were alone on the bosom of the water that lay rocking smoothly between its unseen banks. Some minutes were spent in stout rowing, and soon the boat began to rise and fall on the Atlantic rollers.

"'Tis more deceitful than a pretty colleen," O'Sullivan Og said, "is the sea-fog, bad cess to it! My own father was lost in it. Will ye be seeing her, boys?"

"Ye'll not see her till ye touch her!" one of the rowers answered.

"And the tide running?" the other said. "Save us from that same!"

"She's farther out by three gunshots!" struck in a firelock-man. "We'll be drifting back, ye thieves of the world, if ye sit staring there! Pull, or we'll be inshore, an' ye know it."

For some minutes the men pulled steadily, while one of the passengers, apprised that their destination was the Spanish war-vessel, felt anything but eager to reach it. A Spanish war-ship meant imprisonment, possibly the Inquisition, persecution, and death. When the men lay at last on their oars, and swore that they must have passed the ship, he alone listened indifferently.

"'Tis a black fog!" O'Sullivan cried. "Where'll we be, I wonder?"

"Sure, you can make no mistake," one answered. "The wind's light off the land."

"We'll be pulling back, lads."

"That's the word."

The men put the boat about and started on the return journey. Suddenly Colonel John, crouching in the bow, where was scant room for Bale and himself, saw a large shape loom before him. Involuntarily he uttered a warning cry—O'Sullivan echoed it—the men tried to hold the boat. In doing this, one man was quicker than the other, the boat turned broadside on to her former course, and before the cry was well off O'Sullivan Og's lips, it swept violently athwart a cable hauled taut by the weight of a vessel straining to the flow of the tide. In a twinkling the boat careened, throwing its occupants into the water.

Colonel John and Bale were nearest to the hawser, and managed to seize it and cling to it. But the first wave washed over them, and, warned by this, they worked themselves along the rope until they could twist a leg over their support.

That effected, they shouted for help. But their shouts were merged in the wail of despair, of shrieks and cries that floated away into the mist. The boat, traveling with the last of the tide, had struck the cable with force, and was already drifting, a gun-shot away. Whether any saved themselves on it, the two clinging to the hawser could not see.

Bale, shivering and scared, would have shouted again, but Colonel John stayed him. "God rest their souls!" he said solemnly. "The men aboard can do nothing. By the time they'll have lowered a boat, it will be done with these."

"They can take us aboard," Bale said.

"Aye, if we want to go to Cadiz jail," Colonel John answered slowly. He was peering keenly toward the land.

"But what can we do, your honor?" Bale asked with a shiver.

"Swim ashore."

"Heaven forbid!"

"But you can swim?"

"Not that far. Not near that far,

I know I can't. I'll go down like a stone."

"Cadiz jail! Cadiz jail!" Colonel John muttered. "Isn't it worth a swim to escape that?"

"Aye, aye, but—"

"Do you see that oar drifting? In a twinkling it will be beyond reach. Off with your boots, man, off with your clothes, and to it! That oar is freedom! The tide is with us still, or it would not be moving that way. But let the tide turn, and we cannot do it."

"It's too far!"

"If you could see the shore," Colonel John argued, "you'd think nothing of it! With your chin on that oar, you can't sink. But it must be done before we are chilled."

He was stripping himself to his underclothes while he talked—and in haste, fearing that he might feel the hawser slacken and dip, a sign that the tide had turned. Already Colonel John had plans and hopes, but freedom was needful if they were to be pursued.

"Come!" he cried impulsively. "Man, you are not a coward. Come!"

He let himself into the water, and after a moment of hesitation Bale followed his example, let the rope go, and with quick, nervous strokes, bobbed after him in the direction of the oar. Colonel John deserved the less credit, as he was the better swimmer. He swam with long, slow strokes, with his head low; and his eyes watched his follower. A half-minute of violent exertion, and Bale's outstretched hand clutched the oar. It was a thick, clumsy implement, and it floated high. Colonel John bade him rest his hands on it, and thrust it before him lengthwise, swimming with his feet.

For five minutes nothing was said, but they proceeded slowly and patiently, trusting—for they could see nothing—that the tide was still seconding their efforts. Colonel John knew that if the shore lay, as he judged, about half a mile distant, he must, to reach it, swim slowly and reserve his strength. Though a natural desire to decide the question at once impelled him to greater exertion, he resisted it. At the worst, he reflected that the oar would support them both for a short time.

They had been swimming thus for ten minutes, as he calculated, when Bale, who floated higher, cried joyfully that he could see the land. Colonel John made no answer — he needed all his breath. But a minute later he, too, saw it loom low through the fog; and then, in some minutes afterward, they felt bottom, and waded onto a ledge of rocks which projected a hundred yards from the mainland, eastward of the mouth of the inlet. The tide had served them well by carrying them a little to the eastward. They sat a moment on the rocks to recover their strength; then, stung to action by the chill wind, which set their teeth chattering, they got to their feet and scrambled painfully along the rocks until they reached the marshy bank of the inlet. A pilgrimage scarcely less painful brought them, at the end of ten minutes, to the jetty.

Here all was quiet. If any of O'Sullivan Og's party had saved themselves, they were not to be seen; nor was there any indication that the accident was known on shore.

While Colonel John had been picking his way, his thoughts had not been idle; now, without hesitation, he made along the jetty until the masts of the French sloop loomed beside it. He boarded the vessel by a plank, and looked round him. There was no watch on deck; but a melancholy voice piping a French song rose from the depths of the cabin. Colonel John bade Bale follow him—they were shivering from head to foot—and descended the companion.

The singer was Captain Augustin. He lay on his back in his bunk, while his mate, between sleep and waking, formed an unwilling audience.

Tout mal chaussé, tout mal vêtu,

sang the captain in a doleful voice.

Pauvre marin, d'où reviens-tu?
Tout doux! Tout doux!

With the last word on his lips he called on the name of his Maker, for he saw two half-naked, dripping figures peering at him through the open door. For the moment he took them, by the dim light, for the revenants of drowned

men; while his mate, a Breton, rose on his elbow and shrieked aloud.

It was only when Colonel John called them by name that they were reassured, lost their fears, and recognized in the pallid figures before them their late passenger and his attendant. Then the cabin rang with oaths and invocations, with *"Mon Dieu!"* and *"Ma foi!"* Immediately clothes were fetched, and rough cloths to dry the visitors and restore warmth to their limbs, and cognac and food—for the two were half starved. While these comforts were being administered, and half the crew, crouching about the companion, listened, Colonel John told very shortly the tale of their adventures, of the fate that had menaced them, and their narrow escape. In return, he learned that the Frenchmen were virtually prisoners.

"They have taken our equipage, cursed dogs!" Augustin explained, refraining with difficulty from a dance of rage. "The rudder, the sails—they are not, see you! They have locked all in the house on shore, that we may not go by night, you understand. And by day the ship-of-war, beyond — Spanish it is possible, pirate for certain—goes about to sink us if we move! Ah, *sacré nom*, that I had never seen this land of swine!"

"Have they a guard over the rudder and the sails?" Colonel John asked.

"I know not. What matter?"

"If not, it were not hard to regain them," Colonel John said, with an odd light in his eyes.

"And the ship-of-war, beyond? What would she be doing?"

"While the fog lies?" Colonel John replied. "Nothing."

"The fog?" Augustin exclaimed. He clapped his hand to his head, ran up the companion, and as quickly returned. "There is a fog," he cried, "like the inside of Jonah's whale! For the ship beyond, I snap the finger at her! She is not! Then forward, *mes braves!* Yet, tranquil! They have taken the arms!"

"Aye?" Colonel John said, still eating. "Is that so? Then it seems to me we must retake them. That first."

"What—you?" Augustin exclaimed.

"Why not?" Colonel John responded, looking round him, a twinkle in his eye. "The goods of his host are, in a manner of speaking, the house of his host. And it is the duty—as I said once before—"

"But is it not that they are—of your kin?"

"That is the reason," Colonel John answered cryptically, and to the skipper's surprise. But that surprise lasted a very short time. "Listen to me," the colonel continued. "This goes further than you think, and to cure it we must not stop short. Let me speak; and do you, my friends, listen. Courage, and I will give you not only freedom, but a good bargain."

The skipper stared. "How so?" he asked.

Then Colonel John unfolded the plan on which he had been meditating, while the gorse-bushes pricked his feet and the stones gibed them. It was a great plan, and, before all things, a bold one—so bold that the seamen, who crowded the foot of the companion, opened their eyes.

Augustin smacked his lips. "It is what you call—*magnifique!*" he said. "But," he shrugged his shoulders, "it is not possible."

"If the fog holds?"

"But if it—what you call—lifts? When then, eh?"

"Through how many storms have you ridden?" the colonel answered. "Yet, if the mast had gone?"

"We had gone! *Vraiment!*"

"That did not keep you ashore."

Augustin cogitated over this for a while. Then: "But we are eight only," he objected; "myself, nine."

"And two are eleven," Colonel John replied.

"We do not know the ground."

"I do."

The skipper shrugged his shoulders.

"And they have treated you— But you know how they have treated you," Colonel John went on, appealing to the lower motive.

The group of seamen who stood about the door growled seamen's oaths.

"There are things that seem hard," the colonel continued, "and being begun, pouf! they are done while you think of them!"

Captain Augustin swelled out his breast. "That is true," he said. "I have done things like that."

"Then do one more!"

The skipper's eyes surveyed the men's faces. He caught the spark in their eyes.

"I will do it," he cried.

"Good!" Colonel John cried. "The arms first!"

(To be continued.)

THE MERRY WAR.

BY THOMAS R. YBARRA.

A SHORT STORY.

JIMMY REEVES burst into the sanctum of the *Hemisphere Magazine,* eyes ablaze.

"Coles, my boy," he sputtered, leaning over the editorial chair; "the best ever!"

The editor put aside his blue pencil. Enthusiasm in Jimmy Reeves was of good omen. Without it, as Coles himself had once tersely put it, Jimmy's humorous writings might plausibly be attributed to Schopenhauer.

"Fine!" said Coles. He smiled encouragingly, though still a trifle severe, as becomes an editor, even when he is only thirty years old. "But, Jimmy, mind you, it must be funny this time. When I assigned you to Coney for the *Hemisphere,* you did Greenwood by mistake. What's the story?"

He whom Coles considered America's most promising young humorist bent forward eagerly, eyes sparkling.

"Listen!" he said. "Parry, of the *Evening Star,* took me along with him to interview the next Zulian revolution. It's rich. It's a graft. It just writes itself. It—"

"South America, eh?" mused Coles. "There might be a good funny story there."

"Might be!" burst forth Reeves anew. "Might be! Why, listen, you. I have suddenly become the bosom friend of General Francisco de Paula Zamora. He is the leader of the Zulian Nationalist Liberal Reform party, means to invade his native land with fire and sword, and—is sitting at a dago hotel near Union Square swathed in flannels and giddy from drugs, because he is mortally afraid of dying from what he calls a 'cheell.' His second in command, General Arias—who'll be minister of war if Zamora wins the decisive tiddledywinks game—hardly dares go out of doors because he is firmly convinced that he'll be killed by an auto.

"Arévalo, the adjutant-general—oh, Coles, you ought to see Arévalo—thinks that the attention of the world is centered on his mustache—twirls it day and night, and tells me ingenuously how every American girl whom he meets on the street loves him. Oh, it's the original circus! When those three walk along Broadway, they look like the conspirators' song in Act II. Listen! I'll read you an extract from the 'Official Proclamation of the Chief of the Zulian Nationalist Liberal Reform Revolution.'"

Reeves pulled from his pocket some typewritten sheets, assumed a melodramatic pose, and began:

"To the Sovereign People of Zulia!

"Fellow citizens!

"Like Themistocles to the Athenians, like Dante to the Florentines, I speak to you from exile, counting on you to aid me in driving from our beloved fatherland the tyrant Berrío and that unspeakable gang, the Conservative Federalist party.

"Take heart, O patriots of Zulia! Soon I shall land among you, to lead you, as Epaminondas did the Thebans, as Hannibal did the Carthaginians, to glorious victory

over our oppressors! Together, we shall banish that ferocious monster, that ghastly composite of Caligula and Attila, who now disgraces the presidential chair of our beloved country! Take heart, patriots! Like Bonaparte at Elba—"

"And so on," said Reeves. "Hark to the grand finale:

"But if it be ordained that my disinterested and heroic efforts shall be, like those of Kossuth, in vain, then, with arms folded and head held high, I shall await the verdict of Fate!

"New York, October, etc., etc."

"Rich, eh?" inquired Reeves, when he had finished.

Coles nodded.

"Write the bunch up," he ordered. "Let's see—to-day's Monday. Can you have the article done two weeks from Saturday?"

"Rats!" ejaculated Reeves. "I'm going to freeze to that infant Zulian revolution until it's a respectable adult government." He drew himself up. "You are lacking in respect to me, Coles," he announced grandly. "I forgot to tell you that I'm no longer Jimmy Reeves, but El Capitán Jaime de Reeves, of the Zulian Nationalist Liberal Reform party, attached to the staff of General Francisco de Paula Zamora, the hope of Zulia. Cringe, dog, cringe. Why, they think I'm the ace, that bunch. And we're all sailing south together, to free dear old Zulia from the intolerable galling Conservative Federalist yoke.

"When?" asked Coles.

"In two hours," answered Jimmy.

"Bully!" cried Coles. He had caught some of the other's enthusiasm. "Make it a series of articles, Jimmy. And—here's luck. Don't get shot."

"How could I, with that gang, unless I tried suicide?" shouted Jimmy. And as the young adventurer hurried out of the sanctum, Coles took up his blue pencil again, smiling.

"Bully!" he repeated presently, half aloud. "Jimmy's found himself."

And he resumed the editing of manuscript for the magazine which he intended to make a shrine to his pet deity —American Humor.

Two weeks later the editor of the *Hemisphere* heard from Reeves. The letter was dated at Curaçao, Dutch West Indies. It read:

Coles, my boy, the circus isn't in it with this outfit. On the way down, our Grand Chief Bad Man and his First Assistant Machete Swisher were so abjectly and pathetically seasick that they appeared on deck only four or five times, and even then the grand chief was so afraid of dying of a "cheell" that he darned near did. As for Arévalo, he spent much time giving a new Marcel twirl to his mustache and informing me how madly he was worshiped by a young American girl on board, who, on her part, never lost an opportunity of telling me, with shocking frankness, what kind of a fool she considered him. It was rich.

And you ought to see us here at Curaçao. We snoop about darkly, firmly convinced that Queen Wilhelmina and her consort—this place is Dutch, you know—are about to frustrate our generous and patriotic plans for pushing the Zulian government off its perch. Fortunately for us, however, the Dutch authorities know from experience that to-day's revolution may be to-morrow's government, and *vice versa*, hence they open their eyes in horror when told by the Zulian consul what desperate breakers of international law we are, only to close them again in phlegmatic unconcern when we make a flat failure of masquerading as innocent tourists, engaged in studying the influence of the gable in Dutch architecture.

We hang out at the Gran Hotel del Universo, run by a Zulian maniac called Lozada, who used to be minister of public instruction in his native land. He is coming with us on our piratical expedition, in hopes of picking up his august ex-job again, hotel-keeping having suddenly palled on him, though he enlivens it by a drink-mixing machine of his own invention, famous throughout the West Indies, which sounds like a ten-horse-power file drawn soulfully over the jagged edge of a china plate. It is gradually driving me mad.

For instance, I sit down to concoct fine writing in anticipation of my forthcoming great battle article, as follows, to wit:

"What have you got?" inquires the Revolution of the Government.

"Eighteen miles of gold braid, a large yellow sash, a jeweled sword-hilt and this dinky cocked hat," replies the Government proudly.

"I beat you by an epaulet and a comprehensive acquaintance with Dutch," chortles the Revolution.

"Oh, very well," growls the Government, abdicating crossly.

"Grrrrbzzzzzftch!!" goes the machine mixer, and inspiration closes up for the day. Honest, you ought to hear the thing, Coles. It's the national hymn of Matteawan. Soon I'll wreck it.

We sail to-night on the most rakish schooner in the world, and expect to be off the Zulian coast at dawn. I suppose that toreador suits will be distributed to us after we're on board, likewise repeating guitars and double rounds of castanets. Oh, it's simply—there goes that infernal cocktail-mixer. Excuse me while I wreck it.

Yours, JIMMY.

II.

"ZULIA! Ah, Zulia!"

That cry disturbed Jimmy Reeves's dreams of future literary eminence as he lay wrapped in his blue-and-red "cobija" on the deck of the revolutionists' little schooner.

He sat up. The night was still dark, but a stone's throw from the vessel's side Jimmy could distinguish the silhouette of great, gaunt mountains, rising sheer from the water's edge, up, up, far toward the starred sky. By the rail, enveloped in their "cobijas," stood General Zamora, his second, Arias, and Lozada, the ex-hotelkeeper, devouring with their eyes the dim outline of their native land.

"Zulia! Ah, *mi Zulia!*" said the revolutionary chief again, and his voice shook with emotion.

Somehow, Jimmy resented this. It wasn't funny. And when dawn revealed the mountains in all their grim vastness, they looked too solid, somehow, for comic-opera scenery. The young American felt puzzled and uneasy.

Soon a man signaled from the shore to the schooner. After an answering signal, a small boat was lowered and manned. Zamora, Arias, Lozada, Reeves, and Arévalo were rowed ashore. Stepping on the sand, Jimmy found himself among hundreds of revolutionary soldiers, stretching along the strip of beach in long, straggling lines—dwarfed, swarthy fellows, some grizzled, some mere boys. They were wearing dirty yellow ribbons around wide-brimmed straw hats, and kept hitching up ragged trousers and cracking coarse jokes amid jovial guffaws as they stood leaning slouchily on gleaming, wicked-looking rifles.

Their commanders at once joined the revolutionary leaders in a hurried conference. When it was over the order to march was given, rifles were lazily shouldered, and the motley force zigzagged inland.

"On to Borburata!" remarked Arévalo, the adjutant, to Reeves. And with that he started humming a light tune and gaily twirling his luxuriant mustache. But Jimmy questioned him persistently until he learned that Borburata, their destination, was a small town twenty miles inland, where Zamora intended to effect a junction with the revolutionist general, Torrealba, who had risen against the Zulian government with a formidable army of five thousand men.

"Which," Arévalo observed, "it will be a great pleasure to meet. Incidentally, President Berrío himself, with the main government army, is also in the neighborhood of Borburata, and will undoubtedly look us up. *Que venga!* We'll be ready." And the light-hearted young dandy fell to humming again.

Every village through which they passed was deserted, except for a few children and old people, cowering in the huts. Once, the head of the revolutionary column, wheeling suddenly round a turn in the trail, came upon a lonely hovel. A man and woman rushed to the door. Instantly one of Zamora's officers seized the man and thrust him rudely into the ranks. A cartridge-belt was buckled round him, a rifle forced into his hands—he was a soldier. The woman, shrieking, raised her hands to Zamora, cantering past on his horse.

"War is war," said the veteran not unkindly, passing onward. And Jimmy heard rough jests from the soldiers as they slouched past the woman, prostrate on the threshold of her home.

In the glare of the noonday the dusty column plodded wearily into the little adobe town of Borburata, stacking arms in the square plaza and along the arcade-lined streets. Arévalo promptly vanished in quest of an old flame, whose absolutely unapproached charms and fidelity had formed the staple of his conversation with Jimmy for the last ten miles, at least. Jimmy, after "washing up" and taking a long rest in the house commandeered by Zamora as a head-

quarters, started, toward evening, on a stroll through the town.

Deathly quiet hung over the little place. Every door was closed, every window barred tight. No townspeople stirred in the streets. Over a few houses hung foreign flags—Spanish, Italian, French.

Jimmy stopped suddenly, gazing curiously at a bedraggled Stars and Stripes floating over a wide doorway. Beside it was a small, yellow-haired individual, who accosted Jimmy with the words, "You're a foreigner," in tones of deep conviction.

"United States," agreed Jimmy. And there was a violent handshake, as the little man loudly proclaimed himself the local American consul.

"Though my name is Schwanthaler, and I am born in Frankfort," he added.

After he had drawn from Jimmy the why and wherefore of his presence in Borburata, Schwanthaler seemed much displeased.

"*Ach,* foolish, foolish," he sputtered. "I shall have to keep an eye on you, yes? Now, remember, the consulate is your home. If you are in trouble, come to it." And Jimmy, promising that he would, continued on his way.

At the revolutionary headquarters he found Arévalo, humming "A San Antonio bendito" to a gay little air.

"Reeves," he remarked, "nowhere in the world is there another pair of eyes like hers, or another voice so sweet and silvery. She has just been singing to me:

"A San Antonio bendito
Tres cosas pido
Salud y riquezas
Y un buen marido.
Pero el santo me responde,
Ay! me responde:
'Como ha de ser bueno
Si ha de ser hombre?'"

"That," observed Arévalo, "accompanied on a guitar by the most beautiful girl in the universe, is, to put it mildly, delicious. I am very happy, Reeves—though, of course, I feel badly about the news General Zamora has received."

"What news?" inquired Jimmy.

"Why, Torrealba, curse him, has gone over to the government side with his five thousand men. He and President Berrío will be knocking at the gates of Borburata within a few hours. Bah! Let 'em come. *Que importa?* Listen, Reeves. The second verse—"

"What'll Zamora do?" inquired Jimmy. The dandy stopped brushing dust from his natty white ducks and looked up, puzzled.

"Why, fight," he said. "What did you suppose? Fight, *amigo*—naturally. Now, don't interrupt, barbarous Northerner. The second verse goes—

"A San Antonio bendito—"

But this time he was interrupted by a bugle sounding the call to arms.

III.

At dawn ten thousand men attacked Zamora's fifteen hundred, and were repulsed. Shaken, but still defiant, the defenders of Borburata, crouching behind earthworks and hastily loopholed walls, prepared for the next onslaught of the government troops.

It came, heralded by sharp cries of command and thundering cheers. Street to street, house to house, the two armies struggled. Jimmy Reeves, soaked in sweat, his revolver grasped in blackened fingers, learned to know the smell of powder and the look of death. Again the government soldiers reeled back. And *"Viva Zamora!"* burst from Jimmy's parched throat, and high in the air went his hat, while about him dusky men, dancing with joy, hurled vociferous insult into the huddled, panting ranks of their opponents.

Then—"Here they are again!" came in warning tones from old Arias. *"Muchacos, prepárense!"*

Sure enough, dark masses of men were debouching into the narrow street. They plunged forward.

"Fuego!" shouted Arias.

Again there was the roar of rifles; again the front rank of the advancing mass toppled over into the dust of the roadway; again those behind, with lowered, gleaming bayonets, came leaping over the bodies of their comrades, hurtled into the lines of Zamora's men, and there went at it grimly, hand to hand. Jimmy's revolver went on snapping and spitting with the best of them, until,

in a clearing of the smoke, flying groups of enemies told the young American their tale, and caused him to smite Lozada and Arévalo on the back and bawl, "*Viva Zamora!*" again and again in hoarse, exultant savagery.

"*Viva!*" came in feeble response from a man lying gasping on the ground.

Reeves turned. It was old Arias.

"*Americanito,*" he whispered thickly as Jimmy knelt beside him—"anyhow, it wasn't one of those cursed Broadway autos that got me. Give me a cigarette. I've time for one."

But he hadn't. Bending forward, Jimmy Reeves gently closed the old man's eyes. Then, reloading his revolver, he hurried back to the firing-line.

As he reached it, Berrío and the traitor, Torrealba, hurled their entire reserve force against the defenders of Borburata.

The revolutionists' lines swayed, sagged, reformed, bent back, closed up again desperately, staggered, and then, broken in a dozen places by frenzied masses of the enemy, they were borne down and swept away in one last agony of resistance. Zamora's revolution had failed.

Reeves, stunned by the suddenness of it, was carried back in the rout.

Scores of wild-eyed soldiers, throwing away their rifles as they ran, tumbled past him. One of them, shot through the back, fell prone at the American's feet, calling with his last breath on his patron saint. The American recognized in him the man who, the day before, had been dragged from his roadside hovel.

Half stupefied, Jimmy stood gazing irresolutely at the corpse till he was roused by a touch on his arm. Arévalo was beside him.

"Come on," shouted the dandy; "it's all over."

Mechanically, Jimmy followed him.

"Where are we going?" he asked.

"To General Zamora," answered the adjutant.

"Where is Lozada?" inquired Reeves.

"Dead," replied Arévalo.

As he spoke he kicked open the door of Zamora's headquarters. Jimmy, entering close behind, shut and bolted it again.

General Zamora was seated at a table in the brick-paved front room. He was smoking.

"*Se acabó!*" cried Arévalo without ceremony. "We're done for. Escape, general."

But Zamora shrugged his shoulders.

"Why?" he objected calmly. "I'm too old. I had my chance. I lost. Let this be the end." He turned to Jimmy, kindness in his dark eyes. "What!" he said gaily. "Go back to your cold North and die of a cheell? B-r-r-r-r-r! Never!" Then he laid his hand on Jimmy's shoulder. "*Americanito,*" he urged, "go to the American consulate. They'll protect you there."

"No," said Jimmy. He pointed to the *patio,* where Zamora's horse was tethered, champing from impatience to be off. "Escape, general!" he cried; and Arévalo, grasping his chief's arm in his excitement, joined eloquently in the plea. But Zamora, again shrugging his shoulders, resumed his seat by the table.

A savage blow from outside smashed the wooden shutters of a window. A face, distorted to fiendishness, appeared. Arévalo fired his revolver into it, point-blank. It disappeared. At the same instant the door was dashed from its hinges. One, two, three, a dozen government soldiers leaped into the room.

Arévalo faced them smiling, airily twirling his mustache. There was the gleam of a machete, and the dandy, gashed and bleeding, tumbled into the brick-dust.

General Zamora rose to his feet, threw his head back, and folded his arms.

For a second or two, Jimmy Reeves did not move. Then he suddenly drew his sword, waved it madly above his head, and rushed straight at the knot of government soldiers.

"*Viva Zamora!*" he shouted. "*Viva la revolución! Muera Berrío!*"

Something struck his wrist, sending his sword spinning through the air. A blow from a rifle-butt stretched him on the floor, senseless. General Zamora, stabbed to the heart, fell heavily across the prostrate body of the American.

Jimmy came to next day at the American consulate. Schwanthaler was beside his bed.

"You fortunate young dog," growled the German. "I'm going to get you out of this country before you trust your luck once too often, never you worry."

"What's doing outside?" inquired Jimmy feebly.

"Oh, they're just putting the finishing touches to sacking the town," replied the consul.

In his eagerness for news, Jimmy half rose on his elbow, whereupon Frau Schwanthaler, the consul's wife, entering with chicken-broth, shooed her husband away, and enjoined silence on the invalid. And Jimmy, weak and silent, lay back on his pillow and thought deeply.

Next day he was allowed to get up. With bandaged head he helped Frau Schwanthaler dole out black beans and coarse arepas to a long line of ragged, abject, starving townspeople. In the evening he lay in a hammock on the consulate veranda, watching the glare in the skies from kerosene-soaked heaps of corpses which government soldiers were burning. "You can start on your trip home to-morrow," announced Schwanthaler. And Jimmy smiled wanly, and was glad.

Coles, in the editorial sanctum of the *Hemisphere,* stopped reading Jimmy Reeves's manuscript and looked with comical disgust at the author.

"Man," he said, "do you call this humorous?"

DOREE.

BY BILLEE GLYNN.

A SHORT STORY.

DOREE! To the camp the name meant a pair of dark, joyous eyes—eyes by which any one of the forty lusty loggers, foreman and all, would gladly have sworn—a comely, buxom form, a temperament that had grown up in the free spaces of life, and a complexion that held the clearness of the open air.

She came with her father, a hand-logger—not any too careful of her in his gruff, reticent way—and they started to keep house in one of the cabins on the beach, close to the boom-man, and about a third of a mile down from camp. The inlet steamer called there once a day with the mail, and there was no other woman within forty miles. The boom-man was old. He looked on Doree without any awakening in his glance, and took to playing black-jack with her father.

Not so the camp. The camp heard of her, looked in one another's eyes, and swore softly. Then, one by one, they made it their business to see her, and swore again. A woman of any kind—but such a woman! The boom-man had never been so popular with his associates before—the mail he dealt out had never been so much in demand.

They couldn't wait till he brought it up to them. Poor old Mike! After all, it was a shame to have him climb up a mountainside on a slippery, treacherous chute with a few letters and papers, when it was so easy to go down after them. It took all the ginger out of him for jumping logs. So every man took to going down after his own mail, and would trust it to no one else. And he would come back whistling—that is, if Doree had spoken to him, or shed for a moment upon him the welcome of her dark eye. As for her—well, she treated them all alike. She was simply Doree, in every pulse of her the light and rhythm of running water, or its musing depths cupped in some flower-fringed pool.

A good two weeks it went on so—two weeks in which no one was anything in particular to her, and the chance stood the same for all.

Then one evening, while the moon stuck itself, shedding silver, from the topmost branch of a ragged pine, the men clustered about the lazy, glimmering fire that curled its wraith of smoke so fantastically in the dusk, and smoked in preoccupied silence, saying nothing whatever of the subject nearest their hearts. Formerly they had been in the habit of speaking of her—speaking with the frank admiration of men who lived in the open, and of whom none had yet usurped any claim above the other.

Now — Mike still stood there on his bent limbs, grinning at the effect of his story. She was out in the dory—with Feenay — drifting! Down there you could hear them, her laughter, soft, low-tuned, and deep as a sigh, breathing shoreward. Ah, but it was a night to make love! So Mike had told them dramatically, with an Irish imagination, and the humor that delights sometimes in stroking the cat the wrong way. But not a man answered him. They sat there smoking, and the fire sputtered. At last some one cleared his throat.

"It's a case, I suppose, of the brave deservin' the fair," suggested Fowler in cramped tones that failed utterly in their attempt at lightness.

Then suddenly a dark, threatening form rose, scowling down at them. It was Birchard, his black eyes beads of anger.

"Not if I know it!" he growled; then strode out from the fire, and the bunk-house door closed with a slam.

Slim Jim, the whistle-man, was the first to break the silence. He chuckled in a monotone.

"The Squawman's got it bad," he said. It was a sobriquet they had given Birchard because of the straight brush-back of his black hair and the eagle curve of his nose.

Receiving no reply to his comment, Slim Jim broke out again.

"Wonder if he could lick Curly?" he asked, glancing the round of faces. "Lordy, what a scrap!"

But no one made reply to that, either. The men looked at one another, that was all, as if a question had been raised that might carry discussion. Then Ridley, the young skidding-boss, reached out to poke up the fire, echoing a huge sigh.

"I guess there's more'n Curly and the Squawman got it," he said, "if the truth was known. I raickon a good scaler would find us all a little soft at heart—except Slimmy, here, maybe, an' he's married. We've reason, too—if a pretty woman's a reason, and I guess this one could persuade the most of us. But it's no use. Curly and the Squawman would have an easy runnin', anyway, against the rest of us, so we all stand out—do you see?—and let them run it themselves according to the rules of fair play. I only hope," he added fervently, "that she'll give them both the haul-back."

The concluding wish found unanimous indorsement in the circle of musing faces; then a man got up and threw back his shoulders. It was Simmons, the bookkeeper, who stood a chance with the girl against the other two men, if any one did. He spoke for the crowd.

"All right, Ridley," he said; "Curly and the Squawman play the game alone. The rest of us stand out an' watch 'em to it. There's to be no sides. Let's wait up for Curly."

So they rooted up the embers and fell to chatting amiably, and by and by Peters, the young islander — Prince Edward Island, what other could there be?—got out his old, rickety violin and shook such music from the strings that the moonlight turned into sprites and danced there.

Feenay, commonly called "Curly," came after a while, whistling an air in accompaniment. He approached the fire, his hat on one side of the twisted light-brown hair that gave him his title.

Black Jack, the rigging-slinger, screwed up an eye at Ridley.

"'Pears like Curly were goin' to stay all night," he bantered. "Think I'd better go after him."

"Not yet," returned Ridley. "You can't swim, and on a night like this a dory's only big enough for two."

Feenay laughed, but nobody heard him.

Black Jack again took up the thread of the conversation.

"I'd like to see the dory," he said, "or an ocean liner that 'ud hold Curly and Birchard. Say, look at here"—and

he carefully emphasized the words on his fingers—"them two fellers have got it so bad that's it's likely to pry a board or two off the bunk-house for 'em both to sleep there. Never saw the Squawman so mad in my life. He won't do a thing to Curly."

The laugh went round, then an immediate acceptance of Feenay's presence.

"All right, boys," said Feenay; "hands up to it here. And she's worth a whole house, instead of a board or two. Birchard be hanged!"

Then, as the violin crooned out "Annie Laurie," he broke into the words of the song.

> For her face it was the fairest
> That e'er the sun shone on—

It was a rich, clear tenor voice; and as he stood there singing, a perfectly developed man with the youth still bubbling in him, he looked the very zest of life. He was Irish, Feenay, with good looks and a smile. Still singing, he left them for the bunk-house, and the group shortly afterward scattered in the same direction, or toward the smaller shanties that served more private shelter. The brown-spotted pointer alone was left, his head on his paws, blinking over his dreams by the light of the last dying embers.

II.

THE very next day it was that the cook fell ill. It's the way of a cook in a logging camp to get sick when there's considerable pay on his book and away in the distance the town lights bobble an invitation. But to his credit let it be said, Sweeney was sick in real earnest. They took him down to the boat, and for a week tried to fill his place, while Slimmy, the whistle-man, tortured digestion to a last patience, and finally made himself sick with his own cooking. Then one day the men came in to dinner, and a girl was there, and a real meal on the table.

It was Doree, of course. Their tale of wo had drifted down to her, and she had come to the rescue—for a day or two, at any rate, to save a few lives that didn't matter, as she carelessly expressed it.

Her action put the final flourish to the last letter of their adoration. What they didn't call her hit the sky trying to get higher. And they meant every word. Yet, they remembered their agreement. They stood back to watch the light grow in Feenay's blue eye and the chip assert itself a little more on Birchard's breadth of shoulder, while the girl looked from one to the other with the reflection growing in her glance.

He was a man to notice, Birchard, dark and fiery as a night after the moon. His muscles were straps banded all over him, and while shorter than Feenay, he was still of good height, with a wonderful column of neck rearing his black head, a thing of daring and blood. He was a straight savage, indeed—the finest sample of one—from the sinister crouch of the eyebrows to the swoop of the dark, heavy mustache beneath the bend of the nose, and every passion leaped out of him, frank and uncontrolled, as he felt it.

Feenay was just as fine a specimen, in his way, but the direct opposite. Longer and less thickly built, his strength lay more in litheness and agility. Yet he had a reputation for a fight. He was light-haired and optimistic. He carried in his manner a debonair carelessness, a separateness of joy, that made him peculiarly attractive, while beneath all ran the mixed depth, humor, and tenderness of the typical Irishman. They were a pair, certainly, and the girl had reason to reflect.

Tarkins, the young foreman, humorously aware of the situation, made it about even for them. He let Birchard go out with her one night, and Feenay the next. He had always something for the other fellow to do. By the time the new cook came, Doree looked from one to the other and reflected more than ever behind the depths of her dark eyes.

But she was long since up to the game of playing them both. In fact, she insisted on her independence in the matter, and the engagements she made with the one she did not permit the other to break in on. So, one evening it would be Birchard in the dory with her, drifting out there in the inlet, moonlit and hushed as if on very purpose for lovers, and next time Feenay.

At work the two men had stopped speaking to each other. It was one of the manners of Birchard's hating, and the Irishman had laughingly accepted his rival's silence. Yet he was as intensely in earnest, in his different way. And through it all each man continued to plead to the girl against the other, and she met each with banter or laughing defiance, yet with that look of reflection shining deeper in her eyes.

Theirs were such different sorts of love-making. Out in the dory, Birchard mostly sat still, burning her with his glance, and sometimes she would grow restless.

"Why do you look at me like that?" she would ask.

"Because I love you," he would declare. "I want you." And, backed by such forces of virility, of physical power, the words carried a thrill that moved her strangely.

"How am I to know?" she would ask. "Perhaps you do not really love me at all. You're a great big rough man, and it would be so easy to throw a little girl like me from you."

One night, to words like that, Birchard actually got down on his knees, but she laughed him up again.

"Oaths are never any good by moonlight," she said.

"No," he blurted out, "for you love that hound, Feenay."

Then she sighed softly.

"Oh, he's just like you, with a little more blarney. One never knows whether he means what he says or not. It would be so easy for him to laugh a woman away from him, just as it would be for you to throw her over by force. He's nice, though — don't you think?"

"He's a fool," said Birchard. "Look! I could crush him like that." And he clenched his hands.

She paused for a moment, thrilled by his look of power, by the primitive force speaking out of him. Then she spoke warningly. "You'd better not," she said, "or I'll quit thinking that you're nice, too."

So she kept both men at a certain distance. But that night, when they got out of the dory, Birchard caught her in his arms and kissed her in spite of herself. She resented it strongly, and they parted in anger. But when he was gone something in her heart went out to him and left her faint, and she could have cried after him. At last she felt that it was Birchard whom she loved.

The next evening, however, Feenay was with her, the moonlight meshing itself in his curly, unhatted hair as he dabbled an oar thoughtfully in the water.

"Doree," he was saying — "cruel little Doree!" Then he smiled up at her. "Lordy!" he exclaimed, "but you're lovely to-night."

"And cruel!" she returned satirically.

"Because you're so lovely. And you must reckon you can play a game too long when a fellow's heart's in it."

"I don't see the game, myself." She tilted her chin.

"The Squawman and I!"

"Perhaps it's your move, then!"

He edged deliberately closer to her.

"It isn't checkers, Doree, but a jackpot, and Birchard and I have been bluffing each other long enough. It's high time some one made the rake-in."

"Then you'd better show your hand, hadn't you?"

"I've told you I love you."

"As you've told a hundred other girls."

He leaned toward her, breathing earnestness.

"Cross my heart, Doree—I swear it! Why can't you believe me?"

"Because you're Irish, perhaps," she said. "An Irishman never cares very much for anything."

"Would you like to believe me?"

She shrugged her shoulders.

"I don't know."

"Ah, then it *is* Birchard!" There was real bitterness in his tone; yet, when he laughed, it was with a resumed careless note. "You might say so, at least. If it's the Squawman, then it's time I should quit."

"You seem awful ready to quit," she rejoined, a little piqued.

He laughed again.

"Perhaps, after all, I'm too Irish to let you break my heart."

Then they fell into silence, the girl eying him furtively in the moonlight. She was thinking and feeling as a wom-

an thinks and feels in a moment of crisis. That seeming joyous capability of his of existing without her, tinged even in contrast to the glory of the darker man—the man whose power and primitiveness were a magnet to her.

Yet in Feenay's love-making there was nothing light. She felt that he loved her. Even in his apparent carelessness as he lay back there whistling an Irish love-song, there was the significance of a wonderful gift of tenderness and cherishing. He wasn't overpowering, that was all, and she was a woman to be mastered. It was in a tone of irritation that she spoke to him a moment later.

"Take me home," she said; "you've got me muddled."

III.

He picked up the oars, and the dory shot shoreward. He helped her out, and they were bidding each other good night when a step sounded on the gravel. Still holding her hand, Feenay turned and smiled straight into the face of his rival, the Squawman.

It was a challenge, that smile, and Birchard accepted it. Besides, he had come for this very thing. They threw off their coats and faced each other in silence, as for a moment the girl stood between them. Feenay was still smiling debonairly; his antagonist, a savage now, breathed anger from every swelling muscle. Then, upon some sudden decision, the girl stepped back to let them come together—just as Feenay put out a hand to thrust her aside.

"I'll referee this," she said gravely. And the words were scarcely more than uttered when Birchard jumped in with a terrific right swing. He missed, however; and the next few moments were a swirl of fists—attacks and counter-attacks—in which nothing was clear.

Then, with the foam off, they settled down to the substance of the thing. Feenay's agility was standing him in good stead. He plunged in and out with a speed his companion could not intercept, showering a perfect pelting of face blows that brought blood and made the savage before him hideous, but had seemingly little other effect.

Then once, coming out, he got a body jolt that hurt his wind for a moment, and his antagonist rushed him, slashing recklessly with both hands. Step by step, he was forced back till the surf licked at his feet; then, with a quick forward plunge, the Irishman clinched for an instant and turned, fighting with his back to the girl. Two men — her father and the boom-man—had come out of their cabins to watch the fray.

The fighters were standing up to each other now, Birchard hurling his whole force repeatedly into the other's guard. Feenay, with his longer reach, stood to advantage in such attacks, but the man before him was a piece of unhewn oak that nothing seemed to affect. And breathing long and powerfully like a great beast of prey, he appeared to hold an infinite reserve. Feenay, on the other hand, though still smiling and unbeaten, puffed audibly, and whenever a body blow caught him, showed his suffering in a twinge of pain that shot across his face. Pausing to gloat for an instant on his rival's condition, Birchard gathered himself for a spring.

Then they closed together like the jaws of a trap.

Midst the tangle of holds came a sharp, cracking sound that brought an exclamation from the two men watching, a half-cry from the woman; and when Feenay succeeded in releasing himself with a jab in the other's windpipe, it was with a limp, broken right arm hanging at his side. He was still smiling—but he knew that smile was about all he had left.

Yet, when the girl's father, at her request, made a movement to intercede, he waved him back. Then he stood there recalling his strength, while his companion gurgled to breath again, the joy of victory in his eyes.

Birchard was sure of him now. Once again he gathered himself, then sprang forward recklessly. But the Irishman sidestepped with despatch, flung out the left he had drawn back, with every atom of his twitching body behind it, and the black giant staggered to his knees from a terrific swing on the jaw. Ten seconds he took—twenty—in a ring he would have been counted out. But this was no ring—it was primitive combat in a primitive cause, and the stress of that

blow had left Feenay too reeling and weak to go in and finish the job. He stood there trembling, but still smiling a little, and watched the other regain his sense.

Then Birchard staggered to his feet, went in doggedly with a pell-mell of blows, and Feenay went down beneath him.

It was at this moment that the girl, breaking the spell that held her, rushed forward with a sob of horror and caught at his hands. The two men came to themselves likewise, and proceeded to tear him away. But it was the girl's words that made it easy for them, for he drooped before them as if a blight had scorched him.

"Go away!" she said. "At first I wanted you to beat him, because he could smile so—in spite of everything.

"I thought I could love you if you did—but I hate you for it! Yes, if you beat him a thousand times, I'd love him a thousand times more. You're a brute—and, oh, I've found out—that I'm only a girl! Look!" She bent over the half-unconscious man's face. "He's still smiling, but it's because he's game—he's true!"

THE WINGS OF MARS.*

BY JOHN H. WHITSON,

Author of "The Castle of Doubt," "The Rainbow Chasers," "Justin Wingate, Ranchman," "Barbara, a Woman of the West."

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

ON his way to join a house-party at Wildwood, the home of Jefferson Bland, Tom Amberly is accosted in the railway station at Washington by a beautiful young girl, who thrusts into his hands a small traveling-bag and begs him to guard it for her. Arrived at Wildwood, Amberly discovers that the fair stranger is a guest there also, and that she is Miss Betty Leighton of Washington.

That night the bag is stolen from Amberly's room by two Japanese, who are pursued by Amberly and his friend, Jack Haviland, and overcome. The object in the bag is discovered to be a model for an aeroplane.

In a conversation with Miss Leighton, Amberly declines to ask her confidence. He returns to the house to relieve Haviland, who in his absence has been guarding the bag.

CHAPTER V.

A PUZZLED HERO.

ON entering the house by the rear portico, Tom Amberly's attention was attracted by voices which seemed to come from the garden. Within the doorway leading thither he observed the speakers, the young woman he had seen with Betty Leighton, and the Japanese juggler and acrobat with whom he had had such an unpleasant experience.

The light tinting the fountain revealed them clearly. Miss Travis wore a mantilla-like covering about her head and shoulders, which she held up to her face in Spanish fashion. Whether she intended it or not, the effect was to hide her features. The Japanese was apparently replying to some question. The light fell full on the court-plaster which covered his abraded cheek. His glittering acrobatic attire was gone. He wore an ordinary suit, the same he had on when he fled with the traveling-bag.

Tom Amberly was tempted to rush upon him, but hesitated, feeling that his capture and the explanations which must result would not be pleasing to Betty Leighton. And while he hesitated, Miss Travis turned back into the house. The Japanese vanished into the shrubbery of

*This story began in THE SCRAP BOOK—Second Section—for September, 1908.

the garden with as mystifying an air as he had thrown into some of his conjuring tricks of the evening.

"That was queer, anyway," thought Amberly, when the young woman had hurried past him and through the long hall. "Likely she just happened to encounter the rascal there by the door, and was tempted to ask him some questions about his performance."

Yet the incident stuck in his mind annoyingly.

Jack Haviland was reclining lazily in the plush depths of the Morris chair, and seemed asleep, when Tom Amberly came in. He sat up with a jerk and stretched himself.

"Oh, it's you! The stolen treasure is still safe," he declared when he saw Amberly glance at the closet which held the traveling-bag. "I suppose the orchestra couldn't be hired to play something less sleep-provoking? The villain with the flute must have filled it with morphin." He looked at his watch and yawned. "Hot-footing it toward morning! I think I must have slumbered a couple of winks; but you will find that the strong-box hasn't been forced in your absence. What a bore it is, to be watching an unromantic old closet, when, instead, one might be watching a lot of pretty girls. Thus does one pay the debts of friendship."

Amberly was satisfying himself that the traveling-bag was still in the closet. Then he sat down by the table, looking steadily at his companion with troubled gray eyes.

"Anything happened?" Haviland asked.

Amberly told him what he had seen.

"It probably meant nothing," he added. "Yet as long as those Japs are here I shall keep a close watch on the traveling-bag."

"Yes, they might repeat their performance," Haviland agreed, as if he hoped they would.

"I'm going to ask you to turn in as soon as you like, or seek a little diversion in the ballroom. You've been marvelously docile, and that isn't like you. I'm going to watch the closet the rest of the night."

A certain eagerness lighted Haviland's cheerful face.

"Oh, I can sit it out as long as you can! I'm only hoping they'll come."

But Amberly sent him away; and then sat down to begin his vigil. Sprawled in the depths of his chair, he let his fancy wander; and it wandered wide. He began to surprise himself by taking a mental inventory of his qualities as a man. It was a long time since he had troubled to do anything of the kind, and he would have been pushed hard to answer satisfactorily why he did it now. But as he thought of Betty Leighton, he began to estimate what sort of man he was, his values and defects, his worthiness and his worthlessness.

Whatever Tom Amberly might think of his delinquencies, when he came to think of Betty Leighton a new and brighter light was thrown straightway on his mental canvas. Betty Leighton, of Washington, might be a mysterious young woman, so far as her present acts were concerned, but he knew that ordinarily and normally she was certain to be revealed as nothing of the kind. He desired to know more of her, and, fortune having favored him so signally, he was resolved that he would know more of her, very much more.

After the dancing, the guests began to come up to their rooms by way of the stairs and the elevator. Amberly heard them with languid attention. Some tarried below for a turn at billiards or pool, and it was very late when the last scrape of slippered foot and the last cheery "Good night!" struck his ears.

When the big house was at last quiet, and Amberly began to weary of too much self-communion, he left his room and went out on the west veranda, where he stood looking over the garden. The lights no longer illuminated the fountain, and the huge bulk of the house kept the moonbeams from reaching it. Peering down into the darkness and hearing the fountain's musical splash, he thought of the dark-faced man he had seen disappear there, and wondered where he was and what had been the real meaning of the attempt to steal Betty Leighton's walrus traveling-bag, containing that singular bit of furnishing.

He walked to and fro on the veranda, turning now and then back into the central hall. Always he watched and lis-

tened, unforgetful of his charge. He could see the door of his room from the hall, and out on the veranda he had only to put his head in at his open window to view the room itself in its entirety.

The architecture of the house was simple. There were three low stories, each built on the same plan. Through each a broad hall ran from end to end, the space on each side being divided into rooms. There was a stairway near the center close by the elevator, and two at the rear.

All round the house on the first two stories ran wide verandas, supported by gray Ionic columns. Most of the guest-rooms were on the second and third floors, but a few were on the ground floor, and by some chance Betty Leighton's room was there, flanked by others. At the rear of the house the central halls were met by halls at right angles that connected with the rear stairways. The ballroom was in the center of the house on the lower floor, and the dining-room at the extreme rear at one side. The big kitchen and the servants' quarters were in a detached wing. The rooms were large, and the whole house was of really mastodonic proportions. The style was said to be a modified Southern Colonial, dating from the so-called Greek revival, but the double-decker verandas were certainly a West Indian importation.

As Amberly continued his walk, the personality of Betty Leighton crowded out thoughts of the Japanese, and he began to piece together what little he knew of her family. It was unsatisfactory and vague. He knew the Leightons had an assured position in Washington society. He had met the father and the brother at some ambassadorial function. He had seen Mrs. Leighton at a White House dinner, where she had entered on the arm of a general more famous for his repartee than for his war record. Of Betty Leighton herself the only thing Amberly could recall was some fleeting remark about a charming débutante. She was young, that was certain; she had not been long in society, and supposedly she had lived a sheltered life.

The sound of light footsteps startled him, and he turned hurriedly back into the hall, where he was astounded to see Betty Leighton coming from his room with the traveling-bag in her hand. She had discarded her dinner-gown and was dressed in gray. The only light in the hall was from an electric-lamp near the central stairs. It showed Miss Leighton's figure clearly, but not her face.

Not doubting that the woman he saw was Betty Leighton, Amberly stopped short in his amazement. Hurrying on with quick feet, she did not look at him, and before he recovered enough to speak she had gained the stairs.

"Miss Leighton!" he called after her in a low tone, and took a step in her direction.

She ran down the stairway as if affrighted.

Amberly was soon at the head of the stairs, and caught a final glimpse of her as she disappeared into the lower hall. She was still running, holding the traveling-bag high in front of her, while with her left hand she lifted her skirt so that it cleared the floor.

Amberly descended slowly. When he reached the lower hall he heard a latch click, and beneath the door of Betty Leighton's room he saw a thread of light, which vanished instantly.

He stood staring at the door, hesitating and confused. Clearly, Miss Betty Leighton had a right to her traveling-bag if she wished it. He began to think that fear for its safety had taken her to his room; where, finding the door ajar and the closet apparently unguarded, she had resolved to take charge of the precious object herself.

He walked along the lower hall in hesitation, past the door of Betty Leighton's room. He was tempted to knock on the door and ask her a question; but he passed on, still hesitating, to return soon in the same undecided manner. At length he went back to his own room, bewildered and anxious.

"I don't blame her for taking charge of it herself, if she believed I was neglecting it."

He felt guilty and depressed. He had not meant to neglect the traveling-bag. On the contrary, he had been determined to guard it as if it were his own dearest possession.

He went to the closet, hoping that he had made a mistake—that the traveling-

bag was there undisturbed. He pulled the door open with a jerk. Not being able to see the interior well, he leaned back and punched an electric button on the wall a quick jab that was answered by a blinding light. The traveling-bag was gone. He looked closely, even searching about in the farthest corners where he was sure it could not be.

Retreating discomfited, he sat down in the big chair by the table. He felt dazed. What did it mean? His troubled thinking brought the assurance that it meant nothing, except that for some reason wholly satisfactory to herself Betty Leighton had chosen to change her mind and take the traveling-bag into her own room. She had come to him for it, and finding it as she believed unguarded, she had simply taken it and gone away, no doubt indignant at his carelessness. He confessed to himself now that he had been ineffective in his trust. One of the Japanese could have taken the bag as easily.

He walked about the room, then went out into the hall and looked at the stairs. He went down again, and stood staring at the door under whose edge he had seen that thread of light—the room, he was sure, of Miss Betty Leighton. And he asked himself what it meant—what it could mean?

Much as he desired to, he could not decide to advance and knock on Miss Leighton's door. It seemed such an unjustifiable thing to do. It would startle all the proprieties, perhaps even give waspish wings to gossip. Even to be seen staring at her door like one entranced was a thing to be avoided. And the chance of being so seen was not wholly remote. Some guest, dogged by insomnia, might appear at any moment.

Once more Amberly retreated to his room, where he began to fight back with ferocity the suggestions that thronged in on him disparaging Betty Leighton's ingenuousness. Though he could not explain, he still could deny. And while it was impossible to understand what he had seen, he was determined not to believe that everything was not as it ought to be. He would not acknowledge even that in entering his room at the hour and in the manner she did she had grossly violated all the proprieties. Instead, he clung to the belief that her act was justifiable and proper. She had not recognized him when he called to her in the hall. He had frightened her, and that was why she had fled so breathlessly and had so suddenly turned out the light in her room. Amberly's unacknowledged desire was to stand well in the estimation of this charming girl, so he became simply self-condemning, and sought to slay every doubt that buzzed in his excited mind.

CHAPTER VI.

AN ENIGMATICAL HEROINE.

GROOMS were astir and horses whinnying anxiously next morning as Amberly passed along the driveway to the stables. The lake was in view on his left. Touched into life by a light wind, the mist rolled there in serpentine clouds. At the door of the largest stable a groom stood switching his boots lazily. One might have fancied he had been on guard there all night, and had been but now roused by the touch of the sunlight. He opened his eyes wider when he observed Amberly, for he was not accustomed to see young gentlemen come to the stables at that unearthly hour. Amberly passed, and continued on his way round the high white wall.

Having circled the stable, he looked for the spot where he and Jack Haviland had first seen the flash of the lantern. When he found it, and the flakes of shattered lantern-glass which identified it, he closely inspected the spot where the fight had occurred. It had been a lively set-to, as his blue-black right arm still eloquently testified; the ache had hardly yet gone out of that arm.

He noted the wet, tumbled grass, and found other shining bits of the lantern-globe. But there was nothing to throw light on the mystery of the traveling-bag. He had hardly expected there would be, yet was interested to look the place over in the light of the new day.

When Amberly returned from the stables Jack Haviland was in the hall before his door awaiting him, fresh from his bath, and dressed in cool linen.

"It was wise of you to lock your door," he said, "or I might have burgled that precious traveling-bag. I don't suppose you had any more Jap callers who wanted to lay violent hands on it?"

While returning this cheering address as much in kind as he could, Amberly avoided the subject of the traveling-bag.

"You're up early," was his remark as they entered the room together.

"Yes; I— Hallo! Somebody's been—"

Haviland jumped to the open closet and looked in.

"By George, it isn't here!"

Amberly stood quietly in the middle of the room, not hastening to verify this apparent discovery.

Haviland turned round and stared at him.

"Did you know that? You've put it somewhere else, for safe-keeping, as a joke."

Amberly sat down without replying. There was a troubled light in his gray eyes. The slight cleft in his chin, which at times was but a boyish dimple, seemed to have deepened, and his face looked drawn and tired.

"Somebody has taken it?"

Amberly nodded.

"Yes, but it's all right," he explained. "She came and took it herself, because she was afraid I wasn't careful and attentive enough."

The startled look passed from Haviland's face, and he laughed.

"Came this morning. So she's an early bird, too! She must have been anxious. Not many of these fashionable young ladies would lose that much beauty sleep for a million dollars."

Amberly slipped deeper into his chair, stretched out his legs with an attempt at an indifferent attitude, and said as carelessly as he could:

"If I tell you, Jack, what I really know, you'll keep it to yourself, even though you may—" He hesitated. "Well, it's all right; she came and got it, just as I said."

"What's her idea? What does she intend to do? Going to jump back to Washington?"

"I don't know."

"She didn't take you into her confidence?"

"No."

"I should think she might, after what you have done for her. You scrapped with the Japs for possession of it, and sat up with it all night to keep them from getting it again. But, then, women—" His cigarette-case came out, and he did not finish what might have been a cynical sentence. "She insisted on taking charge of it herself." He touched a lighted match to his cigarette, looking down his nose as the light flamed up and the smoke floated out. "These modern young ladies are the embodiment of self-confidence and—assurance."

"She insisted on taking charge of it herself, but she did not come to me. She came alone, and took it while I was not here."

Haviland sat up with a jerk and the match dropped from his fingers.

"Eh? What's that?"

Amberly explained more elaborately, and saw perplexity and amazement grow in the face of his friend.

"You saw her, and saw the light go out in her room. My lady of Washington seems to be as changeable as the lake. If I were an expert in the psychology of the feminine mind, I could perhaps explain why she didn't want you to know she took the traveling-bag. As it is, I give it up. You're sure she didn't want you to know that she took it?"

"I didn't say that. I shouldn't want to think that. What seems to me probable is that she found me out of the room, and, fearing for the safety of the traveling-bag, she simply took it to keep it secure."

"I suppose you're right. But I'm puzzled to know why she got the notion under her sun-bright hair to investigate at that unseemly hour. My mature judgment backs yours in believing that Miss Leighton is a lady. Yet, however you look at it, it was a queer thing for a lady to do, even in these days and in the higher social circles, where the dear creatures are permitted to do some things that are rather daring."

He looked out of the window, as if admiring the sunlight flecking the tops of the trees. Amberly studied his averted face.

"You can find out what she meant by asking her," Haviland went on in his half-humorous way. "The opportunity

may come soon, for some of the guests seem to be stirring. I heard a door open a while ago, and there goes a window down now with a bang. But," he added reflectively, "it relieves you of the incubus of the thing. It's no fun to sit up all night with a traveling-bag, as if it were a colicky baby. You should be glad to get it off your hands."

Amberly did not get to speak to Betty Leighton after breakfast, though he tried to throw himself in her way so that a conversation could be brought about naturally. She seemed to evade him, and hurried out with Miss Travis by a side-door. Thus it was one o'clock in the afternoon before he had a chance to learn why she had acted in a manner so singular.

She was accompanied again by her apparently inseparable companion of the olive cheeks and dark eyes. Miss Travis was as tall, and as daintily attractive, in a wholly different way. She had the brunette's alluring fire. It glowed and danced in her eyes, and dimpled in her cheeks, which had a certain soft texture of skin, making them seem less dark than they were.

The young women separated at the house, Betty Leighton walking along the path toward the pergola, while Miss Travis went inside.

When Amberly came on her, Betty Leighton was looking dreamily at the lake, standing with hands clasped and bare head bent. She did not try to conceal her pleasure when she saw him.

"I hope the traveling-bag gave you no trouble during the night?" was the remark with which she amazed him.

The color that had flushed his face passed, leaving him suddenly pale. His gray eyes were startled and incredulous.

"I think I don't quite understand you," he said, "unless you mean that it gave *you* no trouble."

She seemed bewildered.

"Just what do you mean by that?" was her quick question.

"I don't know why you ask me," he said, "when *you* came and took it away."

She stepped toward him, fright in her eyes.

"*I* took it away!"

The tone was a swift and scared denial, so emphatically pronounced that Amberly had a sensation of giddiness.

"If you didn't, who did?" he demanded.

"Do you mean that it has disappeared?" she gasped.

"Why, Miss Leighton," he protested in bewilderment, "you took it from my room yourself."

She came closer. Her face, always rather white, was pallid; her blue eyes were wide open, and hot and bright.

"Why do you say that?"

"Simply because I saw you," was the somewhat dogged answer.

"But you didn't, you couldn't, for I did nothing of the kind. I know nothing about it. Oh, if that bag is gone—"

She seemed too sincere for acting; and yet—

There was a stratum of common sense at the bottom of Amberly's character. Though on occasion he might be swept from the moorings of cool discretion by the sight of a pretty face, that staying cable always made itself felt. There were qualities in Betty Leighton that swayed him as he had never been swayed before, yet he contrived to hold his judgment in abeyance.

With forced calmness he set out a chair for her; and when she dropped down in it with a bewildered and helpless air he drew up one for himself and took a seat in front of her.

"Miss Leighton," he began, "you know I have not asked confidences of any kind. I don't intend to now. So, of course, if you have a reason for wishing to say you did not take your traveling-bag from my room last night, I have no objection to urge. The bag is your property."

She looked at him wild-eyed, her hands clasped with an air of helplessness in her lap. Red spots were burning in her white cheeks.

"You don't believe me?" she said in a frightened tone.

"I must believe whatever you tell me. A gentleman accepts without question a lady's statements."

"But I can see that you do not. And I know the bag is gone again—has been stolen!"

"Yes, it is gone," he admitted. "If you did not take it, Miss Leighton,

some woman did who greatly resembles you."

"A woman!"

"I thought it was *you!*"

"But, indeed, I know nothing about it." Her face crimsoned. "Can you think I would enter your—any gentleman's, room at such an hour, in such a manner, for any purpose whatever?"

"Pardon me!" He was uncomfortable, as well as extremely bewildered. "My eyes deceived me. But some woman entered my room, while I was out of it a few minutes, and took away the traveling-bag—took it from the closet. I followed her down-stairs, and then"—he hesitated—"then I saw the gleam of light under your door and thought I heard the click of your door-lock. Is there another woman occupying that room with you?" He grew more confused. "I have—no right to know what room you occupy—no right at all, and it is an impertinence; yet I did discover what room it was. I beg your pardon for that, too."

He stopped, moistened his lips, and choked as if he crowded down further statements that might not be agreeable.

"Is there another woman occupying the room with you?" he repeated, while her overbright blue eyes continued to stare at him.

She interlaced and unlaced her white fingers before replying.

"Yes, there was another woman in my room—Miss Travis. She is a dear friend of mine, and her room adjoins mine, with a door connecting them. I was not—just well last night, and for that reason, at my request, she spent most of the night with me."

He lifted his brows a little, recalling what he had seen.

"So you think it may have been Miss Travis?" she said very low, breathing heavily. "But let me tell you, Mr. Amberly, that Miss Travis would no more do what you seem to suggest than I would myself. If you dream that she might have taken the bag from your room, I must insist that you are wholly mistaken. I have means of knowing that she could have no object whatever in doing so. If she had taken it, which it is impossible to think, she would have told me, and, anyway, I should have known it. So put that thought out of your mind."

"You leave me without any knowledge or theory, Miss Leighton."

His manner was not that of a man convinced; but simply that of a puzzled individual who has no ready words to reply.

"Will it matter — very much — this disappearance of your traveling-bag?" he asked, after a moment.

"It matters everything," was her intense declaration. "It matters so much, Mr. Amberly, that I shall not be able to rest until it is found and I have possession of it."

"I am sorry," he declared with sincere regret. "You will blame me, of course; and I deserve your blame. But I was positive you took it, and I can hardly bring myself even now to think that whoever it was took it did not enter your room. You say that was impossible, and I shall banish the idea, of course, but—"

His voice stopped.

She rose quickly and stood looking at him. He, too, got on his feet, and said, hesitantly:

"Of course, I was a poor guardian—bungled my plain duty, and—"

"We will not discuss that, if you please, Mr. Amberly. It is profitless. You certainly were under no obligation to care for my traveling-bag, and I was wrong in asking you to. Understand, I do not blame you. You did even more, far more, than I had any right to expect or ask."

A sudden fear chilled him.

"You do not—cannot—think I am not telling the truth about it, that I spirited it away myself and know where it is?"

"Nothing of the kind, Mr. Amberly. It is foolish for you to say that. I do not condemn you in any way, nor accuse you in my thought. It is not that. And to show it is not, I am going to ask you to help me locate it. I don't know how you are to begin, or where. I don't know how or where to begin myself."

Repressed excitement showed in her manner. Amberly stood helplessly before her, self-condemned, fearful. He dared not think what the effect of the present moment might be on their future

relationship, if indeed there was to be any such future.

He did not sufficiently master the peculiar situation, so that he could choose words which should be pleasing to her and to himself, until she had turned and passed out of the pergola.

The sound of her clicking boot-heels recalled him to the fact that he had lost his gallantry. She had gained the portico, and was passing into the house. He started forward with a certain comical frenzy of manner as the door closed behind her. When he gained the hall she had vanished.

CHAPTER VII.

JACK HAVILAND RIDES TO A FALL.

JACK HAVILAND had come to Wildwood for a good time. Yet it did not trouble Haviland that his good time had been cut into at the start by the destiny which had begun to fling adventures, like stones, into the erstwhile smooth pathway of his friend, Tom Amberly. On the contrary, he enjoyed it. It was like being underwritten against monotony. Amberly was his friend, worthy of the handsomest gifts; but if destiny chose to be churlish and hurl dornicks in lieu of diamonds, it became Haviland's bounden duty to protest and resist, and to find unbounded joy in doing it. He could even make that his good time. Perchance he could include in it at least one beautiful woman. Just now the one beautiful woman whose image wavered attractively before his eyes was Grace Travis.

Haviland had not been idle while Amberly was trying to quarry ore of fact in his interview with Betty Leighton. On the contrary, he was very busy for an apparently idle young man. His industry consisted of casually dropped questions concerning the Japanese. He learned from Jimmy Minot that they had departed for Washington on the early train.

Jimmy Minot was a whip who was never so happy as when he held the lines over the backs of horses, tandem preferred. Nature had cut him out for a groom or a jockey, and then had thwarted her own desires by throwing a fortune in his way. He had driven a tandem team to the early train, expecting to meet some friends, who did not arrive. He had particularly noted the departing Japanese.

Yet when Jack Haviland casually spoke of this to Jefferson Bland, Bland hamstrung its importance by stating that some of the Japanese had gone; but that a few, one or two, he was sure, lingered for some unknown reason.

Jack Haviland concluded shrewdly that he knew why. They lingered because of the traveling-bag. Bland seemed to have no knowledge of that remarkable bit of luggage, and was equally ignorant of the startling events of the night in which the Japanese jugglers had played so suggestive a part. Haviland did not enlighten him.

Close on the heels of this, he was told by Amberly that Betty Leighton had not taken the traveling-bag.

"Some of the Japs are still here," said Amberly, "and you will remember that I saw Miss Travis speaking to one of them at the entrance to the garden."

Walking along a woodland path, Jack Haviland was thinking of this.

"But she is all right," he said to the yellow head of the weed that jumped upward under the beheading stroke of his stick.

Emerging on the little river that flowed placidly a mile or more from the house, he saw Miss Travis herself, seated comfortably by a big gray rock. She had been reading, as was shown by the magazine that lay in her lap; but her thoughts had left the printed page and strayed out to where yellow butterflies were dancing over the sunlit water. Her head was uncovered; one of her brown hands pillowed it at the back where it touched the rock, and a brown wrist and forearm showed. Her pose was so unconstrained, so unconscious, and so wholly attractive that Jack Haviland stopped in admiration.

He noted that her dress harmonized well with the gold sheen of the sunlight on the leaves that framed her trim figure as in a picture, and that the hat which she had discarded and which lay on the bank beside her showed a nondescript loop of blue ribbon. But it was the girl's natural grace, the color of

health in the clear dark cheeks, and the far-away look in the dark eyes that checked and held him. He knew that, tired by a walk through the woods, she had dropped down there, had read a while, and was now day-dreaming. He wished he could flatter himself that her thoughts concerned him! Her attitude gave a sense of remoteness and detachment which was not reassuring to his self-complacency. She was day-dreaming; but not of him. How could she be? She had never seen him until they met at Wildwood.

A sense of his rudeness chided him, and he advanced. She heard his tan boots cracking on the pebbles, and sat up, startled. Then, evidently recognizing him as the pleasant and original Jack Haviland, she smiled.

"I thought myself all alone," she declared naively.

"You are," he answered. "I don't count. Just go ahead and enjoy yourself. But I hope you won't mind if I take a seat here."

"Not at all; it *was* growing poky."

She made room for him, and he sat down, close by her, his back against the lichened rock.

"How much for your thoughts?" she inquired, smiling, as he continued to stare at the water.

"I was thinking of Miss Leighton. She's a charming young woman," he replied absently.

"Oh, were you?"

"Do you know why I was thinking of her?"

He shifted his position, lying almost at full length, so he might study her face. Her dark eyes turned again to the water.

"Because she is pretty and attractive," was her answer; "you said so."

"No, because she is the owner of a traveling-bag that in the last few hours has put a lot of new furrows into the gray matter of my brain."

She looked at him now, yet her surprise was held well in check. She waited for him to go on.

"You know about the traveling-bag?" he asked.

"Um—yes; I know that your friend, Mr. Amberly, has it."

"Had it, you mean."

"He hasn't it now?"

"No. That's what's troubling him—and me."

Haviland had considered himself an unsusceptible young man; but those intelligent dark eyes looking into his, so clear and well-like, and the expressive face, crowned by its dark hair, gave him an unknown sense of comfort. They were wonderful eyes—soft, serious, compelling.

"*She* knows nothing," was his inner thought.

"You amaze me," she said.

"Want me to tell you about it?"

"Assuredly."

"There really isn't much to tell, in spite of its importance and its astonishing character. A woman took it out of Amberly's room last night while he was mooning by his window that overlooks the garden."

"A woman?" Her voice was startled.

"The queerest part of it is, he thought it was Miss Leighton herself."

The grave look became a stare. Then she broke into a ripple of derisive laughter.

"Mr. Amberly's mooning must have filled his head with some of the rainbow gleams of that fountain," she declared.

"The idea is silly?"

"It is idiotic."

"That is what *she* thought."

"She! He told her of it?"

"Unhesitating frankness is his besetting sin, Miss Travis, as it is mine. It leads me to request you to lean back against that stone again; your profile shows to much better advantage that way, and—I like to look at it."

A wave of color dyed her dark cheeks.

"Forgive the praise," he begged.

She did not do as he had requested—lean back against the lichen-gray rock.

"Do *you* think she took it?" she demanded.

"No; not since he doesn't. She denied it, and he was gallant enough to believe her."

"Sensible enough, you mean."

"I accept the amendment — sensible enough. But when he believed that, he jumped to another conclusion—that you took it."

The red in her dark cheeks burned

to a quick crimson. She stared at him again, her scarlet lips apart, her dark eyes startled. She stood up.

"Where are you going?" he asked, trying to affect a lazy indifference.

"Back to the house," she said coldly, her voice trembling. "Perhaps your mind cannot realize when your tongue frames a gross insult."

"Beg your pardon!" He sprang up and blocked her path by stepping out into it. "Now, see here; I didn't mean that as an insult. 'Pon honor, I didn't. I'm a blunderer, just because I'm frank."

She hesitated, looking at him in a way that made him feel uncomfortable. In her right hand she held her magazine; with her other hand she gathered together her skirts to move on.

"I will consider myself crushed," he said. "Forget it. Really, I didn't mean anything."

"I think you did; but—I'll be as frank as you. I'll sit down, and let you say what you will, just because I must know all about this, in the interest of Miss Leighton."

"You're plucky, and I like that. I'll promise to put the bridle of discretion on my runaway tongue, if you'll not be too anxious to hurry away. I like to talk with you."

"I don't think I like to talk with you, Mr. Haviland; but I want information."

She sat down again, leaning back against the rock, and listened, quietly and without comment, while he elaborated his story and put fringes of abasement on his apologies.

"Kind of him, to suspect her—and me!" was her crisp comment.

"Don't say it in that way. Pardon me for speaking so. There is one thing more," he added, "which, to his mind, put the tarnish of suspicion on you. Mind, I don't accuse you—a young lady has a right to talk with whom she pleases; but he connected you with the deed as soon as he recalled that he had seen you talking with that Jap juggler at the garden entrance."

"Anything more?" she asked. Slowly the color had faded from her cheeks.

"You were talking with the Jap?"

"I ought to refuse to explain that—refuse to give an account of my acts. It is really none of your business, and certainly none of his. I do not recognize the right of either of you to question my motives or my movements. But I will say this: It was only by chance I saw him there, and only a foolish desire to hear a Japanese talk that caused me to speak to him. The Japanese interest me, probably because I've read so many Japanese stories. But, really, Mr. Amberly's deductions and yours are an extraordinary impertinence."

"Yes, I guess they are," Haviland admitted ruefully.

For a minute he was silent, and she closed her eyes as if thinking. The pallor of her cheeks had become more marked. But when she looked at him again the expression of her eyes had softened. Her beauty, and a sense that he had been needlessly cruel, stirred him.

"I'm a brute!" he exploded.

"Do you believe I did that?"

She searched his face. A quick flush of self-reproach mantled his cheeks.

"No, I don't."

He made the declaration with positive vehemence of guilt and contrition. And he began to have an undercurrent of fear, that by his abruptness and his smashing method he had put himself beyond the pale of even the friendship of this superb woman. Deep down in his heart was the discovery that he needed even more than her friendship, must have far more than that, if he was to be happy, or even contented with himself in the future.

"Do you believe in poetry, Miss Travis?" he asked abruptly. "I don't. This is a practical world, I've always thought. I like to look at the clouds and the sky, at the stars, at the water, and it always makes me sleepy at night to hear the wind singing in the trees; yet I never went much on poetry. But I once had an old-maid school-teacher who was great on it—the squashy kind, you know—and she used to make us boys commit pages—why, yes, yards of it to memory."

She looked away again, without replying; and he had as fine a view of her perfect profile against the lichened rock as he could wish. It inspired him to go on.

"One of the silly poems she made me

learn and recite all by my little self ran this way:

Two shall be born the whole wide world apart
And speak in different tongues and have no thought
Each of the other's being, and no heed;
And these o'er unknown seas, to unknown lands,
Shall cross, escaping wreck, defying death;
And all unconsciously shape every act,
And bend each wandering step to this one end,
That one day, out of darkness, they shall meet,
And read life's meaning in each other's eyes.

"Do you believe rot of that kind?" he asked, when still she did not speak.

She roused herself and looked at him level-eyed, the flame in her cheeks making them scarlet.

"Certainly not," she declared.

"Well, I don't think I do myself," he confessed, abashed yet persistent; "I only quoted it to get you to talking, you know."

She smiled on him now.

"You're very amusing, Mr. Haviland."

"Am I? That's good." He noted with delight her smile and the sunshine brightening her hair.

"And very silly."

"I'm willing to be that, too."

She laughed; his attitude of penitent entreaty was almost comical.

"Mr. Haviland, do you know what I think of young men like you—of the sort of young men who fill Wildwood and similar places? They are drones. They have so much money that they do not appreciate its worth, and have so much time that they can find no better way of employing it than by killing it at billiard-tables and in trying to make love to women as silly as themselves. Mr. Haviland, I am not of that kind of women, whatever else I may be."

She rose, and closed and rolled the magazine in her strong brown fingers. And then she walked away, in spite of the effort to detain her.

He followed her, at first slowly, and then faster as the house and grounds were approached. But he did not overtake her.

On reaching Wildwood he went at once to Amberly's room.

"I know it was Miss Travis who took that traveling-bag from my room; I know it," were Amberly's first words.

"You do?" said Haviland, flinging himself into a chair. "You do? Well, I—don't know anything."

The next morning Tom Amberly was stunned to learn that Betty Leighton and Miss Travis had left Wildwood. He received this information from Mrs. Chadbourn, who had eyes and ears of a cat.

"Too bad," she said, "to have your flirtation spoiled, when it was starting off so nicely."

"I—I don't think I understand you," said Amberly, coloring.

"I mean that dear Miss Leighton and that enchanting brunette, Miss Travis, went away this morning at a most hideous hour. It was barely daylight. I thought, perhaps, you would know why. You see, I'm willing to admit that I'm a curious little busybody."

She fancied herself almost as attractive as "that enchanting brunette, Miss Travis," and she fairly ogled him.

"You're sure of this?" said Amberly, unable to conceal the shock it gave him.

"Quite sure." She studied his face. "I wonder if they could have returned to Washington? They were driven to the station, but it wasn't the hour for the Washington express. The thing was so peculiar; and I knew it would interest you."

Her pale eyes were still fixed on his face. It seemed to Amberly that heaven sent Jack Haviland into view at that moment.

"Ah! there's my friend Haviland; and I've promised to beat him at billiards this morning. You'll excuse me, Mrs. Chadbourn."

Mrs. Chadbourn would have been much put out by so incontinent a desertion if she had not at the moment seen Jefferson Bland mount to the front portico from the drive. Amberly knew nothing. On the other hand, Jefferson Bland ought to be a perfect mine of information. The pale eyes burned so inquisitively that they held almost the light of eager youth as Mrs. Chadbourn

began to stalk her quarry. As host at Wildwood, Bland was naturally in a position to know rather more than any one else concerning the arrival, and particularly the departure, of his guests.

CHAPTER VIII.

BETTY'S BROTHER.

IN fiction there are no unrelated events. So on the very day this narrative turns aside from that interesting mystery at Wildwood, it draws the reader's attention to Archer Dunlap, on Pennsylvania Avenue, in Washington, in front of the steps of the War Department.

Archer Dunlap seemed much interested in the old cannon which ornament the buttresses of the imposing pile of stone which houses the State, War, and Navy departments.

"Humph!" grunted Mr. Archer Dunlap, looking at the cannon with scornful gaze. "Rubbish! Anachronisms! And soon all their like will be as out of date as the arquebuses of the Middle Ages."

Archer Dunlap was a short, square man, with a short, square face, immensely determined and strong, deep-eyed, yet with a certain pallor and nervousness that betokened long night vigils.

He glanced from the cannon to some windows of the War Department, and then at the stream of clerkly men descending the great stone steps to the avenue. He did not need to consult his watch to know that this was the closing hour for departmental work. The clerks were issuing from the building in shoals.

Archer Dunlap seemed not to be so much interested in the departmental clerks as he had been in the cannon, or as he was now apparently in one of the department windows. He kept looking at that window from time to time. Then he began to walk with brisk nervousness back and forth in front of the cannon, stumping to and fro on his sturdy feet.

Behind that window of the War Department sat a young man who just then occupied a most important niche in the mind of Archer Dunlap. The last young clerk had swung briskly out and away; the last old clerk had lingered, closed his desk with his old-time precision, carefully enveloped his throat in his old-time silk neckerchief, donned his light outer coat and his high silk hat with care, and stumped off, his cane beating a slow tattoo on the War Department floors, each deliberate act irritating to the young man who remained and who wished to be alone now, that he might have time to think.

A man may not by taking thought add a cubit to his stature; but by taking thought at the right moment he may sometimes add several figures to his bank-account.

It was the very unsatisfactory state of his finances which distressed Sidney Leighton. And the old clerk was no sooner out of sight and the room cleared and silent than he pulled some papers, telegrams, and ticker-slips from his pockets and buried his nose in them.

A puckering frown of worry and dissatisfaction harrowed grooves in his forehead, which otherwise was boyishly smooth. His eyes were blue, but of a lighter tint than the deep blue eyes of his radiant sister; yet the resemblance was marked. The blond, cleanly shaven face was pallid; it looked thin and drawn, so much so that the old clerk whose slow movements had exasperated him had remarked earlier in the day:

"Mr. Leighton, you need a vacation."

"I'll get a vacation, all right; and a good long one if I can't work out of this hole," was young Leighton's thought now, as he took a pencil and pad and began to set down some figures.

A step in the doorway startled him. He looked up and a wave of irritation suffused his face when he saw one of the cleaners.

"Don't trouble about this room now, Riley," he urged. "I'll be out of it in a little while, and if I'm not you can do it in the morning."

The man went away, flicking and dabbing with his dusting-cloth. Sidney Leighton settled down again to his papers and figures.

"More than ten thousand dollars," he said. "How I'm to raise it I don't know, unless—"

He hoisted his heels again, tipped back in the comfortable swivel-chair,

crushed the papers in his hand, and closed his eyes. The flush evoked by the cleaner's sudden appearance deepened slowly in the pallor of his cheeks.

"More than ten thousand dollars! If I don't raise it at once, I'm gone; but if I raise it in that way, I'm—"

He knew that if he yielded to the seductive temptation before him he would not only ruin himself, but his father and mother, and his sister, Betty Leighton. He would smirch the name of a proud family, bringing on it confusion, shame, and sorrow, and topple down all the fair fabric of their hope.

Thoughts of his father came closer to Sidney Leighton. It was much to have such a father as General Leighton, whose reputation as one of the bravest and ablest of the fighters had been supplemented by the record he had since won in the ordnance bureau. He was now on the retired list; yet the rooms of the ordnance bureau still knew and welcomed him, and the trials of new guns at Indian Head seemed, somehow, even to those in positions of present responsibility, singularly inadequate when General George Leighton was not there to take measurements with his keen old eyes and touch with the sure finger of vast experience every weak spot in ammunition or metal. To bring down into the dust of humiliation that gray head would be a crime unforgivable.

"But—he can never know! It can be kept safe—safe as those ordnance secrets he keeps locked so securely in his own bosom. Why not? Who is to know anything about it or discover it? If that Englishman should blab over a wine-glass some time — which he wouldn't, for he wouldn't dare to — it could be denied. I could say he lied, snap my fingers at it. The thing is perfectly safe, and—" He ran his slender fingers through his thick blond hair, leaving it in a tangled bunch on his forehead. It was heated and wet, like the mop of a football player. "No one could ever know about it. And I'm driven to get money, somehow, from some place. I've just got to get it, and at once."

Sidney Leighton, the youthful and handsome brother of Betty Leighton, because of the record of his father and the standing of the family, had received a minor yet responsible place in the War Department. He was clever, well-bred, well-educated, and amiable. These things will take a young man fast and far, especially if at the start there are influential hands behind him. In a few months Sidney so won the favor of the assistant secretaries, and of the Secretary himself, that now he in many matters possessed important confidences.

Meanwhile, he had begun to gamble in stocks, making marginal bettings on the rise and fall of certain picked securities. As a rule, he was fortunate. It would have been better for him if he had lost. That might have frightened him out of the game. But he won, and then won again and again. He began to feel that he was lucky, and he went deeper. He lost. To recoup he put up all the money he had, and lost again. He borrowed of some friends, staked his borrowings, and saw them swept away. The first mutterings were heard of the storm that was to hurl so much wreckage on the shores of the financial sea. Sidney Leighton failed to read the portents aright. He believed it was but a mild affair, and that if he could hold on a few days the market would turn and he could save himself whole. But he had put up everything; and still came the demands of the brokers, which he must meet or drop out and into ruin.

This was very clear to him as he sat staring at the telegrams and papers. He needed more than ten thousand dollars. He had stretched his credit to the limit, and could no longer go to the friends who had favored him. He dared not go to his father. He even feared to let his father know about it. He dared not go to his mother. Betty was left—Betty, his sister. He had already used some of her money surreptitiously—money she had confided to his keeping. Could he go to Betty? Would she help him?

"No, I can't tell her—not yet," he said, shifting restlessly in his chair.

He stared at the walls, and, through them, out into the future and back into the past.

He began to figure again on the pad of paper.

"It would be an easy way out of it, if that Englishman is in earnest; and I

guess he is. I couldn't miss this time. The broker assured me that if I could just put up the stuff this once I'd surely win out. And I believe it. If I don't put up, the whole of it is gone—and that means ruin. This would get the money, and no one need ever know about it. It would be dead easy—just let that Englishman, Borden, have the look he wants, and the thing is done. Even if I lost on the turn of the market, I'd be no worse off than I am now. The Borden part of it need never be known. Borden wouldn't dare to tell; would have no reason to. No one could ever really know how the secret got out."

He put the pad down on the desk, under a paper-weight which bore the figure of a tiny Mars, and going to a big safe, he drew open its door. Inside were numbered and indexed documents, pads, and rolls of paper, plethoric envelopes stuffed to bursting, with ledgers and account-books of various shapes and sizes; and on the floor, in the center, a walrus traveling-bag.

Sidney Leighton drew out the traveling-bag, which was so light in weight that it seemed to hold nothing at all. As he did so, and was on the point of opening it, he heard a step.

Archer Dunlap, having waited with impatience until the last leisurely clerk had descended, had then mounted the steps himself on his way to the inner sanctum of the War Department.

"Hallo!" he cried in a tone which made Sidney Leighton jump.

Then Dunlap laughed and came in. He walked right up to the traveling-bag and stretched forth his hand.

"Glad to see that you're taking an interest in my little invention," he declared, and dropped unceremoniously into an armchair. "Has the Secretary seen it yet?"

Sidney Leighton retreated to the chair he had before occupied, and sat looking at Dunlap. The traveling-bag rested on the floor before the safe.

"I regret to say he hasn't. He's out of town, you know."

He pulled himself together while Archer Dunlap was digesting this unsatisfactory morsel.

Archer Dunlap withdrew his gaze from the walls, let it fall on Leighton's agitated face, and brought a broad hand down on the chair-arm with an emphatic thump.

"If the United States gets into trouble with Japan, the little thing in that traveling-bag will be worth more to the Secretary of War than anything else in the world."

His face colored with enthusiasm and his eyes glittered.

"That's what I want to tell him. That's my reason for wanting a personal interview with him. I must have it, and I intend to. I came to you and to your father, you know, at your home, because I was acquainted with you, and because previously I had failed to secure an interview with the Secretary. I took my model to you, and showed it to you, and begged you to bring it to his attention."

"And I said I would."

"You said you would, as a personal favor. I don't forget that. And you took the model and brought it here in your traveling-bag. I was up here this morning, and didn't get to see you. I couldn't get in. The ninnies who guard these sacred precincts took me for an assassin, or an anarchist, I suppose. I thought one of them was going to throw me out or hand me over to the police. This afternoon I saw you enter the building. I tried to speak to you, but you disappeared too quickly. So I waited. When the clerks came down and you weren't with them I knew you must still be up here, or I thought so. And I just walked in on you. Why I was permitted to I don't know. I suppose it was because the great Secretary and his great assistants were known not to be here, and no one thought it important to guard your precious life against an assassin."

He stopped, wrinkled his brows; then broke into a harsh laugh.

"Oh, I know that's what people call me—a crank! But it doesn't trouble me. Fulton was called a crank, and Morse, and Sir Isaac Newton, and every other fellow that ever had brains enough to lift him above the fossilized ideas of the herd. No, it doesn't trouble me; for I *know* what I've done, or am doing, and what my machine will accomplish. I can afford to laugh at the fools."

He observed the paper-weight, with its figure of Mars, and picked it up.

"My idea will give wings to this fellow," he cried. "I saw your cannon down there on the porches, and your antiquated arms at the head of the stairway. My invention will make present methods as out of date as the most antiquated guns you've got here on exhibition. You don't believe it? Or, perhaps, you do. No matter. I've got to see the Secretary. I've got to see him, right away."

Sidney Leighton's eyes moved occasionally to the traveling-bag, while his mind dwelt on the Englishman, of whom he had been thinking when he took the traveling-bag out of the safe.

"You're interested in that model, I know. You were about to look at it, study its possibilities. I don't object, of course; for I can rely on you to keep the thing to yourself, if you gained any information by the inspection. If I hadn't known that, I shouldn't have left it with you. I've known you a long time, and your father. There is a man for you!"

He stopped again and inspected the tiny figure of Mars.

"Yes, it will give this ancient god the wings he needs for his business today. Wings for the god of war! I could sell my idea to some foreign government; but I don't want to do that. I'm an American — a loyal American. My country first, last, and all the time! It was thought of my country which inspired me in that work—which stirred my brain and steadied my hand. I want the American government to have my aeroplane. It means easy victory for America, in any war that comes—with Japan or any other power. Why, we wouldn't need battle-ships if my invention should be taken up by the government. If the Japanese were foolish enough to send war-ships against our Pacific coast cities, a fleet of my aeroplanes carrying dynamite would simply blow them out of the water; sink them before they could do any harm at all. And it would be inexpensive; a whole fleet of my aeroplanes, sufficient to protect us against the world, would not cost as much as one first-class battle-ship."

His enthusiasm made his face red; he jammed the tiny Mars down upon the table with almost savage vigor, and waved his hands to emphasize the enthusiastic words with which he tried to give form to the visions on which his imagination had so long fed.

"But I told you all of this when I called on you and left my model with you, at your home," he said more mildly, his voice dropping.

"Yes," Sidney replied, "and I said I would bring it here and induce the Secretary to examine it. I will do that. Just now I was thinking about it, and opened the safe to make sure that it was there and secure."

"You have faith in it?" The inventor's eyes sparkled.

"Yes, I have; abundant faith," Sidney replied. "I believe the Secretary will have faith in it, also; at least, I hope so."

Archer Dunlap suddenly changed his tone and looked at the bag.

"How does it happen the safe wasn't locked? It's after office hours."

Sidney had heard him through as one who does not hear. His mind was engaged with the seductive offer of the Englishman, recurring to that as soon as it regained its equilibrium after the inventor's startling entrance. Dunlap repeated his question before Leighton took notice of it.

"Oh—ah! Well, you see, that is a safe I have charge of myself. I hadn't locked it yet."

"I heard some one moving round out there," Dunlap went on, "and that model is too valuable to run any risks with. I don't want it seen, you know. But for the risks, I'd patent it. There are inventors lying in wait to claim every new thing as their own. A man of inventive ideas sometimes has to keep away from the patent office as a matter of self-protection. No one has seen it?"

"Not a soul."

A window banged somewhere in a room beyond, causing Dunlap to start nervously.

"Chuck the bag in the safe and keep it out of sight. Keep it out of sight until the Secretary is willing to look at it. Telephone me when he's ready to see it, or wire me. Here's my card."

He took a card with his name and

address on it and laid it on the table beside the figure of Mars. Sidney rose and restored the bag to its place in the safe. Dunlap was staring in the direction from which the sound came that had startled him.

Then he and Leighton left the room together, the younger man accompanying the inventor to the stairs, where he said good-by to him perfunctorily and repeated his oft-reiterated promise to bring the aeroplane model to the attention of the Secretary at the earliest opportunity.

When Archer Dunlap began to stump down the stairs, Sidney went back into his office room, swung the safe-door open, and sat staring at the traveling-bag, thinking of the Englishman, Lionel Borden.

(To be continued.)

THE SECRET'S PRICE.

BY I. A. R. WYLIE.

A SHORT STORY.

MRS. REED turned with an emphatic gesture to the man seated comfortably in the cane chair. Her round, kindly face was aglow with eagerness and genuine anxiety.

"Of course, colonel, I know it isn't of much use asking your opinion," she said. "What in the world should *you* know about children? I dare say you would give the poor thing a dose of your everlasting quinin. But do, at any rate, prove your common sense by agreeing with me. Little Erica simply cannot stay in this heat. She must come up to the hills with me and my own babes. Now, do put in your word!"

At this impulsive appeal, Colonel Stanhope looked across the room, his expression at once softening and saddening as his eyes met those of the woman seated opposite him.

"As you intimate, I am only an ignorant mortal man," he began, "but, in my opinion, a change is absolutely necessary. Does not the doctor say so, Mrs. Atherton?"

"Yes," Mrs. Atherton answered quietly.

Almost as though she wished to avoid his searching glance, she bent down to the little girl at her feet and began to pass her hand caressingly over the smooth, blue-veined forehead. In the shadowy room, mother and child, so strongly resembling each other, formed a beautiful picture. The Indian sun had spared the delicate transparency of their complexion, and that, with their fair hair and the simple white in which they were clad, made them seem to the man beings of another and purer world. Both faces, too, bore the same impress of pain, only on the child's the pain was that of failing health, and on the mother's that of ceaseless anxiety.

"Yes," Mrs. Atherton repeated, "that is what the doctor says."

"You see!" Mrs. Reed cried triumphantly. "If the doctor says so, the matter is settled."

Colonel Stanhope's brows contracted. Mrs. Reed's loud, motherly enthusiasm, kind as it was, jarred on him.

"Is it really not possible?" he asked. "Could it not be managed somehow?"

Mrs. Atherton looked up at him, a faint light of haughty challenge in her eyes.

"Knowing how much depends on it, do you think I would not do everything I could?" she said. "But circumstances—circumstances at present beyond my control—make it out of the question. Erica must stay here with me."

Mrs. Reed, who, like most good-natured people, became easily offended when her good-nature was rejected, prepared to take her leave.

"Well, you have still twenty-four hours to think over it," she said. "I am starting to-morrow evening. If you decide to let Erica come, I can still take her. Mrs. Atherton, you are young, and I feel it my duty to warn you that the matter is a very serious one for the child."

With that, she rustled stormily from the room. A few minutes later they heard her driving her dog-cart down the road with more than usual haste.

Colonel Stanhope lingered, though Mrs. Atherton scarcely seemed to notice him. She picked up the child and laid her on the lounge-chair. The tired little form sank unresistingly among the cushions, and, as though moved by a sudden tenderness, the mother bent down and kissed the pale face passionately.

"As though I would not give the world for you!" she said under her breath.

The child opened her eyes and turned them languidly in Stanhope's direction.

"Colonel!" she called.

Stanhope saw Mrs. Atherton's start of remembrance and of annoyance, but he came forward, a curious gratitude in his heart.

"Yes, little woman," he said, "what is it? Do you want me?"

"Yes, colonel." She put out her baby hand, and he held it in his own big one. "Stay there, colonel. I am so tired—"

Mrs. Atherton drew back. She went over to the window and stood there, her lips tightly compressed, her eyes somber and overcast.

Stanhope waited until the child's quieter breathing assured him that she slept, then he put the hand he held gently down and came over to Mrs. Atherton's side.

"Mrs. Atherton," he said in an undertone, "I want to speak with you an instant."

She turned sharply. Her head was thrown a little back, and he saw again in the white, delicate face the expression he knew too well—a mingling of defiance, fear, and something else which he had never been able to define.

"If you have anything to say, I shall be pleased to listen to you," she said.

He bowed, and went on quietly: "Thank you, I can be very brief. Mrs. Atherton, I know your feelings toward me, though I do not understand them. Therefore I want you to understand I do not speak to you as a man seeking to win your love. That I know, better now than ever, is impossible. I come to you as a simple friend who would do anything to help you. Will you believe me?" She looked away from him, so that he could see nothing but the gravely composed profile. There was no answer. "You see, we have known each other a long time. Does not that—even under the circumstances—make a difference between us? Does it not make it possible for you to trust me a little more than the others?"

She looked at him again. "What do you want me to do?" she demanded.

"Just to trust me—to tell me the real reason why you cannot send little Erica to the hills."

"Why do you want to know?"

"Because I wish to help you."

"I tell you—you cannot."

"Are you sure?"

"Absolutely."

"Then you will not confide in me?"

"No."

He took a deep breath, and his shoulders squared themselves.

"You force my hand, Mrs. Atherton," he said. "You force me to tell you that I know the truth. You cannot send little Erica because you have no money—and you will not beg."

Her hands clenched, and the furious red mounted her cheeks. "You make good use of your self-arrogated privileges," she said bitterly.

"Yes. I cannot do otherwise."

"What right have you—"

He interrupted her with a determined gesture. "I do not care what right I have, when your child's life hangs in the balance."

She smothered a startled exclamation, and the color faded from her face as swiftly as it had come. He saw her glance at the sleeping form upon the lounge as though she feared it might have vanished, and her eyes grew large with a new fear.

"Mrs. Atherton, let me help you!" he pleaded earnestly. "I am comfortably

off. I can well afford it. It need only be a loan. You can pay me back."

"I refuse," she said almost roughly.

"For little Erica's sake—"

"Not even for her sake."

He stood silent and helpless. He had made a supreme effort to force the iron gates which she had closed against him, and had failed. There was only one thing left.

"You have refused my help," he said. "Very well. Of that I will say no more, but I have a last suggestion to make. Mrs. Atherton, have you anything you could dispose of—anything, it doesn't matter what? Try and think. Is there anything that your husband left in your keeping, anything that could be of value?"

His tone was heavy with significance. He half-started before the look in the eyes turned suddenly upon him. There was no doubting what the look implied—a clear, undisguised distrust and contempt.

"And if I had—" she began breathlessly, when the curtains at the far end of the room were drawn back and an Indian servant stood on the threshold.

"Meyer Sahib!" he announced, and stood on one side as though waiting.

There was a short, marked silence. Stanhope had taken an unconscious step back, his expression that of a man who, already bewildered and uneasy, suddenly finds himself confronted with a new and unexpected danger. It was only an instant's hesitation.

"I do not understand your attitude toward me," he said rapidly, "but I implore you, for all our sakes, to listen to me before you meet this—this visitor."

Mrs. Atherton had recovered her composure. She walked across the room and arranged one of the shabby cushions.

"Mr. Meyer is here on business," she said. "I cannot, even if I would, accede to your request."

Goaded by her tone, and the knowledge that only an instant remained to him, Stanhope followed her and faced her. His strongly marked, somewhat gaunt features seemed to have aged under the stress of powerful feeling.

"You stand at the edge of a crisis, and you will not trust me," he stammered. "Is that all my friendship deserves? Have you no instinct to guide you to those who would truly serve you?"

"Instinct?" she echoed.

For a moment he thought she wavered. A shadow of doubt and anxiety swept over her face, leaving her again pale and quiet.

"Please—would you go?" she said.

Stanhope gazed at her with angry, passionate eyes. It had been a blow—a direct defiance and repulse—and his pride was up in arms. He went toward the parted curtain without a movement of salutation. On the way he passed the sleeping child, who stirred and looked up at him.

"Going, colonel?" she asked dreamily.

"Yes," he answered between his teeth.

"Coming soon again?"

"No—I think not."

He went on, forgetting those clumsy tokens of affection he was wont to show his favorite. At the door he came to an abrupt halt.

II.

HEINRICH MEYER had appeared on the threshold, and stood there in apparent polite hesitation, his burly figure seeming to dominate the whole room.

The two men stared at each other without any sign of recognition. A sudden new-born hatred leaped up in both faces and for a breathing space thrust aside the formalities with which civilization seeks to chain the elemental passions. Then Meyer, with a bow, stood back, allowing the officer to pass.

Stanhope went out into the deserted and neglected garden. His helmet was still in his hand, and the sun blazed down on his uncovered head. He hardly noticed it. He glanced back at the dreary little bungalow. Behind its drab walls, in the room he had just left, a woman's careless, unguided fingers were weaving fate for herself, for him, perhaps for a nation!

And he could do nothing. He had been defeated by an unseen, unknown enemy, who had driven him from the field almost before he was aware the battle had begun. The thought was like the prick of a spur. He strode on, tortured by a growing fear and the sense of his own powerlessness.

Meanwhile, Heinrich Meyer, gentle-

man at large and all-round amateur, had taken his seat by the open window. He was leaning a little forward, his square-tipped fingers pressed precisely one against the other, his florid, somewhat oriental, face expressive of nothing save placid content and pleasure.

"I had your message, dear Mrs. Atherton," he said. "I cannot tell you how delighted I was to find that you had considered my proposal, after all. But you know—I thought you would. I am rarely mistaken."

"Indeed!" She had seated herself opposite her guest, her hands clasped on her lap. She raised one hand now as though to smooth back the hair from her forehead, and his keen, watching eyes saw that it trembled. "In any case," she went on in a low voice, "I am prepared to—sell you those of my husband's papers you require. I neither know their value, nor how you came to know of their existence, but—"

Heinrich Meyer waved his fat hand by way of interruption. "Both points are easily explained, my dear lady," he said. "I was, as perhaps you know, slightly acquainted with your husband, and it was from him that I heard of his invention. Had he lived, I am sure he would have confided it into my hands. As regards the value"—he shrugged his shoulders—"you know I take a purely amateur interest in chemicals of this sort, and am therefore prepared to pay a fancy price—also out of quite personal and friendly reasons."

He smiled at her, and, as though moved by uncontrollable irritation, Mrs. Atherton rose and crossed to a table on which lay a little iron box. She unlocked it, and came back with a bundle of papers in her hand.

"These, I think, are what you mean," she said.

Meyer nodded. His eyes, which until now had been fixed in somewhat insolent admiration on her face, were now turned on the papers she held toward him. There was something greedy, almost savage, in the movement, and a sudden instinct made her draw back under the pretense of loosening the strings with which the papers were bound.

"I do not know what this invention is," she said, "but my husband set great store on it. I do not ask a fancy price, only a just one."

"Ah, a just one! May I see a moment, Mrs. Atherton?"

She gave him the papers with a reluctance she herself could not explain. He turned over the sheets carelessly enough, but a faint flush spread over his features.

"Yes, these are what I wished. Quite a good idea—undeveloped, you understand, but, with a little polishing, might be of some use. What do you say? For friendship's sake—two hundred pounds?"

"Not for friendship's sake!" she exclaimed sharply, yet the sound of 'two hundred pounds' echoed in her ears. It meant salvation both for her and for the fading life at her side. She composed herself with an effort.

"Well, then—for business' sake!" he said impatiently.

"I am ignorant, and trust you to deal honestly with me," she answered with stiff lips. "If two hundred pounds is a just price, I am satisfied."

"One question first—no one has ever seen these papers but yourself?"

"Only my husband. It was his invention. So much I am sure of."

Meyer nodded. He crammed the papers into his capacious pocket, and then drew out a leather case.

"There—count for yourself," he said, pushing the notes across the table to her.

She made a pretense of counting, but in reality she saw nothing for the mist before her eyes. God had indeed heard her, and her heart beat out a hymn of thanksgiving.

Meyer rose. His face expressed a more than ordinary satisfaction.

"Now that business is settled," he went on easily, "I have something else to speak of. I refer, of course, dear Mrs. Atherton, to the matter I touched on before, the matter of a closer relationship between us."

Mrs. Atherton rose also. The mist seemed to have been swept away, and she looked him steadily in the eyes.

"Our business is settled," she repeated, "and any relationship other than that of business is out of the question. I told you that once before, if you remember."

Meyer shrugged his shoulders and laughed.

"You refuse? Ah, well, two hundred pounds will not last forever. What then?"

"Then I will pray for other help," she answered bravely.

"Then you will come to me!" he retorted from the door. "You also will remember what I said. I can wait—and when you come, we will make a good bargain, you and I."

She stood motionless until his burly figure had disappeared. Then she bent down over the sleeping child and caught her in her arms. As in a vision, she saw the red glow of reviving life creep back into the pale cheeks, the light flash again in the heavy eyes.

"My baby!" she murmured passionately. "Think, little one! To-morrow we shall be climbing higher and higher in the pure air—up in the glorious mountains, where you won't feel tired any more, where we can forget every one, save just each other. And then home—home to England, our dear home, little one!"

The child nestled close with a contented sigh. "And colonel—colonel will be there, too?" she asked.

Mrs. Atherton made no answer. Quite suddenly—perhaps it was the reaction—she buried her face in her hands, and broke into a storm of tears.

III.

COLONEL STANHOPE refused the chair she offered him. He stood stiffly upright, his rugged face set and stern.

"I swore to myself I would never enter your house again," he said. "I had no wish to force myself or my help upon you when both were distasteful. Fate has been stronger than my oath—Fate, and a great danger. The time is past when we might speak to each other from behind masks—it is face to face now. Mrs. Atherton, I know that you have in your possession papers of your husband which are of the utmost value—"

She interrupted him with the old haughty gesture of defiance. "You know! How do you know?" she demanded. For the first time, his eyes sank. He looked away, and she laughed shortly and with intense bitterness.

"Does that matter?" he said. She did not reply, and he went on: "It is surely enough that I *do* know. I have reason to believe that you have no idea of their real value. For your sake I must interfere."

"For my sake!" she repeated. He heard the mockery in her voice, and lifted his head.

"Not for your sake, then," he said, "but for the sake of the country which is yours and mine."

She faltered before the fire in his eyes and the unswerving resolution which his manner conveyed.

"What do you mean?" she stammered.

"This much: those papers contain the particulars of a discovery which may change the whole method of warfare. The nation into whose hands they fall will become at one blow the domineering power, against whom the others, at any rate for a time, will be helpless. That discovery is by right England's. It is in your hands, in your keeping. You are responsible for it. Mrs. Atherton, I have come to warn you—"

He stopped, arrested by the expression on her face. She had grown as white as the dress she wore, and he saw her hand rise gropingly as though seeking support.

"Mrs. Atherton!" he cried out sharply, and then as a dawning fear crept over her features: "You have those papers—"

"No."

"Where are they—what have you done with them?"

"I—have sold them."

"You sold them!" He strode across the room to her side and caught her hand in an iron grasp. He was conscious of nothing, save that the catastrophe whose warning thunder he had heard that very day had broken over them both with all its annihilating force. "You sold them!" he repeated passionately. "I know to whom—to that German spy! How dared you?"

She flung herself free from him, and faced him with a new courage born of conviction.

"How dared I?" she cried. "They were mine to sell. And it was for baby's sake—for her life. What matters more to me than that?"

"One thing matters more," he said—"your country."

His voice had lost its harshness. He had given utterance to the code which governed his life, whose articles were woven into every fiber of his being. As she looked at him, a light seemed to flash over his face which smoothed away the hard and rugged lines, leaving it almost beautiful in its sudden serenity. He no longer saw her—his eyes were fixed far ahead, as though on something splendid seen only by himself.

"Mrs. Atherton," he went on very quietly, "I want to tell you the story of that invention. It is quite simple, and I do not think you have ever heard it. The man who owned it once did not come upon it suddenly. He gave up his life to its discovery. Some instinct told him it was somewhere hidden in the darkness, only waiting a steady, devoted patience to find it. So he was patient and devoted, not for himself, but for the country whose servant he was. He loved that country. He wanted to see her greatness shielded by a new strength. When he at last found that strength, that new defense against hatred and malice, he was happy and grateful. He thanked God."

His voice sank and died away. For a moment neither spoke. The man seemed to have forgotten everything save the memory whose shadow he had called up. Only when a stifled sob reached his ears did he realize that Mrs. Atherton had buried her face in her hands.

"Don't!" he said huskily. "It wasn't your fault. You did not know—how should you?"

"I sold my husband's secret, for which he gave his life, for two hundred pounds—to an enemy!" she answered.

His intuition told him the agony she could not express. Almost unconsciously his big hand rested on her shoulder, pityingly, and with an unmeasured tenderness.

"It was my fault—I should not have let you. I let your coldness and my own miserable pride drive me from you. I should have braved everything, knowing what hung in the balance. But you would not trust me." Then the suppressed bitterness of four long, silent years of waiting broke from him. "Why did you not trust me? Why?"

She looked up at him. Through the dimness of tears he saw that light of doubt he had learned to dread.

"Yes, I distrusted you—I dare not hide it from you—I distrust you to this hour."

"Why? I have the right to ask."

She gathered herself together as though for a supreme effort. He saw her lips twitch with pain.

"My husband was dying when he gave me those papers. They and this little home were my only heritage. He bade me swear never to trust one man. That man was you."

"I?"

"He told me you would do everything in your power to get those papers or even see their contents. He said you would ruin baby and me—because you were his enemy."

"You believed that?"

She threw back her head proudly. "I believed—I believe him. My husband was an honorable man."

He made no answer. His face was turned away. She could see nothing save the broad shoulders and dark head.

"Colonel Stanhope, it's without mask now. A great crisis is on us. Won't you be honest? See, I will break my promise. I will believe you—only tell me the truth. Had my husband reason to fear you?" There was a brief silence.

"Yes," he answered in a stifled voice.

She had leaned forward in eager feverish expectation. She drew back now, her white face relaxing as though from a great tension.

Suddenly he turned upon her. "Has that—that thing made a difference? Could you have answered me differently three years ago had it not been for that?"

She covered her face with her hands.

Stanhope groaned, turned sharply on his heel, and stood motionless, staring out at the arid stretch of compound.

There was a long silence, which she at length broke. "That must be forgotten," she said unsteadily. "All that concerns our two selves must be forgotten. Only one thing must be done and thought of—the recovery of the papers."

He shrugged his shoulders. "You do not know with whom you have to deal. I do. Meyer knows that his government will give tens of thousands where he has

given hundreds for his secret. What price have you to offer in comparison to *that?*"

She rose and came toward him, swaying a little as she came. "I think—I have the price," she said.

He stared down at her, wondering at the resolution written on the frail woman's face.

"You?"

"He asked me to be his wife," she went on, scarcely audibly. "He said he would pay anything for that—that he would make the bargain a good one. Perhaps—" she broke off, unable to finish.

For a minute he did not understand. Then, as her meaning dawned on him, his whole face flushed and darkened with the storm of passionate protest.

"You cannot—you shall not!" he cried fiercely. "You must be mad! You shall not sell yourself. It would be a crime against yourself, against me"—he halted an instant—"no, not against me, for I am nothing in your life, but against your child."

She looked at him steadily. "Do you not remember—you said only a few minutes ago that there is one thing that matters more than ourselves, our loves, our lives—something that demands the highest of all sacrifices—our country? Have you so soon forgotten?"

He put up his hand as though to ward off a crushing blow. "My God!" he said under his breath. "No, I have not forgotten!"

"So, you will not try to persuade me. You will let me do what is right. If I succeed, I shall give the papers to the English government. In any case—it is good-by between us two." She held out a white, cold hand, and he took it.

They looked at each other with the despair of two beings seeking each to read the secret in the other's soul. Perhaps in that moment's silent communion a little of the truth, till now hidden, was revealed to both.

"He said you were my enemy," she went on gently. "You have not denied it—it must be true. Still, I have trusted you—almost, I think, I am counting on your strength to help me to be strong. I do not know why—I cannot help it."

He nodded, white to the lips. "Thank you," he said.

He picked up his helmet and went toward the door, groping like a man in overpowering darkness. At the door he turned an instant. "You are a brave woman," he said.

After that a veil seemed to drop before his eyes. He was conscious only of painful, dazzling sunshine, and a blurred, dusty road stretching out before him in endless monotony. He felt that an eternity separated him from the time when he had tramped toward the little bungalow, his heart torn between fear and unquenchable human hope. Now the worst—the very worst his brain could conceive—had come to pass. The innocent woman he loved, and had loved faithfully half his life, was to be the victim of a long chain of circumstance, crime, and error. The fact that she was to be the all-atoning sacrifice for a time stunned him.

Then as he walked, his mind clouded with black visions of the future, the man's natural energy and stubborn courage urged him to plant himself once more in Fate's path and make a final effort to turn her destroying hand.

IV.

He made his way to Heinrich Meyer's bungalow, a whitewashed building surrounded by a lovely rose-filled garden. Heinrich Meyer, the wealthy amateur, professed a passion for such flowers, though no one had ever seen him look at them.

Stanhope made no attempt to call a servant, but went resolutely through the open door into the cool and shady house. A former visit made him well acquainted with the rooms. Without knocking, he opened a door on the left, and, entering, closed and locked it swiftly after him.

Heinrich Meyer was deeply engrossed in an important document addressed to the German government, and Stanhope's entrance had somewhat the effect of a bursting bomb. He swung hastily round in his chair, his eyes dilating, his florid face grown livid. He had no liking for unexpected visitors, or, indeed, anything unexpected and outside his own plans. And there was something about this visitor's expression which did not help to reassure him.

Stanhope gave his host no time to

speak. He came forward and seated himself directly opposite him, at the same time laying a revolver on the table.

"I want to speak with you," he said curtly.

"So I see," Meyer stammered, with unwieldy sarcasm.

"The revolver is not a threat," Stanhope went on—"at least, not directly. I have no actual intention of murdering you. I merely put it there as an intimation that I am serious—also desperate. Are you going to listen to me?"

Meyer leaned back, his coarse hands playing nervously with the half-finished document. "There is not much choice," he said.

"No—and there isn't much use in trying to call for help. Now, we are going to be quite open with each other. I have no objection to laying my hand down, weak cards and all, if you do the same."

Meyer waved his hands. "I don't know what you are talking about," he said.

"You will in a minute. You cheated a woman this afternoon. Don't be excited. You know you are not really insulted—you are rather flattered. You gave her a miserable two hundred pounds for what you know her government and yours would give thousands. You cheated her. That is why I am dealing in this summary way with you. Now, I want those papers back."

Meyer laughed.

"It seems absurd, doesn't it?" Stanhope went on. "But you will admit one thing. If I wrote to the same place I see you are writing to, and told them that your secret was not a secret at all, but already known to the English, the chance of their paying you more than a few hundreds would be rather remote."

"No one knows the secret!" burst out Meyer.

"One man does."

"A dead man—yes."

"No—a living man."

"Who?"

"I myself."

"Prove it!"

"Certainly. Take the papers. Now listen."

Meyer sat as though paralyzed. Quietly and without haste, Stanhope began to recite the contents. At the end of five minutes Meyer flung the papers down with a curse.

"It is not Mrs. Atherton, but I, who am cheated!" he cried in a paroxysm of rage. "She cheated me!"

"She did not—not knowingly."

"If you expect me to believe you, you must tell me the truth. How could you be in possession of the secret without her knowledge?"

Stanhope rose suddenly to his feet. "The invention is mine," he said.

"Yours?"

"Yes."

"You are the inventor?"

For one instant Stanhope hesitated. Then he nodded.

"But, Atherton—" Meyer left the sentence unfinished. He saw the other's face, and his keen eyes, trained to pierce every depth of the human heart, read the truth in the gray, set features. "Man—it was stolen from you!" he cried out. "Atherton stole it—that is what you mean!" Stanhope did not answer. "And you kept silence all these years—" He stopped again. The light was dawning faster, and his hardened, calculating nature stood bewildered before the revelation of sacrifice.

Stanhope looked up, his features relaxing into a painful smile. "He was my friend," he said, "and his wife—but I do not expect you to understand all that. The point is this—Mrs. Atherton must have the papers back. They can only be of value to one of us if the other consents to keep silence. These are my strong cards. First, you do not know the secret by heart. I do. Therefore you can never take my knowledge from me. Second, it would be a pretty bad blow for you if you were thrown out of here, and I know enough of your transactions to make India too hot for you. They are not bad cards, are they? Besides, I am prepared to pay. What is your price?"

Meyer made a rapid calculation. "The game is yours for eight thousand pounds," he said. "That means seven thousand eight hundred pounds plus my two hundred pounds."

Stanhope drew out his check-book. "I am not going to haggle," he said. "You know your strong cards, too, I suppose. But you have touched the limit." He took up a pen and wrote the check. Then

he pocketed his revolver and began to collect the papers on the table.

"No copies? No, of course not—you had no time. I was too prompt. For our own sakes we shall keep this interview private. Good-by."

V.

FIVE minutes later he was again on the dusty highroad, his eyes clear and his pulses throbbing with the old elation of battle. It had been a good fight, and he had conquered with his one weapon —the truth.

For years he had kept this truth to himself. He had tried to spare the sacred memory of the dead, hoping that the day would come when the living would trust him with what was his own. Now at last he had spoken—to save her. He walked rapidly. The sun no longer dazzled him. It seemed a joyful setting to his own thankfulness. An hour ago he had been fairly well off, as the world goes. Now he had nothing, and henceforth life would mean a hard, lonely struggle.

And she distrusted him. Even that last, bitterest of all blows lost its sting. He had saved her, though she did not know it, and should never know it. Therein lay his happiness and his reward Presently, as he drew near his bungalow, he saw her come out of the deserted little garden. He knew her errand. She tried to go swiftly past him, but he stopped her, the papers in his hand.

"I was coming to you," he said quietly. "Mrs. Atherton, the great sacrifice is not asked of you."

She took the package almost mechanically.

He saw a swift wave of emotion sweep over her face—fear, doubt, finally an endless relief.

"I have a little influence with Meyer," he went on with a faint smile. "He was quite amenable. Though you distrust me, take my advice. Give the papers at once to the English government. They will make you a rich woman. As for the two hundred pounds, they are yours until that time comes. Once you refused my help. Now you cannot—dare not. You have been too near a great catastrophe." He saluted gravely and stiffly, and went on his way.

He had given her no time to speak, and she stood there gazing after him, the precious package clasped in her hands.

. . . . . .

The crisis was over. Now came the hour of reaction, when pain, the memory of the past, and of vain regret, surged up stronger than his will. He stood in the shadow of the trees, his arms resting on the wall, his eyes fixed somberly on the dark windows of her home.

The dusk had already begun to envelope all in shadow, yet his imagination saw her, as he had so often seen her, standing amid the wild flowers, the child at her side. It was his last weakness, his last farewell. He was not ashamed to stand there and read over the simple romance of his hard life before he tore it up and cast it away. He was not ashamed in the lonely silence to let the stern lines fade from his face, and all the poetry, all the profound tenderness which he bore within him, rise to his eyes.

So he dreamed, and in his dream he saw her stand on the broken veranda and come down toward him, a white spirit, purified in trial and suffering. The weeds and grasses seemed to part and make way for her. Something caught at his throat and choked him. The pain of it was almost more than he could bear. She spoke, and he started awake.

He knew then that it was no dream —that it was no spirit, but a woman, who stood before him, her face lifted to his, her hand upon his arm.

"I did not see you," he heard her say, and her voice sounded far off, "but I knew that you would come. It was instinct told me—the instinct which made my heart turn to you and trust you—in spite of the whole world."

He did not answer. He would have turned and left her, but he could not. There was something in the Indian night of heavy perfumed air which held him in wordless, breathless waiting.

"I know all," she said—"all you hid from me. You sacrificed everything—ambition and wealth. Meyer told me. I could not rest. I knew there was a secret I could not penetrate. Now I know."

"Poor little woman!" he said beneath his breath.

"No, no—not poor. You tried to shield a false memory. You tried to guard a clay idol I had set up in my heart. It is shattered, but you have raised another and a better in its place." She drew a little package of papers from the bosom of her dress and placed it in his hands. "It is yours—it was yours always. Take it—and forgive all the evil I have thought of you." He tried to resist. "Take it," she repeated brokenly—"that and everything I can give and your heart desires."

The darkness was fading. He saw nothing but the white face illumined with a growing wonderful happiness, that transfigured it.

"Everything?"

"Everything."

"Helen, do you know what that means? Are you sure?"

"Dear—if you only knew how hard it has been to refuse you that everything!" she answered him.

Then he understood the full measure of her gift. He put his arm about her and led her through the garden wilderness home.

THE SHADOW OF THE SPHINX.*

BY ALBERT PAYSON TERHUNE,

Author of "On Glory's Trail," "The Scarlet Scarab," "Fate Throws the Dice."

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

HUGH STANDISH and his friend, Jack Penn, are traveling through Egypt in search of Professor Keyes, who, Standish thinks, can help him trace his mother's family. They find him, with his daughter, Hope, the guests of a Bedouin Arab tribe, whose emir, Basraoul, offers to the two young men his hospitality.

Standish is discovered to be the son of the emir's older sister, and is, in consequence, next in line of succession. To offset the fact of his alien blood, the emir proposes to adopt him as a son and give him his daughter, Feridah, in marriage. The young Sheik Hafiz, who loves Feridah, and who has hitherto ranked as heir to the emirship, treacherously tries to kill him.

Feridah confesses her love to Standish, who is already in love with Hope Keyes. Hope, seeing the two together, misunderstands the situation. Standish is summoned to a council of the tribe to give his final answer to the emir's offer.

CHAPTER XI.

AN INTERRUPTION.

THE audience chamber was full when we arrived, but a lane was quickly made for me as I moved forward to Basraoul's dais. At a gesture of invitation from the emir, I took a seat at his side.

Just opposite sat Hope and her father. Midway between was Feridah, attended by two of her women. Hafiz, his dark face inscrutable and masklike, stood near her. Along the walls and back of the dais were grouped thirty or forty notables of the tribe. The gorgeous costumes made brilliant display, heightened by the red burnooses and shining spears of the guards at the entrance. The sun was just rising, and the whole long apartment was bathed in roseate light.

My coming had apparently been awaited, for as the emir returned my salutation, and motioned me to the place of honor at his right hand, he rose and faced the assemblage. All sprang to their feet as at a signal, and bowed to him with hand on brow. The weapons of the guards clashed in ringing salute.

There was something in the barbaric pomp of it all that went to my head like strong wine. I straightened myself, and drew in a deep breath. Almost I was tempted to yield, and thus win the

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chance of leading such men to battle—of making them accord me the reverence lavished on the emir. Then I glanced across, for reassurance, at Hope.

I chanced to look at a time when her big azure eyes were fixed on me, but she averted her gaze before mine could fairly meet it. Brief as was the vision I had of her full face, I could see that she was pale and wan, with dark circles beneath the eyes, as though she, too, had for some reason slept little. I noted, also, an expression that I might almost have read for coldness.

This troubled me, I knew not why. Surely she must be aware that the scene of the night before could readily be made clear? For had I not that very day told her of my love? She must certainly understand. As soon as the audience should be at an end I would go to her and force her to listen. She would then know, past all doubt, that my love was all hers—that nothing could part us.

Then my eyes fell on Feridah. She had noted my eager glance at Hope. Her broad brow furrowed, and a flush came into her olive cheek. She did not seem pleased. I wondered why, but turned my errant attention to the emir. He was speaking in a grave, courteous voice, yet one which carried with it an undertone of supreme command. All about him were silent except Saïd, who, in a far part of the tent, was whisperingly translating to Jack Penn—the only person present who was unfamiliar with Arabic—the gist of the speech.

"His coming," the emir was saying as I began to listen, "was a direct omen. the hand of Allah was in it. The youth who shall one day tread in my steps has been *sent* to us. It is my will—and the law of our people—that he shall be my heir. For that reason I propose, this day, to adopt him as my son and to invest him with the insignia of his rank."

He indicated a richly embroidered burnoose, caftan, and white and gold turban held by a servant who stood behind him—garments such as only a chief or the son of a chief may wear.

"To sweep away all doubt as to my elder nephew's rights," he resumed, "I ask him this day in open council to take for wife my daughter."

A murmur ran through the audience. Then dead silence, broken by a long whistle of amazement as Jack Penn received and digested the news.

But it was at Hope that I was looking. Her features were set and expressionless, nor did she glance in my direction. An impatient, almost angry movement from Feridah made me aware that my eyes must have carried a world of appeal to the unrecognizing American girl.

Then my look shifted to Hafiz. As though carved from marble he stood. His face was like stone. Yet I saw that the hand laid carelessly on his saber-hilt gripped the weapon until his knuckles were white with the strain. Inwardly I admired his splendid self-control.

All faces were now turned upon me. For good or for evil, the time to speak had come. In another minute, the calm gaze of the onlookers might well change to glares of fury, and a dozen drawn weapons might menace me.

Yet I would speak the truth. I would remain true to the pale, stately girl who now refused even to meet my eye. At risk of death itself, I would prove to her that I was not faithless. But it cut me to the heart to do what I must do. Feridah loved me—had risked horrible death for me; and now the man she twice had saved must shame her before her father's whole tribe.

I would almost, at that moment, have changed places with the mangiest of the scavenger-dogs prowling on the outskirts of the camp. This was worse than my direst fever-nightmare.

"Nephew," prompted Basraoul kindly as I hesitated, "you have had the night for reflection. What is your reply?"

He smiled pleasantly, confident of my answer, and deeming my pause due to natural embarrassment. In a measure he was right. Never since the birth of time, I think, has wretched man been worse embarrassed.

I got to my feet, saluted him once more, and prepared for the plunge. Nothing could be gained by delay.

"Greeting, O Basraoul! And you, O sheiks, elders, and councilors of the El Kanah!" I began. "My mind is indeed made up, and what I now say I must abide by to the end. With humble

gratitude I have heard your emir's dazzling offer—an offer of which I am all unworthy. And I will reply frankly."

"*Salaam! Aleikum!*" came a hoarse salute from the doorway. A man, dust-covered and travel-stained, burst without ceremony through the amazed circle and advanced unannounced toward the emir.

Basraoul faced the intruder angrily, and wrathful mutterings swept the concourse at this rude interruption. But to all this the newcomer gave no heed, nor did he bow before the emir, as was the unfailing custom of the desert.

An odd figure was this stranger, gigantically tall, with almost coal-black face and the features of a particularly ferocious negro. He wore but a single garment—a long, dirty-white tunic—and carried in one hand a seven-foot, shovel-headed spear. His woolly black hair was piled high above his low brow, and a white scar ran down one side of his neck.

This was my first glimpse of any of the famous, or infamous, "Fuzzy-Wuzzies," the Khalifah's Sudanese dervish bodyguard. I wish it had been my last.

The Sudanese, without salutation, thrust a dirty parchment scrol' into the emir's hand.

"From the Son of Heaven, and in haste!" he growled in thick, guttural Arabic.

At his words, the demeanor of all the Bedouins underwent an instant change. Anger and surprise gave place to anxious, respectful interest. All leaned forward, regarding the messenger with new interest. I and my affairs were utterly forgotten.

The emir took the scroll with actual veneration. Touching it to his lips and forehead, he broke the seal, spread out the parchment, and glanced over its contents. Surprise was in his strong face as he read. Then, finishing, he again kissed the scroll and thrust it into his girdle.

"See that this messenger from the Heaven-Born is cared for," he ordered one of his servants. Turning to the assemblage, he went on:

"This is a matter for instant and private council. All save the high councilors and sheiks will withdraw."

Catching my eye, as we others prepared to go, he added less formally:

"To read the Heaven-Born's message to my council will not take long. Then, hurried as we shall be, we will yet find time to finish the happier affair. But marriage and all else must wait on the Khalifah's business. Return in a half hour, my nephew."

As we left the tent, I noticed that Feridah was pausing on the threshold for a word with me. But I dared not speak to her then; so, linking arms with Jack Penn, I feigned not to see her amid the crowd of outgoing people. Once free of that press, I would seek Hope and tell her everything.

"So you're going to be a real live emir yourself!" crowed Jack, slapping me on the back with Herculean force that left me breathless and homicidal. "And going to make the princess into Mrs. Hugh Standish, too? Lord, but some folks get all the luck! Now, if it were *I*—"

"Jack," I snapped, "you must have been born more than ordinarily foolish! You never could have acquired all your idiocy in the twenty-five brief years you've lived."

"But, say—" he began.

I caught a flutter of Hope's white dress just beyond. She was moving out, alone, toward the rocky plain beyond the encampment. I could not have asked for a better chance to say what I had to. I took my temporary respite as a good omen. With the knowledge that she loved me, I could face any difficulty with a blithe heart. Then, too, her father, who was wise and well-versed in Bedouin ways, might be able to solve the knotty problem and avert Basraoul's wrath.

So I broke unceremoniously from Jack's arm and ran forward, away from the others, to where Hope walked alone.

CHAPTER XII.

"A WOMAN SCORNED."

A TURN in the rude path, fringed by high boulders, carried Hope beyond my view. But at once I had rounded the curve and caught up with her. We were quite hidden by the tall rocks from the encampment behind us.

She looked around, listlessly, as I

came up. Then, seeing who I was, slightly increased her pace.

"Hope!" I cried, impatient at her aloofness.

She halted, her eyes sweeping me in an impersonal lack of interest.

"Well?" she queried.

"Hope!" I said again, paused, at a loss how to begin; then blundered on: "Are you angry with me?"

Her dainty dark eyebrows lifted.

"Angry?" she repeated coldly. "No."

She made as though to continue her interrupted walk, but I barred her way.

"You sha'n't treat me as if I were a child in disgrace!" I protested. "You must hear me out. Then you can do as you see fit."

"Is it necessary?" she asked, with a scornful weariness that made me unreasonably angry.

Yet I curbed myself and went on:

"It *is* necessary. It is *everything*—to me! After what happened yesterday—"

"Morning or night?" she interposed.

"You know what I mean. Yesterday morning—up there on the hill—I told you that I—"

"I have forgotten," she cut in. "Nor," as I strove to speak, "do I wish to be reminded. That is past. If you have one spark of American feeling left, please have the manhood not to speak of it."

"You listened to me then. Yet now—"

"That was a thousand years ago!" She laughed mirthlessly. "The world is a very different place to-day."

"My heart is where it was yesterday—where it will always be!" I protested. "It—"

"In the tents of your mother's people?"

"At your feet."

Her pale face flushed hot. The soft hue of her eyes was frozen and steely as she replied:

"You have followed me here to insult me?"

"Insult you?" I echoed in horror. "Heaven forbid! Since when has it been an insult for a man to tell a woman he loves her? If—"

"Since he became the plighted husband of another woman," she made answer. "Now, will you let me go on with my walk?"

"No!" I cried. "Not until you hear me out. I am not any woman's 'plighted husband.' I love *you,* Hope! You are my whole life, my future, my soul itself. You are all on earth I love—all, perhaps, that can love me. Hope, can't you see I'm speaking God's truth?"

"You perhaps cannot realize," she sneered, "that an American girl may regard it as an insult to hear the love-vows of a man who is betrothed to another woman. Plural marriages may be quite correct in the East, but—"

If she had lashed me across the face with a whip I could not have been more furiously outraged in every fiber of my being.

"I am American!" I broke in madly, "and you have no right to speak as though I were not. I have offered you no insult. I love you, and you alone."

"Then your match with Feridah is a mere 'marriage of convenience'?" she suggested. "Yet I should scarcely have thought so after what I was so unfortunate as to see—and hear—last night."

"Will you let me explain?" I implored, clinging desperately to my one lingering vestige of self-control.

"If you can explain away the evidence of my eyes and ears, you are at liberty to try. But I warn you that facts are stubborn things. Not that I underrate the powers of your very clever tongue. I confess—if it gives you any gratification—that yesterday I actually believed you. But yesterday is past. Much, *much* is past."

For the first time there was a tremble in the cold, sweet voice. The frozen eyes, too, softened in spite of themselves. The momentary reaction went to my brain—that is the only way I can account for the insane, boorish thing I did. Looking back, I myself cannot understand my action.

For, as the glorious eyes softened and the dear voice shook—before she could overcome the brief weakness—I had sprung forward.

My arms were about the slender, white-clad form, straining it close. My kisses were hot on her upturned face.

"I love you! I love you! I love you!" I heard myself repeating over

and over again. For the moment I was mad.

During the briefest fraction of time, Hope rested unresisting in my arms. Then a shudder ran through her, and by main strength she tore herself free. Her face was aflame, her eyes blazing. I strode forward again. With clenched fist, she struck me full on the mouth.

"You *beast!*" she gasped. "You Arab! With the kisses of Feridah on your lips! With her love-words in your ears! You cowardly Arab brute!"

Like some goddess of wrath, she hurled at me the vials of her bitter scorn.

And I? White, aghast, too dismayed to note even the blood that coursed from my cut lips, I stared at her in speechless bewilderment. Shame that my great love should have momentarily swept away the bounds of reason was only second to the dazed horror awakened by her words and blow.

Then, in a breath, the flood-gates within my heart burst asunder. I think I must have lost what little sanity I had ever possessed. Every one of her terrible words was branded across my brain as with a white-hot iron. Her scorn cut deeper than ever had any emotion of my life—even my love for herself.

"As you will!" I cried heartbrokenly reckless. "For the unpardonable thing I have done, I ask pardon. Let that pass. You, whom I loved, shrink from my touch as from that of a snake. You disown me even as a fellow countryman. You call be an 'Arab brute!' So be it! I *am* one, from now on! You typified all that was best in my home land. You turn from me in loathing. What is left? The land, the tribe, and the woman that offer me welcome and love! The choice is made. You have struck Hugh Standish dead. The Bedouin sheik who rises in his place has neither lot nor part with you, or your country, from now on and forever!"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE DIE IS CAST.

I HAVE set down the foregoing scene baldly, without mercy to myself, nor with a hint of extenuation. Think of me as you will. If any may judge my behavior abominable, so do I myself. I tell the tale as it happened, not as I could have wished it to happen. But he who has loved and been cruelly misjudged will, I think, understand.

My brain afire, I strode back toward the camp, threading my way, with blind heedlessness, along the labyrinthine path that wound between the high boulders.

The pocket-opening of my loose riding-coat caught on the spikes of a thorn-bush. I jerked it free, scarce noticing what I did. But the instant's pause required for the trivial action meant all the difference between life and death to me.

For even as I halted, momentarily, to free myself, a mass of rock, weighing perhaps ninety pounds, was loosed from the low cliff under which I was passing and crashed noisily to the pebble-strewn ground at my very feet. It had missed my head by a bare handbreadth. The dust it drove upward at its impact almost choked me; for the time my sight was blurred by the sand particles hurled into my eyes.

Through all my hopeless, mad misery, I was suddenly brought to reason by the narrowness of my escape from an appalling fate. But for that chance pause my brains must have been dashed out.

Dully I looked down at the rock at my feet, then up at the cliff ten feet above my head. As I did so, I noted—first unconsciously, then with startled keenness—a certain discrepancy which my undergraduate geological studies thrust upon my attention.

The cliff was of soft limestone. The rock that had fallen from its summit was of jagged quartz. Now, even the veriest amateur in mineralogy knows that quartz rock is never found in or on limestone formations.

The rock that had fallen from the cliff had never belonged there. How, then, came it there? Who could have lugged ninety pounds of quartz to the top of a limestone precipice?

Another detail, now that my attention was drawn to it—the cliff-crest was not cut nor crumbling as is the case where a landslide has swept such surfaces. The quartz, however placed there, had not been dislodged by accident, but by design.

It had been meant for me! Nothing but my sudden halt—which the man above could not have foreseen—had marred the clever calculations of distances and saved me from instant death.

With a bound, I was scaling the cliff-side. This was more of Hafiz's work—I knew it as well as though I had seen him launch the projectile. He, or an agent of his, had done this, and if I were in time I might avenge the deed now and in my own way. The thought of actual fighting was as tonic to my broken spirits.

In a moment I had reached the crest, careless of the chance that I might readily be struck down from above while climbing. But, from the summit, not a soul was in sight. The assassin—Hafiz or his tool—had been too swift for me. Again death had struck at me and had left no incriminating evidence.

But Hafiz had by this act done himself the worst turn possible, for he had aroused every drop of fighting blood in my sorely overtaxed nature. He had declared war to the death? Very good! War to the death it should be. He sought to remove me from the royal succession? Then I would claim that succession and battle for my hereditary rights against all odds. My course lay clear before me.

Hope Keyes had stripped me of my love, of my belief in womankind. She had even cast from me the title of American, and had termed me an "Arab beast!" She had left me without love, without ideals, without country.

Hafiz, the sheik, had turned my mind in that moment of desolate emptiness to new chances, new fatherland, ideals, and ambitions that my wretched life might still hold. My wild words to Hope, at parting from her, might perchance have been repented had I been left to myself. Now, this cowardly deed of Hafiz's had fixed them firm, had crystallized them into sudden stubborn resolutions. If my promised position in the tribe were a thing to covet, to the extent of seeking a human life in order to attain such eminence, then I as well as Hafiz would strive for that position. And I would win.

I put away from me, as I thought, forever, all memories of America, of my former hopes and of my own people. Henceforth I was a Bedouin—henceforth and to the end. The Arabs were part of the army even now massing against the English. I would cast in my lot with them. The English were Anglo-Saxons, of the same blood as the race that had cast me off. Then I, as an Arab, would fight them and help drive them from the land of my birth.

Strong in my morbid resolve, exulting miserably in my self-sacrifice, I made my way toward the camps.

Coming toward me, from the emir's tent, was Basraoul's chief *kavass*. He was evidently in search of me, for he salaamed as I drew near, and began:

"*Howadji,* the—"

"When you address me," I snarled, breaking in on his message, "never again use that term. To you and to all others of the El Kanah, save to its highest sheiks, I am henceforth '*effendina.*'"

He looked puzzled.

"I am of your blood, and henceforth of your tribe!" I went on. "Foreign titles are not for me, nor do I wish them. Remember that, and pass my order on to your fellows. Do you understand?"

"Yes, *effendina*" (excellency), he replied, his tanned face lighting up happily. "I shall obey with joy."

A new idea came to me. I halted again as I was about to go onward.

"How long have you been the emir's *kavass?*" I asked.

"It will now soon be twenty-five years," he said.

"You remember my father?"

"As I remember yesterday's sun, *effendina.*"

"And myself as a child?"

"From the day of your birth, *effendina.* May the day be remembered on high, and the—!"

"How was I named, then? What name did my mother and my mother's people give me at my birth? Do you chance to recall it?"

"I recall it well, as does many another here, *effendina.* Your name, set upon the great scroll, was Nassar."

"*Nassar!*"

I repeated the high-sounding word reflectively. The Arab term for "victor!" Truly, a vile irony of fate! But I was minded to make it one day true.

"In Allah's name, so be it!" I exclaimed. "Be that my name henceforth, to you and to all others! You came bearing me a message?"

"Yes, *effendina,*" he replied, brought back suddenly to duty. "The secret council has risen. The emir—on whom be eternal peace!—bids me summon you and say that he will now take up the affair broken off by the Sudanese messenger. The others have also been sent for. Will you hasten? See, the elders and the Feringee are already assembling."

Many were moving from various directions toward the great tent. Even as I looked, I saw Hope Keyes rejoin her father, who had wandered out in search of her. The two neared the tent ahead of us.

Jack Penn met them and spoke gaily to Hope, but she made no reply. Far away as I was, I could see that her face was white and drawn. I could not feel as glad as I should that she, too, suffered. Indeed, the sight of her haggard features gave me a queer twinge of pain. But I had turned my back on the past. So, forcing her from my mind, I hurried onward.

The assembly, when I entered the tent, was disposed much as it had been earlier on that same fateful morning.

As I came in and saluted the elders, they rose and returned my bow with the respect due the emir's heir. This stirred me unaccountably. I read the question in the emir's eyes, and, without awaiting his words, I spoke:

"Basraoul, my uncle," I began, "and you, elders and sheiks of the El Kanah! My resolve is made. My answer is for all to hear. With willingness, I accept the offer whereof I am unworthy."

A stir went about the room. Feridah's luminous eyes shone in repressed delight. The emir's stern face broke into a smile that softened and beautified it—a smile reflected on two out of three of the Bedouin faces about him.

All this I saw from the corner of my eye. For my gaze was not bent upon any of these, but upon Hafiz, who had hastily entered just ahead of me. He bore the searching ordeal well—no muscle of his masklike face stirred. Yet his eyes were as smoldering fires. I continued:

"For the priceless offer of the Princess Feridah's hand in marriage, I thank my uncle, and I accept it with humble gratitude. For the offer to adopt me into the mighty tribe of my mother's people, I thank him. And I accept, hoping that I may bring honor and new glory to my tribe. For his wish to make me his heir, I am grateful. I accept, and I shall strive to follow in his wise steps."

I paused again. Not once had I taken my eyes from Hafiz. I was making him suffer tortures, and I reveled in the fact.

"If any here doubts my rights or desires to combat them," I went on, my voice ringing out defiantly, "let him say so now, and meet me man to man."

My gaze still searched Hafiz's blank face. He made no sign, though his muscles were working convulsively and his cheek grew ashy pale.

"Then," I resumed, "I take it none questions my right, or else that he who questions it is a coward—a scum of the desert who cringes before his master's eye. I hereby put aside my past life, my own former name. Henceforth know me for Nassar, Sheik of the El Kanahs, promised husband of your emir's daughter."

A shout of applause shook the tent. But I did not hear it. Nor did I now hold Hafiz in torture any longer with my gaze. All my thoughts were on one woman.

For Hope Keyes had quietly fainted in her father's arms.

CHAPTER XIV.

A CHANGE OF PLAN.

IN the uproar and general jollification following upon my excited words, few noticed and fewer were interested in Hope's swoon. Yet I, brushing past the thronging men who would have stayed me to kiss my hand, hurried toward her.

I saw her blue eyes open vaguely as I drew near. Then their weary glance fell on me, and a shiver ran through the slender, relaxed body. The girl stood up, freeing herself from her father's arm.

I got no nearer. Into my path slipped Feridah. Her splendid form was drawn

up to its full commanding height, her dark eyes were glowing as she barred my farther passage toward the woman I had lost.

"You are in haste, my betrothed!" she commented, her rich voice vibrant. "Whither would you go? To the Feringee maid who swooned? She has recovered. Her father and the other Feringee are with her. Your place is at my side henceforth, not with the daughter of the race you have disowned."

There was gentleness, even persuasion, in her tone, yet beneath this ran an undercurrent of purpose, firm and deadly as cold steel. I checked my advance.

"You are right," I muttered, "quite right. I shall not forget—again."

I turned back toward the dais, where the emir awaited me. With his own hands Basraoul bound about my waist the gold-crusted saber-belt from which hung a carved, jewel-hilted Damascus blade. An elder of the tribe placed on my head the turban of princely rank. with the long burnoose draped about me, I stood forth a Bedouin sheik. Hugh Standish, New Englander and Harvard football player, was indeed lost.

I could guess what must come next, for I had witnessed more than one Bedouin marriage ceremony. The whole tribe would adjourn to a cleared space beyond the encampment, and there sit in a great circle while Feridah and I stood each on a flat stone at opposite ends of the space thus enclosed. Then in turn we would be called on to cry aloud the world-old Bedouin formula:

"In the presence of Allah and of my people, I declare, standing on this stone, that I take you for wife (or husband), *and I call to witness Allah, the Most High, and Mohammed, His Prophet."* etc., etc., to the end of the long ritual.

After which the emir would join our hands and bless us.

Well, I was nerved to the ordeal. Nothing mattered now.

But I was, it seemed, to have a still further reprieve. Basraoul was saying:

"This is no time for marrying and for giving in marriage. Word has reached me this day that the *Inglesi* (English) are advancing by rapid marches toward Omdurman, the sacred city. The Heaven-Born calls on us and on the other tribes of the Faithful to march with all speed to the gathering-place, whence the legions of the Prophet are to be launched like living lightning upon the infidel, to sweep the Feringee forever from our land. This day we break camp. In a few weeks at most the invader will be crushed. Then will the marriage be celebrated. Until then, it is the Holy War that we must follow, not the dictates of heart or state. The audience is at an end."

"*Effendina!*" called Professor Keyes, who had been listening to a whispered plea from Hope. "The time has come for me and mine to depart. For your courteous treatment we thank you with all our hearts, and the memory thereof shall be in our minds as the breath of the acacia-bloom. But the time has come for a return to our own land. Will you grant us dismissal and an escort to Assouan? From that point we can—"

I did not wait to hear the rest of Keyes's words. So the wrench of parting must come at once? It was better that way.

I turned to Jack Penn, who had worked his way through the throng to my side, and held out my hand to him.

"Good-by, old chap!" I said in English. "I can't thank you enough for your loyal friendship and the time you've wasted on me and my wretched affairs. Good luck! I think I shall never speak the old language again. I'm going to try to forget it. So let my last English words be 'Good luck!' and 'Good-by!'"

"Hugh," grunted Penn, "you sure make a fine speech, but you talk like a man in a cave. Do you think I'm going to clear out with the professor and Miss Hope? Not for little Johnny! She's a winner, but somehow she ain't stuck on the idea of winning *me*. Here's where I stay."

"But you can't!" I protested. "And—"

"But I sure *can*," he contradicted. "Likewise I shall. I had a measly, stupid time traveling till I met you. Since then I've been looking forward to seeing the biggest sort of excitement when our Sudan friends get to mixing it up with Kitchener's Tommies. It'll be

something to tell my grandchildren about. And do you think I'm going to lose it just because the others are leaving? Not me."

"You don't understand," I answered, amused in spite of myself. "This isn't a picnic. It's war. I've cast in my lot with my mother's people. The best luck I can look for is death on the battlefield. With you, it's different. You've got everything to live for. Clear out while there's time."

"Look here, you old duffer!" exclaimed Jack, losing his gaiety of manner and dropping into a more serious vein than I had yet seen in him. "Look here! You're sore about something. You needn't tell me what it is, and I won't try to guess, though I think I've a sneaking idea about it. That's your affair, not mine. But just because you choose to play you're an Arab, doesn't change the fact that you're the whitest chap I know. And it doesn't keep me from being your chum."

I gripped his big hand, more affected than I dared show.

"I'm your chum," he went on, "and I'm going to see you through this streak of dirty luck. The time'll come when you'll get your senses back and remember you're an American. When that time comes, maybe it'll help you to have me on deck beside you, and beside you I'm going to stick. We'll buck the line together. That goes! See?"

I knew his stubborn self-will too thoroughly to waste words in trying to shake it, and I was deeply touched by his rough loyalty.

"Stay, then," said I, "and be my guest, in all that the word means to a Bedouin."

"'Bedouin,' your grandmother!" he snorted. "You're no more a Bedouin, Hugh Standish, than I'm a pale-blue Dodo bird. The—"

"I am Sheik Nassar, of the El Kanah," I replied. "If you stay here, please remember that. Hugh Standish is dead."

"Hugh Standish is dead wrong," he cut in irreverently. "But go ahead with the silly rot, if it amuses you. Be Grand Panjandrum of the Mokamok Islands, or Pound-Master of Pompton, New Jersey, for all I care. Anything to please. But remember I'm with you, whatever game you're playing. And when you're tired of it all, I'll be on hand to take you back to your own people, and to God's own country, where you belong."

"These are my people, and here is where I belong," I insisted.

"Suit yourself," he grinned, "but when— Hallo!" he broke off. "What's all the powwow about? Translate, won't you?"

Keyes had finished speaking, and the emir was earnestly advancing some counter-argument. As I stopped to listen, Basraoul was saying:

"No! It is quite impossible—I dare not permit it. The order that came to me this morning has gone forth to other tribes as well. The whole Sudan is mad against the Feringee. While you are my guest, I can answer for your safety with the lives of all my people. But if you leave my protection you will be slain by the first war-party you meet. And the country is full of such. I cannot let you go."

"We are prisoners, then?" asked Hope, breaking in on the conference rather anxiously.

"Your father, lady, and your father's daughter are our dear and honored guests," replied the emir with unruffled graciousness. "Otherwise you would be free to go. As soon as it is safe, you may depart in peace. But I would be your foe, not your well-wisher, were I to send you forth at a time like this. Abide with my people until the country grows calm."

"He is right, Hope," admitted the professor. "I see it now. I can't put you into peril by—"

"It is only *my* safety you are thinking of," she urged. "Please let us go at once! I would rather—*far* rather—take my chances in the wilderness than here."

I understood, and my heart bled for her.

But in the end her father overruled her wishes, and it was decided that they should remain with Basraoul until after the campaign.

Could any of us, at that moment, have read part of the future, I think Keyes would have set forth at once, across country, with Hope, braving the most horrible of fates at the hands of savage Sudanese, rather than remain in what

then seemed like perfect safety. But unfortunately for us all, no shadow of what was to come fell across our path.

CHAPTER XV.

SWORD TO SWORD.

HISTORY is stupid reading at best, yet I must ask you to bear with me while I recite very briefly so much of it as is needful to the thread of this tale.

In the early eighties a Sudanese carpenter's son, Achmet by name, announced that he was the *Mahdi* (Redeemer) whose earthly coming the Mohammedan world had for centuries awaited. As Achmet had a way of dropping off into frequent epileptic trances in which he beheld visions, as one of his eyes was blue, while the other was brown, and as he backed his claim with several clever hand-made miracles, the Faithful flocked in thousands to his standard.

The *Mahdi* announced that he had been commanded by Allah to declare *Jehad* (Holy War) on all unbelievers, and he made glittering promises of the joys—here and in paradise—that awaited those who fought in his behalf. In a few months the whole Sudan was a boiling caldron of revolt. Troops of the Egyptian government were destroyed or went over to the *Mahdi,* and their forts were seized.

General Gordon, who, in behalf of civilization, had earlier wiped out slavery and oppression in the Sudan and had won the love of the natives, went forth to Khartum to rescue the loyal garrison there and to seek to check, if might be, the uprising. He was hemmed in by the Mahdists—Sudanese, Egyptians, Nubians, Bedouins, and other classes welded into a common cause by religious fanaticism—and after a year's siege was slain, his appeals for relief having met with no adequate reply, and Khartum having fallen at last, through treachery, into the enemy's hands.

During ten long years Mahdism ran rampant throughout the Sudan. The land lay waste, wallowing in barbarism. Then England's vengeance, long delayed, began to awake. A British and Egyptian punitive expedition was fitted out, under command of General Kitchener; Gordon's death was to be avenged. For two years Kitchener beat down, one by one, the Mahdist strongholds. Now he was preparing his crowning blow.

The *Mahdi* himself, in the meantime, notwithstanding his claims to immortality, had died. His place as inspired leader of the Faithful had been taken by his chief disciple, Abdallah, who assumed the title of *Khalifah* (successor). Now that the British were on the march, and advancing on his headquarters at Omdurman, the Khalifah had raised high the green banner of the Jehad, and every true Moslem was summoned to fight for *Islaam Deen*—the faith of Mohammedanism.

There! My tedious journey into the mazes of history is at an end.

The details of our forced march toward the headquarters of the Khalifah I shall not set down here. For me it was a busy time. From the wisest veterans of many desert battles I studied the tactics of Bedouin warfare, the handling of cavalry squadrons.

I must have been a more than ordinary apt pupil, for my swift acquirement of the simple rules governing desert war pleased even the sternest of my grim instructors.

I was glad of the constant employment—it kept my time and, in a measure, my thought from other matters. I seldom saw Feridah, and never came into the proximity of Hope or of Keyes. Jack Penn stuck to me throughout, his wonderful physical strength and the ease werewith he grasped the details of any muscular exercise winning praise from the hardiest of the emir's officers.

Thus affairs progressed during our weeks of marching. I moved as if in a dream, one side of my nature dumb, inert, while with the other I was ever quickly grasping new facts. I had abandoned altogether the costume of an American traveler, and wore the full regalia of a Bedouin sheik. My dark complexion, tanned by desert suns, was as bronzed as that of Basraoul himself.

Twice during the march I received reminders of Hafiz's sentiments. Once as I galloped back to camp at night, after inspecting the pickets, a spear hurled

from a copse of aloes ripped the turban from my head.

Again, my *kavass* was found, one day, rolling on the floor of my tent in mortal agony. He confessed between paroxysms that he had tasted—just tasted, by the beard of the Prophet—the palm-wine set out to cool for my own dinner. Had he drunk deeper of it, I should have had to find a new *kavass*.

Was it strange that I did not tell Basraoul of all this? What was there to tell him? I had no proof to connect Hafiz with either of the occurrences; nor was I minded to crawl to any one for protection.

Soon or late, I knew, one of two things must happen—either Hafiz would succeed in his purpose, or else I should catch him or one of his followers in an attempt upon me, and should thus be enabled to wreak instant vengeance. Which alternative to expect, I did not know—nor did I greatly care.

My marriage to Feridah had been postponed. When that ceremony should again become imminent, I knew I must look for a real master-stroke on Hafiz's part, instead of these desultory attempts which only served to keep my nerves raw.

One morning late in August—we had begun our march long before dawn, so as to rest during the broiling heat of midday—I was riding at the side of Basraoul, at the head of the line of march. With his saber, the emir pointed to a hill before us.

"From the crest, there," said he, "we shall see the White Nile at our feet. Five miles beyond lies Omdurman, where the Heaven-Born holds court. Across the river from it are Khartum's ruins. It is a fair sight—the great river, the capital city, and the rich valley. Our guests would perhaps enjoy the first glimpse of it. Will you send a *kavass* back to the rear to ask them to ride forward?"

My *kavass* was not in sight. I was tired of slow motion, and relished the idea of a gallop.

"I will go myself," I answered, wheeling and shaking loose the rein on my gray charger's neck.

Off flew the horse, delighted at a chance for brisk exercise. Down the long, dusty line we thundered. At a bend in the tortuous road I struck across open country by way of a short-cut toward the rear. As I dashed past an acacia thicket I noted Hafiz, attended by two of his suite, cantering toward me. Coming forward from the rear, he had evidently made use of the same convenient short-cut. At sight of me his face contracted, before he could slip over it his usual mask of impassivity. One of his men looked inquiringly at the sheik. Then all three glanced toward the road, as though calculating the chances of observation from any of the passing tribe.

Bringing my horse to a standstill, with the acacias still screening me from the main body of the troop, I awaited the trio's approach.

"Greeting, and the blessings of the day, O my cousin!" I called jeeringly as Hafiz drew near. I saw that my maneuver puzzled him, and I laughed aloud at his perplexity.

"You seek speech with me, I think, and in private," I added. "Well, here I stand, unseen by my friends. The time seems ripe. I regret that I could not give you notice in time for you to prepare me a Nile asp, a hidden assassin, or a flask of poisoned wine. But perhaps, since you lack your favorite weapons, you may deign to make use of your saber?"

The three men had scattered, in their advance, as though to assail one from various points. Hafiz's sword was half drawn.

"Wait!" I shouted, whipping out my revolver. "This toy of mine shoots six times without reloading. It is not a clumsy tool, like the flintlocks you gentle murderers carry. If your two jackals advance another step I will open fire. Then there will be three scoundrels slipping in company from the earth into the red depths. You two others halt where you are! Let the Sheik Hafiz advance alone, and we will try the temper of our swords without further—"

Jack Penn, who had been lumbering along on my trail, his bulky weight enforcing upon his mount a far slower pace than mine, now caught up with me and glanced in wonder at the hesitant men I was haranguing.

"Jack," I called in English over my

shoulder, slipping my pistol back into my belt, "keep those two fellows covered while Hafiz and I fight."

Then I rode forward, curved saber in hand, to the attack. Hafiz spoke no word. Like a cornered rat's his eyes gleamed, and the long, cruel teeth showed white behind his back-drawn lips. But he showed no fear; there was even a savage joy in his face. While he would doubtless have preferred to slay me in his own way, yet he none the less willingly greeted this form of settling the matter.

For months I had daily practised saber-fencing. I had, moreover, been lucky enough to hold a place in the old days on the broadsword team in Harvard's fencing-club.

Hence, the combat with so renowned a swordsman as Hafiz himself was no one-sided affair. If he was the quicker, I was the better athlete. In reach we were about equal.

Our horses bounded under a simultaneous spurring, and our blades met with a clash. The fight was on.

Fencing on horseback is about as easy as waltzing on the deck of a rolling ship. The excited, plunging horses require expert handling; and many a good blow or parry is turned to naught by the unforeseen rearing or backing of one's mount. Yet there is a splendid exhilaration about the sport, and for the moment I was almost happy—for the first time in weeks. My arch-foe was at my sword's point. I was primal man once more, warring for my life.

Our desert-bred charges bit and lashed out at each other as we, their riders, exchanged lightning thrust, slash and parry.

Ever Hafiz took the aggressive, seeking some weak spot in my guard of whirling steel. And ever I sought to slip past or beat down his blade, and reach the slender, elusive body behind it.

Ah, it was a fight to have lived for, there in the silent wilderness, with the desert wind in our faces and the hot sun turning our sabers into arcs of shimmering light!

Round and round flew our horses. The blades whistled, clashed, and whined the eternal war-song of the ages. Once my thrust reached Hafiz's throat, but was caught and made ineffective by the voluminous folds of his burnoose. Once his whizzing down-stroke sheared a bit of the gold embroidery from my turban's edge. Eye to eye, sword to sword, we fought on.

So engrossed were we, so oblivious of surroundings and lapse of time, that a warning shout from one of Hafiz's men passed almost unheard. It was with a shock that I saw some one ride suddenly between me and my foe.

The anger-mists cleared from my eyes, and I realized who it was that had interfered. Feridah, seated on a white desert pony, had forced her way between our battling horses. Behind her were six men of her own guard.

"Nassar! Hafiz!" she cried. "Are you both mad? In sight of all your tribesmen! It is a matter for death if my father learn of it. What—?"

In our excitement, we had been carried beyond the shelter of the acacias. The princess was right—our duel was visible to all who might care to view.

"What could be done?" said Hafiz with a shrug. "I was riding to my uncle for orders, when this half-breed attacked me. I fought but to save my life. I do not know the cause of this assault from one on whom I have showered every courtesy. Unless, indeed, he is insane. I—"

He had been speaking low, as was his way. But I broke in on his words loudly, that all around might hear.

"My beloved Cousin Hafiz is a peerless swordsman," said I in blatant courtesy. "I begged him to let me try against his high prowess my own poor and newly learned skill. It was a friendly bout, between brothers, to pass away a weary five minutes. Was it not so?" I appealed, turning to Penn, and adding, under my breath, "Say 'yes.' Say it in Arabic."

"*Aiwa!*" (Yes), bellowed Jack, glad to air one of the few native words he knew.

"So what you feared was a tragic battle," I went on, still loudly, "was but brotherly sport. In proof whereof," I added, turning to Hafiz and stretching forth my hand, "I thank my cousin for the lesson he has taught me. And I trust we may soon continue it in the same loving spirit."

I think it hurt Hafiz worse to grasp my publicly proffered hand than it would have to take a thrust from my saber. But there was no redress. I had scored. He bowed and rode off.

"Did he and his men fall upon you from ambush?" whispered Feridah as, side by side, she and I rode back, at the head of our little party, toward the main body.

"No," I answered. "They were about to attack, when I forestalled them. I think if you had not interrupted—"

"You would have been condemned to death by my father," she finished. "Both Hafiz's men would have sworn you provoked the attack. He is too wily for you, beloved."

"My sword may prove as 'wily' as his," I grumbled, the fever of battle still smoldering within me. "Another time—"

"There will be no 'other time,'" she contradicted. "He will not meet you, man to man, now that he sees you are his match. Nor will he forgive you for forcing him to take your hand. Beware of him, beloved! When next he strikes, it will mean death for one of you. Oh, if only I might guard you from all harm!" she ended, the eternal mother-love cropping out.

"It is I who should defend you, not you me," I laughed. "That is supposed to be a man's duty, isn't it?"

"I need no defense," she answered proudly. "At least—not from any *man.*"

"What do you mean?" I asked, wondering at her odd tone.

"I mean, the only danger I fear is losing you. And the only person whom I really fear is not Hafiz, but—the Feringee woman. Do you understand, *now?*"

"You mean you are jealous of—"

"Of the gold-haired woman. Yet you never speak to her, or even look at her, now. Why not?"

"You have no cause for jealousy of her," I returned dully. "She looks on me as the dust under her feet. Let us speak no longer of her, nor of—"

"You have quarreled with her?" she demanded.

"If you put it that way—yes."

"I feared so," she murmured, her dark brows bent. "It is in quarrels, not in indifference, that love lies. If you have quarreled, it means she cares. Is it not so?"

"No; it is not," I retorted curtly.

"Yet it is my will," she went on, calmly imperious, "that you continue to hold no speech with her. If she seeks to talk to you, or even to look at you, do not respond. You will remember?"

There was no coquetry, no gay wilfulness in the positive order. It was a command, pure and simple. And as such it unreasonably angered me. Surely I had lost enough, had sacrificed enough, without having this babyish restriction thrust upon me.

"I have been told," said I dryly, "that the chief trait of a Bedouin wife is obedience. Is it so?"

She flushed, and tapped her pony's mane angrily.

"When once we have stood on the two stones and called aloud our vows," said she, "I shall become your wife, your slave, your chattel. Then; not until then. In the meantime, I am Princess of the El Kanah, and my word must be your law. Therefore, I forbid you to hold speech with the Feringee girl. Is it so understood?"

I had sent Jack Penn to the rear, to convey the emir's interrupted message to Hope and her father. Now, all three came toward us on their way to the front.

What devil of perversity mastered me I do not know, but at sight of them I resolved once and for all to show the imperious woman at my side that I was not to be ordered about like a Nubian slave. Which resolve shows just how weak an ordinarily strong man can sometimes be.

We had reached the main body, and had drawn up alongside the princess's waiting litter. I jumped off my horse, courteously helped her to dismount, and assisted her to enter the litter. Her eyes were still bright with anger, and as she took her seat she repeated:

"You will obey?"

"In everything," I answered gently, "that can add to your real happiness or welfare, and unreservedly in everything that you have the slightest right to ask."

"I have forbidden you to—"

I cut short the fierce reply by bowing

again, springing into the saddle, and cantering directly across to where Hope, Keyes, and Jack were riding. Yes, it was a rude, abominable thing to do. I know this, but, as I said once before, I am telling this story as it happened, not as I could have wished it to happen.

I reached the trio, saluted, and—repenting of my crass folly—was about to pass on, when Hope stopped me. To my utter bewilderment, she said:

"If you are on your way to the front, may I ride with you part of the distance? I won't detain you long."

Stupidly, wondering, I drew in at her side, Keyes and Jack falling behind us a few paces. Why had this lost love of mine sought me out? What could there be in common between us now? Why should she desire speech with me? My head was awhirl. I did not even give a second thought to a gaze of furious rage from a face behind the curtains of a litter we passed.

CHAPTER XVI.

I BURN MY BRIDGES.

FOR a space we rode in silence, she and I. The easy lope of our horses had carried us past the slower-marching tribesmen and on to the hill-foot before the wordless spell was broken. It was enough for me to be at her side—where I had no right to be—and to know that my presence no longer filled her with the loathing that had possessed her when last we met.

Though I wondered vainly why she had sought this ride with me to-day, yet a sort of illogical contentment filled me. It was good—oh, it was good—to be near her again! So might a son, exiled forever from home, peer in through the lighted windows of his father's house and gain momentary surcease from home-sick loneliness by a fleeting glimpse of those he loved and had forever lost.

I noted that Hope's dainty flower-face was thinner and paler than of old. There was a settled sadness about the glorious eyes, a pathetically firm set to the soft lips. She had suffered, but from what cause I could not divine. I would not speak first.

It was not stubbornness that gripped my tongue—merely a yearning to remain longer under this sweet anesthetic that stilled for a time the dull ache gnawing ever at my heart. It was enough to be near her. And I was betrothed to another woman!

At last Hope spoke:

"I have wanted to see you once more," she began, speaking with difficulty, and looking anywhere but into my inquiring eyes. "I have wanted to see you, because there was something I ought to say—for my own sake, not for yours."

She stopped. I did not help her out. The horses were mounting the steep hill, neck to neck. Their rapid gait had slowed into a steady walk.

I looked back at the plain behind. The little army was stretched out like a long, brown snake, the foremost ranks just beginning to breast the hill. Keyes and Jack were some fifty yards to our rear.

"I have sent word to you, more than once, as you know, asking a moment of your time," she continued formally; "but always you were busy, and could not come. I—"

"You sent word to me?" I cried, astounded.

"Four times," said she, surprised at my vehemence; "by my groom. Each time your *kavass* reported—"

"My *kavass?*"

"Why, yes. He carried the message from my groom to your tent, and returned with word that you were too busy to be disturbed. Is it possible," she added, half doubting, half hoping, "that he was wrong? That—"

"Most things are possible in this Sphinx-shadowed country," I answered wearily. "In this particular case it isn't a matter of possibility, but of certainty. Either your groom or my *kavass* has been bribed not to deliver such messages."

But it was not all. Angrily I realized who it was that sought to make impossible all hope of reconciliation between this American girl and myself, by intercepting any messages that might be sent by one of us to the other. And again I was irked by my imperial and imperious fiancée's surveillance. But I could not explain to Hope.

She was still pondering over my words. Then she said:

"You received none of my messages?"

"Naturally not."

"You are *certain?*" she asked incredulously, it seemed to me.

It was the last straw of the morning's burden, and under it my temper went to pieces. I laughed disagreeably.

"I forgot for the moment," said I. "I am an Arab, and in our dealings with the Feringee we think it no sin to use any deception in our power. Yes, the messages came, no doubt, and were all delivered to me in due form, and I gave the answers reported by my faithful *kavass,* and by our equally faithful groom. Then I forgot the whole thing, and now that it is recalled to my memory, I lie about it."

"Oh, *Hugh!*" she exclaimed impatiently; "that isn't worthy of a schoolboy!" Then, catching herself up, and resuming her more formal tone, she added: "I did not doubt your word. I was only amazed at the—"

"I'm sorry," I said contritely. "I seem forever saying or doing the wrong thing where you are concerned, and then having to apologize. I don't know what's come over me these last few months."

"It's all right," she answered, touched at my abject capitulation.

"Thanks," I said in gratitude, and our hands met.

We both drew away in confusion from that hand-clasp. For the contact suddenly brought us back to memory of our present relations toward each other. I had been behaving for a moment like the Hugh Standish, and she like the Hope Keyes, of old. Now we were both on guard again.

"It was my fault," I ventured, in stiff explanation.

"No," she denied; "it was mine. It must be hard to become an Arab all at once. There must be lapses—"

"There shall be no more," I answered. "You called me 'Hugh.' My name is 'Nassar.' You took my hand. The last person who grasped it had just tried to kill me. I—"

"You are in danger?" she asked, in quick alarm.

"No," I hastened to lie. "Of course not. It was only a joke."

"I don't understand you," she sighed in desperation. "You—"

"East and West," I began, "never understand each—"

"You *can't* have become in this short time a wholly different man from the Hugh Standish I knew, and—"

"And tolerated," I supplemented, as she checked herself. "I am what you have made me. And you mustn't blame yourself, for I have simply returned to my own. And"—I lied again—"I am very—happy."

"You have no right to say that," she declared.

"That I am happy?" I asked.

"No. That you are what I made you. It is not true. You know it is not. It is for that, partly, I wanted to see you—to speak to you, and—"

"To tell me it wasn't true?"

"To tell you that I have been thinking and wondering for weeks over what happened back there at the old encampment," she replied. "All my reason, all my common sense, tells me I was not mistaken in the conclusions I formed then. But always, just when I've assured myself I'm right, the memory of the sturdy, honest little boy I used to know years ago in Concord comes back to me and says: 'I couldn't grow into the sort of man you think I am!' Is that foolish?"

"No," I said shortly, an unaccountable lump in my throat. "You know it is not."

"And yet," she argued, "it must be. My own sanity tells me that. Oh, how can I know *what* to think, Hugh?"

I did not answer. There was nothing to say. I had carved out my own path. It was too late now to look back longingly over the golden valleys of Might Have Been.

"So I decided, at last," she continued, after waiting for me to speak. "I decided to say to you that if I had in any way done you injustice or wronged you—that day when I forgot myself so—I ask your forgiveness. And if I am in any way wrongly responsible for this mad move of yours in turning your back on your own land and your former friends, I beg you to change your decision before it is too late, and to—"

"It *is* too late," I said quietly.

I had been doing some rapid thinking, and my course was plain. The step I

had taken was irrevocable. By solemn oath I was the betrothed husband of Feridah. I was a sworn sheik of the El Kanah, adopted by the emir as his son. While the princess lived, while the tribe should endure, there was no release for me. I was chained to my post as truly as by material fetters.

Nor could I be cur enough to send my lost love away from me with the idea that she was responsible for my terrible position. She must not go through life with that on her conscience, nor with the grief of knowing that she had so cruelly wronged me and broken my life. This last poor reparation was the least I could make to the woman who was all the world to me. I must hurt her if I would cure her. Thus it was that I said: "It is too late."

"It is never too late," she protested. "I will help you—my father will help you. See! I will take your own unsupported word that—"

"Listen!" I said, steeling myself to the awful effort that her every precious syllable made more and more difficult. "You are utterly mistaken. I *was* an American—or thought myself so. I came out here. My ancestral blood asserted itself. All at once my old life became distasteful to me. My old friends grew less dear to me. An irresistible craving drew me to become what I am to-day. I fought against it. I even tried to become—to become interested in *you.*"

The words choked me, but I fought my way on.

"Up on the knoll, that morning, I tried to make love to you. But all the time my heart was down in the tents where Feridah was singing. That evening we became betrothed, she and I. The next day I followed you to see if you really cared. I found that you didn't, so I had nothing more with which to reproach myself. I could turn to my new, chosen career with a clear conscience. And I did! I am no longer an American, even in thought. I am a Bedouin! A sheik of the El Kanah—of my mother's people! That is all."

I threw out my arms in a gesture that tried to express happy freedom. The motion dislodged something from the breast of my caftan. The object fell to my saddle-bow. I caught and replaced it before Hope could catch sight of the relic I so carefully restored to its hiding-place on my breast. It was a tiny silk American flag.

The girl said no word as I finished speaking, nor could I say more. I had torn my heart to pieces in the elaborate falsehood that was to save her from future misery. The thing was done, and I was weak and inert.

"I think," murmured Hope at length, "I will go back and ride with father now. Good-by!"

"Good-by!" I answered heavily, without looking up.

She seemed about to speak again, but, changing her mind, reined in her horse. And I rode on alone.

I was nearing the hilltop. Beyond lay my future. Behind was all that had made life beautiful.

Striking spurs to my charger, I dashed ahead, recklessly eager to meet half way the fate whose fearful caprices I luckily had not the wit to foresee.

(To be concluded.)

AFTER THE BATTLE.

HOME from her battle, spent and done,
The Day her line of hours drags,
Before her face the fiery sun,
Above, the clouds, like tattered flags.

Wounded and faint, her head unbowed,
She marches to the sunset light;
Oh, rest is sweet to those uncowed,
Behind the ramparts of the Night.

Charles Hanson Towne.

THE OVER-MAN AND THE UNDER-DOG.

BY DONALD KENNICOTT.

A SHORT STORY.

IN the *patio* of Billy Suarez's road-house, by a table on which stood a whisky bottle, a tin cup, and a smoky, flaring lamp, the Over-man lounged at ease and smoked his cigarette—an absurd little cigarette, that under the great, sweeping hawk's-wing of his mustache hardly showed at all. The shadow cast by the light beside him against the limewashed adobe wall of the courtyard, was like the reconstructed image of some strange, primeval monster—shaggy, tusk-toothed, terrible.

The night had fallen hot and close. In the circle of lamp-light on the flagstones, a tiny green lizard frisked to and fro, catching gnats. Idly, the small, lead-colored eyes of the man in the chair followed the little creature about. Once, when it passed close, he thrust out a careless foot to intercept it, but by a hair's breadth it eluded him. Instantly, then, the whole demeanor of the man changed. The heavy eyebrows lowered, as if to curtain the sudden, savage gleam in his eyes; the fists clenched; the head drew in close between the shoulders like that of a crouching cat.

And when, after a moment, the lizard ran near again, the man hurled his huge bulk out of the chair with a movement almost incredibly swift, and making a quick lunge, crushed the tiny reptile to a mere morsel of quivering flesh. He knelt over it a moment, then picked himself up, laughed a little shamefacedly, and resumed his chair and cigarette.

A door opened, and through the low-arched passage from the kitchen old Suarez shuffled into the courtyard, his carpet-slippers flapping against his heels.

"Mistro Leonard will stay the night?" he asked, bowing obsequiously. It behooved him to be obsequious, for his little, lonely tavern, standing between the desert of rock and the desert of sand on the long trail from the Chula Valley to the railroad town, found its chief support in the patronage of Leonard and his cowboys.

The Over-man turned in his chair.

"Sure," he said. "I always do. What made you think I wouldn't?"

Suarez mopped his forehead and shot an uneasy, sidelong glance at his guest. "*Pues*—I could not know," he answered dubiously. "Mistro Fleming, *he* cross the sands to-night—because it will be less hot, he say."

"Fleming? Is that fellow here?"

The tavern-keeper bowed again.

"Yes, Mistro Leonard. He come in about noon. All afternoon he sleep. Now my daughter, Agata, give him his supper. Pretty soon he start on across the sand to Jornáda City."

He paused and shot another sidelong glance at the man by the table, but could detect no change of expression at his tidings. And this was a surprise to him, for Fleming was the fellow who had been foolhardy enough to dispute the absolute rule of Magnus Leonard in the Chula country—had drilled a couple of wells in the lower end of the valley, had built him a house, and turned out a few hundred cattle on the range that for twenty years Leonard had held as his own unquestioned property.

Suarez tried again.

"It is long, is it not, Mistro Leonard, since in the valley of the Chula you have had a—a neighbor? I had thought, perhaps, you would wish to journey with him. But he ride hard, this little Mistro Fleming, because he fear the storm of the sands, and you, of course, do not.

"*Holá,* yes! There comes a great storm of the sands—a storm of three days or four. My bones ache, and it is hot, hot; and for all there is no wind, the sand-devils have commenced their dance. Listen to them—they are whispering to one another; no?"

The Mexican held up his hand, and in the silence there could indeed be heard a slow, ominous whisper of shifting sand-grains.

Leonard stretched himself slowly.

"Curse Fleming," he said, yawning, "and you, and your sand-storm. Go tell Agata to fetch her guitar and sing for me; she's getting to be a fine, big girl."

For an instant Suarez stared, and then shuffled out again, chuckling and enlightened. In the old days, when men had contested with Magnus Leonard for the lordship of the Chula Valley, something had always happened to them—they had been worsted in open battle, had been smitten mysteriously, or had unaccountably disappeared. What would happen to this consumptive weakling of the East who dared trespass on the lion's hunting-ground, Suarez had wondered. Now he understood; the fellow was not deemed worthy of destruction, but was to be let perish of his own weakness.

There in the *patio,* the Over-man finished his cigarette and rolled another. The girl Agata came in listlessly, without her guitar, and sat down on a stool by the door as if waiting. Outside, some one led up a horse and left it pawing uneasily by the front gate of the court-yard. There came a stumbling tread of booted feet in the passage, and a man entered, passed across toward the outside gate, and then catching sight of the figure by the table, stopped suddenly.

"Good evening, Mr. Leonard," he said, turning. "I'm glad to find you here. I want to see you about that drift-fence—the new one you've built, there below the Black Tank water-holes."

The Over-man looked up lazily.

"Evenin'," he returned. "What about the drift-fence?"

The newcomer winced a little at his tone.

"Why, just this," he answered, advancing a step. "That fence keeps my cattle from getting to the water."

Leonard expelled a thin whiff of smoke, nodding his head the while.

"Yes," he assented, "that's what I had my men build it for."

Fleming bit his lip, and a small spot of red flashed up above the beard on either cheek. He was a slight, thin-featured man, whose stooping shoulders gave him a pitiful look of awkwardness and insufficiency.

"But—but," he stammered, "you've no right to do that. It's government land—open range that's free to anybody. I've as much right to it as you. You can't fence me out that way. It's against the law."

The Over-man flecked the ash from his cigarette and smiled—not a pretty smile.

"The law," he observed impassively, "is my caprice."

II.

He stated no more than the simple fact; in the valley of the Chula, Magnus Leonard had made his caprice the law. When, for instance, an ambitious young district-attorney had caused him to be indicted for illegal fencing, the jury—Mexicans, for the most part, dependent on him for their livelihood, and their lives, as well—had promptly acquitted him; and a few weeks later the ambitious young attorney had failed to return from a trip across the White Sands.

When the Indian agent had protested against the pasturing of Leonard's cattle on the reservation, the Indians themselves—for whom he generously slaughtered a bullock now and then, and whom he kept supplied with cartridges and liquor—denied his trespass on the witness-stand; and soon, thereafter, the agent was replaced by a less active official.

When the father of pretty little Nellie Mason—but that is not a story to be told. Magnus Leonard had administered his law pitilessly.

Fleming had heard of these things, and of many others—of how Leonard would ride about the range, roping and throwing his cattle for the sheer pleasure of showing his power over them; of how he had once spent two whole days in trailing down a coyote on foot, and how, when the poor beast had at last lain down exhausted, he had held it helpless by the jaws for a moment—and then let it go

again; of how, when during the small-pox epidemic on the Indian reservation, a troop of the stricken had come to his ranch to appeal for aid, he had stood in the doorway with a rifle, and shot them down, one by one, before they could come near.

Fleming had heard of these things, but they had not impressed him particularly. They had seemed to him far-off and unreal and incredible—like fireside stories of giants and sea-monsters. He did not understand at all, and was not angry, but puzzled and bewildered.

"But don't you see," he began again, "it's not right for a man to do that. We're all in the same boat out here. We ought to work together. If we get to fighting among ourselves, we can't do anything else. There's enough to fight, anyway, what with the drought and the lump-jaw and the alkali, and all. Now, back where I'm from, when there was a flood or a fire or something, why, the neighbors all pitched in together. I ain't never heard of such a way of running things. It ain't right."

Leonard took a drink from the bottle beside him, and smiled again. He even condescended to give reasons.

"You can be my neighbor, if you want to," he explained succinctly. "But I don't see why you think I'm going to be yours. I can get all the help I want at forty a month and board, and when there's a range fire or anything, the men all pitch in together and work—because I make 'em. I reckon back where you come from, you all work together because there ain't anybody that's man enough to make you work for him. Here, there *is*—savvy?"

The Under-dog had lowered his eyes, and stood gazing thoughtfully down at the pavement. A colony of ants had discovered the little dead lizard, and were marshaling their forces for an effort to carry it off to their nest in the wall. Now and then they would make the attempt, fail, and then await the arrival of additional help.

Fleming spoke again after a little pause.

"Why, of course," he said, staring meditatively at the struggling ants, "of course I understand you don't need me at all—not now, anyway. But just the same, that ain't no right way of looking at things. Don't you aim to let anybody else live in the world? Don't you care whether your neighbors are your friends or not? Why, some day you may want to marry the daughter of one of them. She'll not be worth much if you've crowded her father this way. When you come right down to it, we're all one family—brothers and sisters, just like the preachers say."

Leonard laughed.

"That's rather a long shot," he said. "The girls around here are all right. Now, look here—I'm tired of this gabble. This is all there is to it: I've built that drift-fence because I want it there. It's going to stay. If you touch it, something will happen to you. And it won't do you no good to try and turn loose those lawyers in town on me, neither, because they know mighty well that something would happen to them, too."

At last the Under-dog looked up again.

"Didn't you ever think," he said, "that sometimes, something might happen to you, too? Perhaps you're stronger than all the rest of us now, but that ain't no sign you'll always be. I guess you could get sick or hurt just as well as anybody else. I reckon then you'll like to have neighbors as much as anybody."

Leonard patted his great thigh complacently.

"No," he said, "I ain't sick; and ain't never been sick, and never will be sick—but once. Then I'll die, and you can bring your friends from back yonder and divide the valley among you—until somebody that's bigger than the lot of you comes and takes it away again. Meantime, the valley's mine—savvy? *Mine.*"

Fleming stared at him an instant, his mild blue eyes wide with trouble and perplexity. Then he raised his hand with a gesture at once solemn and pathetic and ridiculous.

"Didn't you ever think, either," he asked, "that something might happen to you—afterward? The Book says pretty plain that what you're doing is wrong—and that them that does it is punished."

The Over-man betrayed some impatience.

"Humbug," he commented; "hum-

bug. When you're too much of a baby to take care of yourself, you keep your little heart up by pretending that you've got inside information that the game will be squared up after you're dead. But that doesn't bother me none, so you'd better run along. I'm goin' to bed."

Fleming put on his hat slowly and turned away. Near the passage, the girl Agata still sat, leaning forward on her elbows, her lips parted and her cheeks flushed with excitement. She was a very pretty girl. Her large brown eyes traveled from one man to the other, watching Leonard in an unwilling fascination, dwelling on the Under-dog with a certain troubled tenderness that now had in it an element of contempt. Fleming saw her, stopped, and drew himself up suddenly. The two looked at each other for a moment without speaking.

Then the man wheeled about and turned again to Leonard.

"Look here," he said, and his voice seemed all in a moment to have taken on a different timbre. "You say you're not afraid of the law. I am. You say you don't need your neighbors' help and good will. I do, I guess. You say you're not afraid of what—of what comes afterward. Well—I am. But there's one thing I'm not afraid of."

Leonard looked up.

"Good," he said. "What's that?"

Fleming answered quietly, but in the close-walled courtyard the word seemed to echo:

"You," he said.

Turning, he walked to the front gate of the *patio,* opened it, and passed out. A moment later, the sound of hoof-beats rose and died away again in the distance.

The Over-man laughed aloud this time, and turned to Agata, that he might share the jest with her. But the girl sat staring at the *patio* gate. She smiled a little, and there was in her face a certain expression of triumph. Leonard saw the look, frowned, and followed the direction of her eyes.

And instantly the whole demeanor of the man changed. He leaned forward suddenly; his eyes shifted here and there like those of an alert and predatory animal; his long fingers extended and contracted like talons.

Old Suarez shuffled into the *patio.*

"Your room is ready, Mistro Leonard," he announced, bowing.

But the Over-man rose.

"Don't want the room," he said. "I've changed my mind. Have the boy fetch my horse, and be quick about it."

"Ah, Mistro Leonard will overtake his friend and journey with him?"

"No—going the other way. Hurry up with that horse."

Ten minutes later, Suarez knelt at the gate of the *patio,* with his ear to the ground.

"Mistro Leonard, he lie," he observed, rising. "I hear clearly. First he start across the rock, but soon he circle back and go into the sands."

The old fellow stood for a moment looking out into the darkness, listening to the faint, mordant whisper of shifting sand-grains. Then he shut and locked the gate, and took up the lamp.

"They had best ride hard," he said, blinking sleepily. "To-night the sand-devils are grinding their teeth."

He shuffled off down the passage, but the girl still stood there, clinging to the iron bars of the gate, her white face pressed close against them.

III.

THERE is no trail across the White Sands. They lie in vast billows, like water, with here and there a crag of the underlying quartz rock jutting up like a reef. Continually the winds shift them about into new undulations hiding old crags and chasms, uncovering new ones. Guided by sun or stars, keeping always a wary eye to new pitfalls, men cross the sands slowly and with infinite toil.

And when the great winds from the south toss up the stinging grains in clouds that darken the sky, travelers shun the district as seamen shun a whirlpool. The sands are wide like the sea, and trackless and treacherous; they bring disaster; they witness tragedy; they veil many secrets; they never give up their dead.

Fleming had a half-hour's start, and was the lighter of the two men, but Leonard knew the sands of old, and his great, gray stallion bore him well. Just at dawn, only a third of the way across, he caught sight of his prey toiling slowly on ahead of him. Already the spasmodic

wind-puffs had merged into a strong and steadily increasing blast; the sand-grains stung his face like needles; the moon had vanished, but the sun did not appear. He unbuckled his holster and urged the gray forward. The thing was absurdly simple; and afterward the sands would do their part without delay.

Fleming had evidently caught sight of his pursuer as well, for he increased his pace, and from time to time turned in his saddle to look back. Yet even then Leonard gained. Presently he drew his revolver, but waited to make sure, for the darkness had grown deeper. And, then, all at once, as if blotted out, the horseman ahead disappeared.

Growling like a beast, the Over-man drove his spurs into the stallion, and the great horse plunged forward, even running. Yet Leonard did not again catch sight of his prey. And a moment later, with a sudden scream of terror, his horse stopped short, and the heavy rider, unseated, pitched over its head—not to the soft sand, but upon a wind-bared ledge of the underlying rock.

For a moment Leonard lay very still, one leg alternately numb and hideously painful. On the edge of the rock, a few feet above him, he heard the stallion snorting, and a little way beyond where he himself lay, he saw Fleming's beast struggling vainly to rise. The man whom he pursued had altogether vanished.

With difficulty Leonard crawled close under the ledge and struggled to his knees. Extending his hands above his head, he contrived to catch hold of the rock and draw himself up. The effort cost him frightful pain, and wrung from him a sharp cry. He dropped exhausted in the sand at the feet of the stallion.

For some little time he lay still. Then there came to his ears a faint sound of footsteps in the sand, and catching up the revolver, which still hung by the butt-strap to his wrist, he rose on one elbow. Through the dusk of the storm, he could just discern the dim outline of a man moving slowly past him. He flung up his weapon, yet did not fire, but with a curious, and to him, unaccountable feeling, watched the laborious progress of this dim, stoop-shouldered figure, so blurred by the sand-clouds as to lose all identity; a helpless creature, weak, storm-beaten, inexplicably pathetic. Blinded, apparently, by the storm, Fleming did not see him, but passed slowly onward out of sight.

Leonard let the revolver drop on the strap again.

"Circlin'," he muttered. "Just circlin' round like a locoed steer! Ain't got sense enough to keep the wind behind him. Why, even a horse knows enough for that! *He* won't never get out of this. Like enough he'll be right back here again after a while."

He rose to a sitting posture. The stallion nuzzled his shoulder and whinnied impatiently, but though he caught the bridle-rein and gave the beast a rough caress, he made no effort to mount.

For long the Over-man sat there. By the brownish hue of the darkness, he was made aware that day had come. Yet, still he waited. And, presently, out of the storm, the dim figure of the Underdog appeared again — that stumbling, stoop-shouldered human figure that, for some reason, made so moving an appeal to him. It was passing to the other side of him this time, and, instinctively, he shouted to stop it. In response there came a sharp, broken cry, and the figure ran to him with hands outstretched, like a child.

Sinking his teeth in his lip to stifle a groan, the Over-man rose to his feet. Fleming halted before him, panting.

"Thank God!" he babbled over and over again. "Thank God!"

Then, catching sight of the revolver, that still hung from Leonard's wrist, he stopped short.

"Oh!" he added; "I—I'd forgot!" and turned away with an awkward gesture of abandonment.

For an instant the Over-man watched him curiously.

"Just circlin' round like a locoed steer, weren't you?" he commanded at length. "Why, my horse's smarter'n that. Here—you climb up onto him, and he'll take you back out of this."

"But what'll you do?"

"Walk. I can walk better'n you can ride."

Fleming hesitated. The Over-man caught up his weapon. "Curse you," he shouted, "get onto that horse, and be quick about it!"

Fleming mounted and took up the reins. Leonard dealt the stallion a heavy slap on the haunch.

"Now clear out," he said.

The Over-man stood there a moment after Fleming had ridden out of sight.

"Just circlin'," he muttered. "Just circlin' round and round like a locoed calf—the poor devil."

He took a step forward, gave a hoarse cry of pain, and pitched to his knees in the sand.

"God!" he cried. "I'd forgot!"

He swayed to and fro a moment, set his teeth hard, and crept forward on his hands and knees.

He progressed for perhaps a hundred yards, pausing from time to time to master his agony, then halted, groped about blindly as if in search of aid, and sank down on one elbow. Trailing his crippled member like a wounded animal, he dragged himself a little farther, and then—stopped. Over him the sand swirled and eddied, and rose and fell, in ceaseless perturbation. The sands are wide like the sea, and trackless and treacherous; they witness tragedy; they never give up their dead.

In a bedroom of Billy Suarez's road-house, by a lamp which flickered in brave contention with the blackness of the storm without, the Under-dog lay stretched at full length on a couch. The girl Agata knelt beside him, binding up the one slight gash in his forehead which the fall of his horse had cost him. She patted the bandage into place, and looked down at the man with a certain tenderness in her eyes. He was talking slowly, almost meditatively.

"And then," he said, "he let me go again. He hunted me down like a coyote — like a dog. And then when he'd got me, he gave me his horse and let me go again. I wonder why he did that?"

THE LAST STRAW.

BY LAWRENCE REAMER.

A SHORT STORY.

MRS. MURPHY pushed open the door without the formality of knocking. As apology she held up a glass of beer. Beesy shook her head, and Mrs. Murphy smiled enticingly.

"It can't do you no harm, girl," she said, "and ye must be tired. I heard that sewing-machine going before eight o'clock. Now it's after four."

The girl, who had only looked up from her work to shake her auburn head at the offer of refreshment, allowed the wheel slowly to stop.

"I am tired," she said, stretching out her long, muscular arms, "but I'll never be tired enough to want that. Oh, it's all right in you to bring it. I just don't want it, you know. It's been more than two years since I had anything like that."

Her neighbor did not insist, and Beesy arose from the machine. About the floor lay piles of the coarse calico wrappers on which she had been working all day. Her tall, graceful figure showed few signs of fatigue as she stooped to pick up the finished products of her labor. The stacks of cheap dresses were piled as high as her waist before she stopped.

"I've got to be busy when there's the chance," she said laughingly. "Now they want 'em. Soon it will be dull again, with no work."

"You're doing it all for somebody else, though," Mrs. Murphy answered as she put her hand on the door. "I hope he'll be worth it when he comes back. I know he wasn't before he was sent away."

A spark of resentmen' flared up in the girl's gray eyes. Her white face

flushed until her cheeks were as red as her lips.

"You mustn't talk against Tom, Mrs. Murphy," she said, with a mighty effort to control herself. "I like you, and you've been good to me — more like a mother than anybody else ever was. But you mustn't—"

The door had opened, and her visitor stood in the narrow hallway.

"You deserve a good husband, Beesy," she responded, determined to leave her opinion behind her at any cost. "You're worth a better man than the likes of that jailbird."

Then she slammed the door. Beesy started after her, but fell back into her chair and dropped her face in her hands. Others agreed with this candid friend, whose words had brought to her mind vividly what the world said of Tom Walsh. She had been slaving at that machine for two years—no, not two full years, or Tom would be with her now. His time ought soon to be up.

She could not remember the exact date, but she felt sure there must soon come a letter telling her that he would be free again. He had been expiating his share in the fatal conflict between the two gangs which ended in a flight from the police—and the dead man lying in Chatham Square. Whose shot had done the deadly work was never known. Tom got off with two years. She believed his story, however, if the jury didn't. She would always believe him, if she had to fight all the world in his behalf.

His days of labor in prison had been no harder than hers. All thought of the careless gaiety in which they had existed until that sudden fight in the street turned a thoughtless young man into a criminal departed forever. She set to work with a zeal that left her time only for her thoughts of Tom and the care of Mamie.

There was less of the latter occupation than she wanted. The younger girl would not allow herself to be taken care of to any extent that inconvenienced her sister. She had successfully rebelled against Beesy's authority so soon as she was able to make her opposition felt, and Beesy was so much occupied at her sewing-machine that the girl went her own way. It was a comfort in the elder sister's life of waiting and working for Tom Walsh that her way seemed to be the right one.

She rose from the chair on which she had been dreaming of Tom, and took from a drawer in the kitchen-table a pasteboard box so full that the cover refused to descend more than half as far as it should. From the pile of letters inside she took the topmost. It was brief, but every ill-written word breathed volumes of comfort to her. She slowly reread the last sentence, framing every syllable with her lips.

> I ought to write only once more, because I will be out about the fifth.

This letter was dated the first day of the month. The middle had long passed and there had been no further word from him. The effort to reconcile the facts puzzled Beesy. Her smooth brow wrinkled and her teeth closed tightly. Tom should have written her long ago, unless something had gone wrong. Many times during the past two years she had pictured to herself the delight of that meeting at the station when he came down the river. Now more than two weeks had passed since he was to be free, and not a word had she heard from him. She must write at once; maybe she should have done so long ago.

She reproached herself with this thought as she took the ink-bottle from the back of the drawer, brought out from another box a sheet of lined paper ornamented with two turtle-doves, and slowly wrote: "Friend Tom." Composition worried Beesy less than the manual labor of correspondence. Her shapely, large fingers tightly clasped the pen, her features were already twisted out of their regular contour, and the tip of her tongue had peeped out of the corner of her mouth in her effort to get the letter under way.

Suddenly her labors were interrupted. The sound of a shot in the court of the tenement and near her own window brought her to her feet. A shadow on the fire-escape darkened the room.

"Let me in, let me in, Beesy!" was the whispered appeal she next heard. "Hurry up, girl!"

It was the voice of Tom, and it thrilled her from head to foot. She

staggered toward the window. He stepped into the room and instinctively dropped to the floor.

"Keep back from the window," was his greeting to Beesy, who had started toward him. She stood staring ahead of her in speechless distress. After a minute he rose and came toward her.

"I didn't think it would be like this, Tom," she whispered, drawing him down into a chair and kissing the hand she had seized. "Why didn't you let me know when you were coming down? I'd have gone anywhere you said to. You know that."

He sat trembling on the chair.

"You're pale, Tom," she said, kissing his brow and stroking the closely cropped hair, "but you look well. When did you get out?"

He seemed craven enough, cowering there in the kitchen-chair, still breathless from the pursuit, yet he was a prepossessing type of his kind. Pallor was not an esthetic disadvantage, for he was likely to have too much color. His regular features were lean and thin, and the cleft chin gave his face a misleading look of strength. His frame was broad and muscular in spite of the prison life.

"Tell me, Tom," she repeated, winding her arms around his neck. "When did they let you out?"

"Yesterday," he answered falteringly.

"Yesterday?" she repeated. "And the cops are chasing you already."

He nodded, and then, leaning forward, rested his head in his hands. He was recovering slowly from the terror of his narrow escape. Then he was thinking of something to tell the girl. He must account for those weeks spent in New York without seeing her.

II.

Beesy was too happy in his presence to question the probability of the story he hesitatingly told. Kneeling by his chair, with her face pressed close to his cheek, she heard that he had come to New York the day before, and to avoid trouble had gone over to his mother in Brooklyn. He did not want to hurry right back to the neighborhood. He was on his way to see her that afternoon when he met some of the old fellows. Then a cop who always had it in for him came along, and there was words—words that he wouldn't stand for from nobody, words that Beesy wouldn't want him to stand for from nobody. In a minute he was off, with the cop chasing him.

"They've always got it in for the man who has been sent up once," he ended. "Them fellows never let up on him."

Then the unfailing optimism of woman in the presence of the man she loves asserted itself. Beesy told him of the money she had put in the bank—more than two hundred dollars. That would be enough for them to get married on.

Until he got a steady job, she would keep on working. She could always find work. Didn't all the foremen tell her that Beesy Martin could get work from them whenever they had it to give? They all knew what a good worker Beesy was when she wanted to be; and for two years she had always wanted to be. The same two rooms would do for both of them. She had thought of that when she moved into them, and—

Tom did not interrupt this happy flow of talk. He listened without a word. All the while his face grew pale until his body suddenly relaxed. He had fainted. The blood dripping from his sleeve to the floor horrified Beesy, who had been absorbed in her talk.

"That cop did nip you, Tom," she said, pulling up his sleeve and revealing a tiny flesh-wound in the muscular forearm. "I'll fix it up. Then we can go round to the dispensary."

She tied up the arm. Slowly the flow of blood stopped. The man grew conscious again, and a faint flush of color came into his face.

"You're all right now," she told him as she drew down the coarse cotton sleeve.

The bandage was not the kind a trained nurse would have made, but it served its purpose. Beesy's intentions were good, but she was as ignorant of domestic accomplishments as the average New York girl of her class.

Tom was too weak to start out then; and she again took her place by his side. Again it was she who talked, telling him of the plans she had made for their future, speculating as to the kind of job it would be best for him to get, and won-

dering how people were going to treat him now that he was out again. Tom stared sullenly ahead of him; but she needed no response. She was so happy that this moment of reunion had come at last.

Something did interrupt them after a while—a heavy tread on the stair. She stopped to listen while Tom sprang to his feet. Then they looked comprehendingly into each other's eyes. Neither framed the words that were on their lips. The sound of footsteps grew closer. Then the girl whispered:

"It's the cop, Tom."

He looked about the strange room and saw the door leading to the closet in which she slept. Her eyes answered yes. He started toward it. Then, with a look of horror, he pointed to her dress. Down the front, on the white waist and on the floor, were blotches of blood.

He was lost now.

He might lock himself in the room; Beesy might swear that it did not belong to her and persuade the cop that nobody was in there. But the bloodstains would betray them. His eyes told her this, and she nodded that she understood. The heavy tread was too near now for them to risk a word.

It was a knock on the door that brought her to a sense of the great need of action. She pushed Tom into the closet, and, turning the key, dropped it into the pocket of her skirt.

"Well?" she asked in answer to the knock.

Before there was an answer, she stepped over to the machine. There she picked up the heavy shears.

Her sleeve was rolled up over the firm white arm. With a breath of resolution, she steeled herself to the pain and then thrust the pointed blade into her flesh. The young blood flowed freely.

She rubbed it lightly on the waist and over the skirt. For a second she staggered with the pain, but as she saw the stains and thought that the trick had saved Tom a look of delight spread over her face. Another knock came at the door.

"Can't you wait," she cried, "or say who you are?"

"Let me in, Beesy Martin," came back the response. "You know I'm the cop."

She tied up the wound with a piece of calico, and, brushing back her ruffled hair, opened the door. There stood Billy Curran. She had known him from the day they had joked about his boyish ambition to be a policeman.

"Well," she exclaimed, "you haven't called on me, Billy, since I can remember. Now you find me nursing a cut in my arm."

Her effort at gaiety was sufficient to deceive the visitor, who had not lost a youthful admiration for Beesy.

"I'm looking for Tom Walsh, Beesy," was his response, "and I thought he might have come here to you."

"Tom's been away now two years, Billy. You ought to know that."

"He's back, Beesy," said Curran, "and you ought to know that. He's been out three weeks. Already there's been another scrap. The fellow wasn't killed this time, but he's in a bad way. Nobody's seen Tom since it happened until one of the men who's been watching your place, thinking he might come here, trailed him to-day. He nipped him, all right, but Tom was too much and got away. The plain-clothes men thought he ran in this court."

Beesy had almost dropped to the floor in the effort to keep her strength. The pain of the wound and the loss of blood would in themselves have been enough to weaken her beyond the power of further control—and here was the story that Tom had been for three weeks in New York. He had been lying to her.

"He ain't been here, Billy," she said. "There's no place to search but the one room. That closet don't belong to me."

He glanced around him. Beesy ostentatiously undid the bandage on the pretext of tightening it. Billy Curran, who had feared in his heart that he might find some trace of Tom and add another to Beesy's troubles, glanced out of the window.

"Call Mrs. Murphy," said Beesy. "She'll tell you there's been nobody here to-day."

"I'll take your word, Beesy," he said. "But the men may be back. I've done the best I could by you. Now do this for me. If that fellow comes round, throw him out."

As Beesy closed the door on Billy

Curran's broad blue back, she should have delighted in the success of her plan. She had saved Tom, for the time being; yet there was no longer the same thrill for her in that thought. How could he have told her such a story?

Maybe he hadn't, and Billy was the one that lied! Once more the blood surged ecstatically through her veins at the thought that Tom was back with her. She would open the door and tell him what Billy Curran had been saying about him. Tom was right. The cops always had it in for the man they were down on.

There was dull pain in her wounded arm, and now in her heart as well. Somehow Billy's story unsettled her more than she could understand.

"Tom's in that closet," she thought as her practical sense asserted itself. "All I need is to call him out and tell him what Billy says."

Yet she dreaded to. She understood instinctively that all her happiness in life depended on his answer. These years of unremitting labor, and all the long time of devoted love—everything that came from them—would be swept away if Tom spoke the wrong word, or the right one falsely. Could he have deceived her?

III.

She had almost gathered the courage to call Tom out and hear the sentence that was to fall from his lips, when, without a warning knock, Mamie opened the hall-door. The girl rushed to where Beesy was standing. Mamie was not usually demonstrative with her; but now Beesy felt her sister's arms about her neck and the wet tears on her cheek.

"What's the matter?" she asked. "Why're you crying?"

Unconsciously, she held the girl out from her and stared into her face. Mamie looked pale and pinched in her cheap finery. There came at once into Beesy's mind the thought that it was not only her hours of work that had brought her into this dejected state. Her face hardened, although the girl's tears still flowed.

"Tell me, Mamie, what's the matter with you? Lost your job?"

The weeping girl, whose head was buried on her sister's shoulder, nodded.

"That needn't make you cry so, girl," Beesy said. "Isn't there something else?"

"Tom Walsh," Mamie answered, drawing away from Beesy and looking straight into her sister's eyes. "Tom Walsh—he's the cause. He's been writing me letters for two years—ever since he went away. I never knew him except from seeing him with you once at a ball, but he wrote to me right along. I met him when he came back, because he asked me to."

Now it was Beesy who staggered, and had to clasp the girl to support herself. It seemed to her as if the house were falling down about her. Tom faithless? Tom, for whom she had toiled and slaved—and whom she had so much loved? Then Billy was right. And he had thrown her over for Mamie—pretty, pitiful little Mamie.

"He's tried to make a fool of me ever since, too, Beesy," she went on, pausing at times for the tears to cease. "Tom Walsh knows how to make a girl love him—you know that. He told me that it was all over between him and you. I believed him. We were together nearly two weeks, going to balls and theaters in the evening after I came home from work. Now for a week I haven't seen him. I lost my job on account of staying away to go to a matinée with him."

The girl stopped speaking, and Beesy felt her body shake with sobs. She was full of sympathy for the child's suffering; yet it all seemed so little by the side of her own sorrow. All at once the sun had blazed out in her life and the world was golden. Now it was night again, and the day had lasted such a little while. Tom was faithless; and she had trusted him so when all the world was against him.

"This morning they put me out of the house," Mamie went on when she was quieter, "and they kept my trunk. I've come here, Beesy, because you're good, and you and Tom used to be sweethearts. You'll understand. And you'll keep me here for a little while, won't you?"

Beesy drew the pathetic wreck to her.

"Why, of course, Mamie," she answered, wondering how it could be that her voice sounded so calm. "I'll always look after you, poor child."

She felt no resentment now against

the false lover there in the little room—hearing, probably, although he gave no sign of it, every word that the two sisters spoke. Her pain had gone from the arm. Now it was all in her heart. The agony of losing in the flash of time it took her to listen to Mamie's story all that her nature loved and craved served to make her numb. She understood completely what had happened, and felt acutely all that the last few minutes meant.

Yet it did not arouse her to the sort of action she supposed her emotions would have suggested. She thought it strange that she did not throw from her breast the girl weeping there, and drag Tom out before both of them to say what he could for himself. Not a single consequence of all the terrible happenings of the last few minutes escaped her. Yet Beesy's only act was to draw the girl closer. She could at least protect her.

The two sisters stood in the middle of the room for a minute. Neither spoke. Mamie first lifted her head when there was the noise of a footstep in the hallway. Then there came a knock on the door.

Beesy opened it on Billy Curran's rosy countenance. Behind Billy were two other men.

"These detectives say Tom Walsh's here," was his explanation for returning. "They have trailed him up the fire-escape. There was drops of blood on it."

The two men stepped forward and looked about the room. Beesy had once more drawn Mamie to her. She looked straight ahead of her without a word of response to Billy. She did not notice the others.

"Is Tom Walsh here?" one of them asked.

Beesy turned as if the full significance of their presence had just come over her. She pointed to the door.

"Wait," she said, drawing the key out of her pocket. "I want to take this girl out of here."

She led Mamie to the shelter of Mrs. Murphy's quarters. Then she came back into the room and handed Billy the key.

"Tell him that Mamie was here," she said to Billy, "so he can understand why I did it. When they looked for him before, I shed my own blood for him. I'd have done it even if I thought he killed that man. But to lie to me and Mamie —I couldn't stand for that."

THE HOUSE OF CARE.

I KNOW not how I came to live
  Within the House of Care!
For once I never knew the place,
  But found it unaware!

I used to live where skies were clear,
  And song and laughter rang;
And all the air was summer-sweet,
  And larks and thrushes sang!

I know not how I found this place,
  Nor why I have to stay;
My very dreams are somber here,
  And gray and chill each day!

It is a dreary place to dwell—
  I would my stay were done!
But, oh, I fear the holding-lease
  Has many years to run!

Emma A. Lente.

A LEGACY OF TERROR.

BY LUDWIG LEWISOHN.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

ROBERT UNDERWOOD goes to the Isle of Palms to seek his uncle, Anthony Underwood, who is living there in retirement. He finds him in a state of constant fear, menaced by a mysterious man for some cause which Robert cannot discover. Mr. Underwood refuses to call in the help of the police, but at last consents to leave the island for the sake of his daughter Olga. Robert goes to Queenshaven to arrange for an escort of police, and upon returning, sees at the shore a small boat in which he suspects the strange man of the dunes to have come to the island. He hurries to the house and finds Olga at the door of her father's room. Glancing down, he sees stealing across the threshold a thin stream of blood.

CHAPTER IV.

THE HEART OF OLGA.

I SPOKE no word, I made no sign. I stood still and gazed upon that red stream widening on the floor. Gradually Olga became aware of my strange attitude. Her eyes followed mine and—she saw. She made no outcry, as any other woman would have done; she shed no tears. But her face grew very white as she said:

"It has come."

We entered that room softly and found the old man lying beside an open window, a knife-thrust in his throat. The thrust had been mercifully and skilfully directed. There could have been very little struggle, hardly any pain. The jugular vein was severed and death had come easily—more like a friendly guest to that tormented spirit, I thought, than as an enemy. We raised his form. Upon his face was a look of peace, that became even more apparent as Olga gently closed his eyes.

Olga stood still for a space, striving, as it seemed to me, to grave those beloved features on her memory. At last she turned to me. Her speech was deliberate, her voice cold.

"You have done what you could, Cousin Robert. But, you see—nothing availed. I shall always think of you with gratitude as the one human being who was kind to him. But now—there is nothing more that you can do."

The implied dismissal struck straight at my heart.

"And what will you do, Olga?"

She leaned against the mantelpiece as if she could no longer support herself without help. The sun sent a ray through the window, and the gold ornament upon her white cap gleamed. Once she essayed to speak—twice—and still her strength seemed to fail her. Then words came, but she spoke, except toward the end, with no passion, no violence. It seemed as if the words she was saying had passed a thousand times through her soul, as if their meaning was too final and irrevocable to need emphasis.

"Do you remember my telling you that he suffered daily the agonies of death—do you remember? I saw it. I watched it. As I grew from childhood to womanhood that was the element in which I lived. And he was kind and good and wise."

She struggled for a moment with a deep sob that threatened to rise in her throat, but she conquered herself.

"He taught me all he knew—all but that fatal secret. I know that my father in his life was guilty of nothing base. And see what that life was! I have lain awake at night, tempted to doubt the justice of God; I have cursed my own kind, of which I knew so little. But this I did know—that if in truth the blow

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fell, that if the end came violently, I would go out into the world and unravel the secret of his life and of his dreadful death, and that, somehow, somewhere, I would bring to justice those who killed him."

She fell silent, pressing her hand upon her bosom.

"And you will go alone?" I asked.

She smiled wanly.

"I know enough, from what I have heard of the world and of men, to know that I must go alone. Because I shall not rest till I have accomplished my purpose, or until, what is much more likely, they have slain me, too. And who is there that would come with me upon my quest?"

Her eyes sought the window and looked out upon the rhythmic swaying of the great waters. She expected no answer. I came a step nearer to her and spoke.

"I will share your quest, Olga. And, perhaps, with my experience of the world, I can make it easier for you; perhaps I can spare you vain attempts and futile wanderings. I will go."

Her dark eyes sought mine.

"And you will ask nothing in return?"

I struggled grievously with my soul before I could answer. There was a hope in my heart, faint and distant, but secure. Yet this was not the hour for its utterance, and so I answered:

"Nothing."

She had read my thoughts.

"You must come with me for no reason but the pity of my father's life and death."

I bowed my head. What was the profit of contention at this hour. I would not let her carry her inexperience and her wonderful beauty unguarded into this world; I would follow her at all hazards. And I would not strive with her at the outset.

We lifted the form of the old man—for Olga was of an unusual and supple strength—and carried it into another chamber, laying it decently upon the bed. And, that done, Olga's piteous ignorance of practical necessities, despite the energy of her soul, became apparent. With an impatient gesture she turned to me, disdaining to ask counsel, and yet forced thereto.

"I must go soon."

I smiled, for the dusk was gathering and she could not see my face. "We must lay your poor father to rest," I said. "We must arrange all manner of practical things. You must look into your possessions, since you cannot travel without money. You must have some definite aim."

"But something must be done at once!"

"It shall be. The police officers from Queenshaven will be here soon. They will be able to help us in various ways."

She was silent thereafter, brooding with shadowed eyes. We had not long to wait. The knocker clanged out, and I went down and admitted two stalwart policemen.

"You've come too late," I said. "Mr. Underwood was murdered during my absense from the house to-day."

The taller of the two men shook his head with real regret.

"An' that's too bad!" He turned to his companion: "Ye must go over to the village and telephone headquarters from the factory. This is a case for detectives."

The man went, and the first officer accompanied me up-stairs. He bowed with a compassionate gesture to Olga.

"I'll take care of the house if ye want to go anywhere."

I went up to Olga.

"Had we not better spend the night in Queenshaven?"

She shook her head.

"I will not leave father until they have put him away into the earth."

And then, with a quiet thoughtfulness, even in the midst of her grief, she went into the little kitchen and prepared some food and brewed tea in a great samovar, against the watching of the night. In an hour two detectives arrived, and went over the scene of the murder. I communicated to them the circumstances so far as I knew or suspected, and gave them a minute description of that dark man who, I felt sure in my heart, had done the deed.

They listened carefully and thought the circumstantial evidence against him very strong. They were confident that they would take him, but this confidence I

did not share. He was, I knew, of an extraordinary intelligence, and I did not believe that he would be captured by the clumsy methods of the provincial police. Still, I gave what help I could, and the two detectives, having seen all there was to seen, set out for the village, where, as they agreed with me, the criminal was probably secreted. Then Olga and I, in one room, the two police officers in another, prepared for the long vigil of the night.

Hour after hour I sat and watched her dark unseeing eyes where weird dreams and plans and memories seemed to pass in an endless file. Even now she did not weep. She was upheld by that resolve nurtured through the strange years of her childhood and girlhood, and now called forth again. I think that I slept for a while toward morning, for the dawn seemed to come with a great swiftness; I looked into the tense, white face of Olga. She had suffered deeply. She seemed to have become thinner during the night, and the exquisitely symmetrical bony structure of her face showed through the pallid skin.

The day that followed was full of wild bustle and hurry, and a thousand futilities to be passed over rapidly. The detectives went through the Bohemian village and found nothing—no trace of the individual whom I had described. Then came a pompous coroner with his jury, and it was sagely decided that "Anthony Underwood had come to his death at the hands of a party or parties unknown." At last came the undertaker and prepared the body for removal to Queenshaven.

Olga bore all these doings with a rare dignity, but her face seemed to grow more and more drawn, her cheeks showed hectic spots, and her eyes burned.

When they carried her father forth from the house in which he had lived for so many terrible years, she leaned her head against the wall and stood there for many minutes. Then she turned back, and I thanked God to see her a little glad of my presence in her great loneliness. I took her hand.

"Now you will let me take you to Queenshaven. Then — later—after the funeral—we will come back here for your possessions and then—then your quest can begin."

"Yes, yes." She spoke like one in a dream. She went to her room and dressed herself, and we walked to the village, where we took the ferry to Queenshaven. She stepped ashore and looked about her with wondering eyes. She had never, to her knowledge, been there before, and the sights and sounds of the old Southern town confused her. I took her to a hotel and left her at the door of her room.

"You must sleep to-night, Olga—sleep and rest."

"I will," she answered.

As for me, tired as I was, I could not sleep for thinking of her and of the strange fate, which I felt sure had her in its grip, and would yet drive her hither and thither upon the face of the earth before she might find rest.

The next day we buried Anthony Underwood in one of the old graveyards of Queenshaven, under a group of peaceful willows that hung their bright green streamers over the mound. It was a very quiet resting-place for one whose life had been so stormy, and something of this truth was, no doubt, in Olga's thoughts, for her demeanor was only sad and regretful. She showed in this hour no violence of grief.

It was still early in the day when we came away from the grave and walked toward the pier. Olga and I had decided to go through my uncle's effects in the hope of finding a clue to the secrets of his life. Olga believed that her father had certain properties in the North, and this matter, too, she desired me to look up and arrange.

We steamed slowly across the bay, landed, and soon stood before the house. Here, for the first time, tears came into Olga's eyes. I turned away to leave her with her grief, but she had soon recovered herself. We trod the echoing stairs of the empty house, and sat down for a little while in the upper hall before invading the precincts of the dead. Olga let me have a glimpse of her own room, which until then I had not seen. I glanced at her dressing-table, and saw on it a number of little ornaments of wood and brass that struck me as Oriental and yet not Oriental in their character.

"Where do these come from?" I asked.

"I have always had them," she said.

I was still wondering, when my eyes fell upon a curious ornament that hung on the wall. It was an effigy of the Savior on the cross, but crudely colored and cut in a bizarre manner in conventional and awkward lines. In a flash I recognized its character. I connected it at once with the ornaments on the table, the physiognomy of my uncle's assailant, the strange song that, half-unconsciously, Olga knew, and the script of the letter that I had seen in my uncle's hand. For the image of the Savior was an ikon carved in the manner customary in the Russian Church.

"Your secret lies in Russia," I said to Olga.

She nodded.

"I suspected that."

"How?" I asked.

"I've read all the translations of Russian novels in father's library," she answered, "and I came to feel that he must once have lived there. And, then—my name—"

We went into my uncle's room, and Olga gave me permission to break open the old escritoire that stood in one corner. Together we sat down before it; but the papers we found related to matters of dry business. There were records of the modest investments that represented the share of my grandfather's fortune that had fallen to my uncle. It had neither increased nor decreased, the income having evidently sufficed at all times. There was no record of any new ventures of business, nor was there any correspondence except with New York bankers.

Only in one little drawer, which we left to the very last, were documents of a more personal nature. We sorted these with great care, laying them evenly before us; and, since it is of some moment in the course of this narrative, I shall put down exactly what we found. There was a beautiful miniature of a young lady who was evidently Olga's mother; an exquisitely painted Russian wooden spoon; a note-book full of Russian characters—later discovered to be part of an obsolete cipher; a bundle of letters, also in Russian, written in a graceful feminine hand; a piece of white silk cord stained with blood; and, finally, a scrap of yellow paper, old and creased, covered with a faded script all but illegible. The scrap had been torn across, and it took me a long time to decipher what portion of the writing was decipherable. It was part of a note written in French; and I shall here set down its contents so far as I was able to master them.

Our good Pavlov will help you in this extremity. He has . . . and he will be in Moscow next month . . . not unusual . . . perhaps . . . the Prussian boundary . . . the snow is terrible here and I am so . . . that I cannot go. Above all strive . . . and escape the one great danger . . . to preserve one's reason is difficult . . .

That was all, but I heard Olga murmuring that last and ominous clause—"to preserve one's reason is difficult."

She turned to me with horror in her eyes.

"What could it have been, Robert?"

I shook my head.

"Russia is a queer country, where queer things happen. How can I tell?"

"Do you think that we shall find out in Moscow?"

"Are you going to Moscow?" I asked.

"Where else? I shall go at once."

We spent the rest of that day packing all that Olga desired to take with her—not much, after all, for she did not want to be burdened with possessions upon her quest. The furniture she left in the house, which had belonged to her father and which now belonged to her. I suggested that the house be sold, but she would not hear of it.

"I shall keep it," she said earnestly, "and perhaps return to it some day. And now, Cousin Robert, since you wish to help me, help me to reach Moscow."

"If you are going, I am going, too."

Her face was grave.

"You remember your promise?"

"I remember."

We returned to Queenshaven, and I engaged two cabins on the steamer Aztec to New York. It was agreed that there Olga was to go to the home of my sister, whence we should both start for Russia. I hoped, indeed, though with a faint enough hope, to persuade Olga to desist from her wild purpose and stay in New York, but for the present I acquiesced in all her plans.

It was a bright autumn day on which we steamed out of the harbor of Queenshaven. We passed the islands that surround the bay, and at last the Isle of Palms. From afar we could see the roof and chimneys of the house in which Olga had spent so many tragic years. Then that, too, was passed, and we were out upon the great sea.

I could not take my eyes from Olga. She looked exquisite in her black dress and a little hat that she had bought in Queenshaven. And she was kind and friendly to me, frank and comradely, but without any warmth. For a good part of the day I walked alone upon the deck, wondering whether we should really go to Russia, and what record, if any, of my uncle's strange fate we should find.

Upon the second day of our trip, I was standing on deck looking down at the steerage passengers, when my attention was attracted by a man who sat with his back toward me. The figure was tall and broad, and clad in a common workingman's garb; but disguised though he was, I knew in a moment that I had again found the black man of the dunes. When he turned his face toward me, I was sure. He had shaved off his beard, but the heavy black mustache remained, the melancholy eyes and the grave bearing.

He looked at me frankly, and from that hour on we silently watched each other. I was resolved that he should not escape me again. I thought that he had shipped as a passenger in the steerage, but toward evening I was disillusioned. He went about the deck, carrying lamps, evidently one of the crew. As he walked across our deck I approached him.

"So you accomplished your purpose?" I whispered.

He stared at me and muttered brokenly:

"No English, mister."

Without exciting remark or suspicion, I asked the second officer what he knew of the man.

"Fellow with the black mustache?" the officer asked. "Oh, yes, that's Czerny, a foreign deck-hand—quiet, useful man. He was with us for several trips. Then he got sick and stayed some weeks in Queenshaven. I'm glad he's at work again. He don't give any trouble."

The deck-hand and I still watched each other furtively. I pointed him out to Olga, and she agreed, with a shudder, that it was the same man. Softly she sang, in his hearing, that strange and melancholy Russian song, and involuntarily he turned his head and listened with gleaming eyes. I told Olga that when we came to New York she must stay on board the ship for a space and give me an opportunity of following our man; and so when, upon the next day, we sailed up the harbor of New York, I kept all my senses watchful and alert.

The man was employed with others to open the great freight-holes and fix the derricks in place, and when, finally, the steamer slipped up to the pier, he was one of the first of the crew to jump ashore to help with the unlading. I burned with impatience until the gangplank was lowered and I could step out on the pier. I ran to the next opening where the crew was working, but already my man had escaped.

At the head of the pier I came upon him again. I followed him as he threaded his way through the heavy traffic along the North River. Swiftly he walked to the foot of Spring Street, where a cab was apparently loitering. At sight of him the cabby, a great bearded fellow, tightened his rein. Without a word, as by compact, the black man of the dunes jumped into the vehicle, the driver lashed his horse and the cab sped away at a furious pace.

A hansom came past, and I jumped into it.

"Follow the cab in front!" I cried to the driver. "Five dollars for you if you keep up with it!"

And so the two cabs raced madly along the North River, and I thought of Olga alone in the great, strange crowd on board of the Aztec.

CHAPTER V.

WE ARE WARNED.

TO this day I think with shame of that futile chase, and of myself in the cab, so complacent, so sure that this time my man could not escape me. We rolled on—the two vehicles—for the better part of an hour. The

speed of the leader slackened perceptibly and so, of course, did ours. At the corner of Eleventh Street and Sixth Avenue the cab in front of us came to a leisurely halt. I jumped out of my own and ran up to it. I tore open the door and found—nothing!

"Where is your fare?" I cried to the cabby.

He answered with a guttural foreign accent:

"I have none."

Heavens! The trick was such an old one—to enter a cab and escape from the other side. My way of life had not brought me in contact with such devices or the necessity for them; but the foolish defeat burned into me, and doubly determined me to find that dark man with his insolent energy and skill, and wring a victory from him yet. Dejectedly I returned to the pier and to the steamer. Olga was calmly awaiting me, and smiled a little at my hot recital of what had happened. Indeed, the girl put me to shame with her courage and calm resolve.

"We shall be defeated often yet," she said. "Do you expect everything to come to you at your desire? But at last —at last—we shall know!"

I bent over her hand and, gravely, she let me kiss it. Then we set out to go to my sister. I had written her of the circumstances here related, and I knew that she would take the strange and fatherless girl into her heart. In her presence, in truth, Olga seemed to soften, and for the first time to rest. But even at the dinner-table that night my cousin asked me of the going of the first available ship to Europe.

"Must you go?" I asked for the last time, for suddenly there came to me a wonderful vision of her staying here, and of my drawing closer to her gradually as time went on.

Her eyes grew cold at my question.

"You know that I must."

"In that case," I said, "you must understand that we cannot go by the first steamer. We cannot go to Russia, especially in its present disturbed state, without passports, and these will have to be made out in Washington. But I will write to-morrow and make all the necessary arrangements."

"You will go with me, then?"

"I will go with you."

Again I must pass rapidly over details that, in my memory, are blurred by the more terrible events that followed. One incident alone that happened prior to our leaving New York remains to be chronicled. It was an anonymous letter that I received, written in the handwriting and employing the language of an evidently cultured man. The letter was brief and, as with the only other documentary clue that we possessed, I shall give its whole contents:

> Attempt to dissuade Miss Olga Underwood from going to Russia. She will find the record of great sorrow, and perhaps find a sorrow of her own in that poor country—a sorrow from which it will be no light thing forever after to escape. She may even find danger there, which it will benefit her very little to incur. Let her accept the heritage of her father's nationality.

I handed the letter to Olga, and she read it over and over.

"Ah, but I want to find that sorrow," she said, "the sorrow of my poor father's fate. He asks me to accept my father's heritage? And what was my mother's —the mother whom I never knew?"

"Did your father never mention her?"

"Not often, but then with infinite reverence and love. He would never tell me anything more than that I looked like her."

And so that incident was closed, too. Our passports came duly, our passage was engaged, and with the coming of winter we sailed on the Prinzessin Alberta for Europe. It was our plan to go over from Hamburg to Berlin, thence to St. Petersburg, and finally to Moscow.

The whole journey struck me as madness. It was the fateful winter of 1905, the revolution raged in Russia, and no man was safe there. We were going into the terrible winter of the North—white, but stained with blood. All these matters I had presented to Olga as strongly as I could, but they only heightened her ardor. She seemed to long for the country to which we were going, to feel herself, even from afar, native there, and all through our voyage she could scarcely conceal her eagerness.

We came to Hamburg prosperously.

The great ferry bore us up the Elbe to the city itself, and thence a cab took us to the railroad station. We managed to secure a coupé to ourselves, and the conductor locked the doors. Just as the train was about to start, I looked through the window and saw once more, Czerny, the black man of the dunes.

A cold fear struck my heart at the sight of him. It seemed to me that we were no longer the pursuers, but the pursued. And this impression grew, for every time the train halted I saw him, under the electric light, peer in at our window with his melancholy eyes.

But when we arrived in Berlin I could not see him anywhere. We drove to a hotel, and rested for a day in the imperially beautiful German capital. Hundreds and hundreds of Russians were daily pouring into the city. Every one who had the means seemed to be fleeing from either the White Terror or the Red of the neighboring empire, and I thought it but a foolhardy thing to venture now across that ominous frontier. The proprietor of our hotel, too, tried to persuade me not to go. He showed me a paper smuggled across the frontier by a Russian refugee. It was an order issued by one Colonel Jablonsky, urging his troops, that scoured the country between the Prussian boundary and St. Petersburg, to use their guns and bayonets without mercy and on the least provocation.

However, we were not to be deterred. Next morning we boarded the train, and by noon we had passed the last German station. Now our speed lessened, and we rolled noisily over the frozen fields. Here and there, by trestle or bridge, we saw a brown-coated Russian soldier, and I felt that we were coming into the grip of the frozen empire. At Wirballen we changed cars, and had our passports examined and *viséd*. Gendarmes swarmed everywhere, and the air was filled with clank of sabers and the rattle of guns. On all sides I kept a sharp lookout, but I saw the man of the dunes—as Olga and I still called him—no more.

Shortly before we entered St. Petersburg, a tall, gray-bearded man entered our compartment. He fixed Olga with his keen eyes, and seemed ever about to address her. Almost involuntarily she moved a little nearer to me. At last the man got up and returned with another, shorter and younger than himself. Together they looked at us, and spoke in low tones. I could not understand what they said, but I felt sure that they muttered again and again the name, Olga Feodorovna.

Olga heard it, too, and her face paled a trifle.

"Are we known here?" she whispered to me.

"It's probably a chance resemblance and a chance similarity of name," I tried to reassure her, but in my heart I believed this not at all.

Punctually at eight-thirty we rolled into the Warsaw Station of the Russian capital. It was a Sunday morning, and the bells of numberless churches pealed out in the cold, clear air. We heard especially the deep boom of the chimes of St. Isaac's and of the Kazan Cathedral. St. Petersburg was calm and white and beautiful. You would never have thought from the appearance of the city that the land flowed with blood.

Olga did not want to delay.

"I shall know no peace until we get to Moscow," she said. "When we are there we can rest a little while we make our inquiries."

But that evening I persuaded her to go to dinner in a restaurant on the Nevsky Prospekt. It was a magnificent place, and a Rumanian band, dressed in its national costume, played through the evening. We sat at a little table, gazing upon the alien and beautiful sight before us. Olga enjoyed it, too, although she was quivering with eagerness to be off for Moscow and begin her search into her father's past.

Not far from us sat three men to whom my attention was more and more attracted. One of them, it seemed to me, that I had seen before. He turned his full face toward me, and I knew that he was the gray-bearded man who had stared at Olga on the train. Not by a movement did the three betray a consciousness of our presence — and yet I could have sworn that they were conscious of it. Olga shared my feeling. A subtle atmosphere seemed to pass from that table to ours. A half-hour passed, and another.

Then a fourth man quickly entered

the room and joined the three. It was Czerny. I sprang up and approached the table.

"Sir," I said, speaking in French so that the others might understand, for they all looked like men of some education. "Sir, I think we have seen each other before, under very strange circumstances. I demand an interview."

The four men smiled, and the oldest of them replied:

"I warn you to desist. This is not a country in which to leave a lady without protection; and we are in no mood to be annoyed, nor have we the time. Therefore, we warn you not to make yourself obnoxious. Also—we warn you not to proceed to Moscow."

"Why?" I asked. "According to the latest news the uprisings there have ceased."

"I have said all that I can."

I returned to Olga, and she urged me to pursue Czerny no farther.

"We know nothing yet. When we know, we will have help in capturing him. People cannot commit murder without paying some penalty."

She was without impetuosity now, but like some young and beautiful Fate—bent upon executing justice, careless of the mere passage of time if but the end be ultimately gained. She seemed devoid of personal feeling, of all regard for self, and often I could have cried out against her will and unswerving purpose when tender words trembled on my lips, and I had perforce to discuss plans and theories. I tried to serve her loyally, and only once broke the reserve that galled me.

She turned from me then with a cold, sad look.

"Have I not sorrows enough, Cousin Robert, without your adding a new one?"

And so I bit my lips and held my peace, swearing in my heart that my time should come.

The next day we proceeded to Moscow. Snow had fallen during the night, and the mercury was far below zero. The train rolled through the fields of snow that had a bluish sheen here and there. The villages were all but obliterated, the gilded domes of the little Byzantine churches gleamed white.

Olga and I knew no word of the language, but we could not fail to observe the tension of mind of all our fellow passengers. Men spoke in whispers, and seemed to huddle together as if for mutual protection. Gendarmes passed up and down through the corridors at the side of the compartments and exchanged glances full of hate and suspicion with the train-guards and conductors. Once, twice, during the night the train was fired upon and stopped. Then the gendarmes sallied forth, and once one of them was brought back with a great bleeding wound in his face.

But gradually we made headway, and at last arrived in Moscow. The city might have been one huge grave, so utter was the calm that reigned—but the calm was tense with ominous foreboding. All trade had ceased, all industry. Not a cab was to be seen, not a tram-car was running. Life itself seemed to be paralyzed. It was with the utmost difficulty that Olga and I, by the aid of a gendarme, hired a great wooden sled to take us to a hotel. The proprietor regarded us with suspicion, and only upon the sight of our passports, gave us rooms.

"I don't know," he said, "what I can give you to eat. No one sells, no one buys. And that is not the worst yet."

"What is the worst?"

"Wait," he said, "wait till the outbreak comes. Then you will see blood, blood, blood. You do not know this country—you do not know what it is to suffer. My son was shot by the Cossacks because he belonged to a reading-club. He was a student of literature, and he didn't believe that the Czar should grind us under his heel. He was shot."

The man spoke with a quiet despair that was more impressive than the wildest anger would have been.

We left him to go to our rooms, but the house was not heated, and the cold was unbearable. I tapped at Olga's door, and found my cousin sitting wrapped in her furs.

"Let us go out and walk!" I said. "We shall be frozen unless we move."

She was glad to go, and together we issued forth into the snowy streets. From afar we saw the towers of the Kremlin; but we did not know the way thither, nor could we discover it. Only a few people were in the streets, and these

walked in the shadow of the houses with heads bent. They did not understand us, nor we them, and they did not seem desirous of being stopped. Altogether, that walk—or rather the first part of it—was one of the weirdest things in all our strange adventures. The day was bright. The great and populous city lay silent under its cerecloth of snow and under the shadow of its deadly fear.

But suddenly, as we were passing through a wide and stately street, the silence was broken. From afar rose the tumult of the trampling of many horses on the stones, heavy hoofs piercing the snow, and shriller, above those dulled sounds, the clashing of swords and the clink of numerous spurs.

The few passers-by in the streets looked fearfully around them and hurried on. Olga and I stood still to await that which was coming. And what, in a moment, we saw turning a corner, was this: A group of cavalry with drawn swords that filled the street from side to side, leaving no path for any man. We saw a man who had not escaped in time, try to pass between the horses; and next we saw the flash of a saber in the light, saw a dark thing fall on the sidewalk, and the soldier's horse slip in the blood of the man.

My heart turned cold, for in a minute they would be upon us. I caught Olga by the hand and, running to the nearest house, beat with all my strength upon the locked door. But the cravens within would not open to save us. We tried the next house, and now the horsemen were nearly upon us—I could see the brutal laugh upon their faces. But this door yielded. We stepped in and I slammed it behind me. Immediately after we heard the passing horses' tramp, and heard, above their trampling, a human cry of fear and agony.

We found ourselves in a dark hall, but it was not long before a man came down the stairs with a lantern in his hand. He was young and comely, golden-haired and bright-eyed and he spoke to us in a friendly manner. I answered in French, and was relieved to find that he understood me.

"We saw you from above," he said, "and we were glad that you came to our door. We left it open for just such purposes and locked ourselves in above. Will you not come?"

He led us to a large room on the upper floor in which about a dozen young men and women were gathered—all intelligent-looking, and all friendly. They pressed about us, expressing their pleasure at our escape and urging us to stay until all danger should be past. I noted that they all called one another by their Christian names, and that the young man who had admitted us, and whom they called Constantin, seemed to be the host.

"You must permit me," I said, "to thank you for your kindness and to tell you who we are. We are Americans. My name is Robert Underwood, and this is my cousin, Olga Underwood."

They all fell silent and, with an involuntary movement, drew away from Olga and myself. Then arose mutterings in which our name was repeated again and again.

"The name—the name—" they said, looking at one another with strange and fearful glances.

But Constantin spoke a few sentences in Russian, and the company returned at once to its friendly attitude. Only I seemed to discern in the women a great tenderness and pity for Olga.

I turned to Constantin.

"May I ask why our name arouses such wonder?"

"You do not know?" he said.

"No," I replied, and then I briefly narrated as much as was wise of our purpose in Russia, saying that we had come to investigate certain family matters and to discover the reason of a tragic event that had recently overtaken us.

They listened to me in silence. Then one of the young women came to Olga and kissed her and took her to a couch at the far end of the room.

I turned to Constantin.

"When do you think we can return to our hotel?"

He frowned.

"Heaven only knows. The government has determined to crush the rising here. The Cossacks kill without discrimination—they can't even read your passports. We are provided with all necessaries here. You had better stay till we hear from our informants."

He would have said more, but a second

detachment of cavalry swept through the street. It passed more swiftly than the first, but in its wake sounded desperate cries and groans. We all sprang to the windows, and saw four men lying bleeding and bruised in the snow.

"Comrades!" cried Constantin, and instantly all the men rushed from the room. We saw them issue into the street and bear in the wounded men. Several of the young women stepped from the room and returned in nurses' gowns, and when the wounded were brought up they tended to them. The situation was clear to me. We had fallen in with a group of revolutionary students and, in the present state of the city, I could not but be thankful for the refuge that was being offered us.

All through the rest of the day, wounded or dying comrades of the revolution were brought in, and our friends, with white, strained faces, ministered to them. Olga and I gave what assistance we could, but it was a weary and a terrible task. From all parts of the city, as dark approached, sounded the muffled reports of guns and pistols and the trampling of detachments of Cossacks. The snow was drenched in blood, and still came the wounded.

Toward eleven o'clock conditions seemed to grow more peaceful, and I sat down with Constantin and a few others to drink a glass of tea. All conversation was carried on in French, whether out of deference to me, or as a general precaution, I did not know. Again, as we sat there, the triple knock sounded at the inner door, and we thought that another patient was being brought in. But the newcomer proved to be a small, swart man with bright eyes and a beaked nose. The comrades all gathered around him anxiously. He seemed about to speak, but glanced at me.

Constantin laid his hand on the man's arm.

"You may speak."

The little man laughed as with a touch of hysteria.

"You had better run to the old cover, Constantin Michailovitch. Your presence in the city is known; yours and Titania's. How long will it be before they find you? And then—"

He ran his hand along his throat with an infinitely expressive gesture.

The oldest of our group stepped forth.

"It is your duty to save yourself, Constantin. The cause needs you."

Constantin stood very still, looking at the floor. Then he spoke:

"I cannot slink away, Jakov. Ever when the battle is at its highest I am sent away into hiding. And I am tired, tired. Let them find me. Death is quick."

"And Titania?" the older man urged.

But Constantin could not reply, for a second messenger, out of breath and dabbled with blood, came into the room.

CHAPTER VI.

IN THE GRIP OF THE TERROR.

THE man panted heavily before he could speak. He seemed about to fall, but a stimulant was administered to him and he recovered. He stretched out his arms.

"Comrades! Pavlov Sergievitch is here."

They all sprang to their feet, and Jakov, turning to Constantin, said:

"Now, you and Titania can go."

But Constantin shook his head.

"Did I not tell you, Jakov, that I am tired? We fight and fight, and they slay us, and our brothers' tears are not stanched nor their wounds healed." He turned away and left the room.

The remainder of the night was more peaceful, and the next day was again silent. I would have gone, despite the danger of the streets, but Olga would not hear of it. The force of nurses in the house was insufficient to tend to the wounded and dying, and she could help.

"But you have your own life and your own mission," I pleaded.

"These are my people!" she cried. "I know it! I feel it! Do you know what that song is which I sang—that song we heard on the dunes?"

"No; what is it?"

"It is the chant of the revolution! Go, if you must."

"I stay with you, Olga. You ought to know that by this time."

She gave me her hand and smiled.

"I know."

The words were few and simple, but they were the most deeply felt I had ever had from her, and I knew that I would face any danger now.

Four days passed, and gradually I, too, began to assume my part in the general duties of that strange house and to become acquainted with the aims and characters of my friends, the terrorists. Upon them I would not pass judgment. That these were men and women of the purest personal character, of the most unselfish devotion to the cause—this I knew. That the country groaned under intolerable wrongs no one could deny; and it would ill befit an American to doubt the right of men to fight for fundamental human privileges. Whether their methods were wise, time alone and the outcome of the long and ever resurgent revolution will show.

So far, I must say at once, our house was regarded as a "white" house by the authorities—that is, no revolutionists or suspects were supposed to be in it. But our informants caught disquieting rumors. It appeared that our doorkeeper had talked indiscriminately, and although he was at once dismissed, the mischief was done. Titania, who was ostensibly a student of medicine, went out and came back with alarming reports. Constantin, who was known to have prevented a massacre of the Jews at Kief by the assassination of the governor about to order it, was being sought for rigorously. His portrait was printed on handbills. It could only be a matter of hours before he would be discovered and taken, and that would mean, of course, instant execution for himself and Titania. A council was held, and one plan after another discussed.

Constantin had recovered his spirits, and fear for Titania spurred him on.

"The one thing to do," he said, "is to get to Warsaw, if possible. There I have Jewish friends who could manage first to hide us, and then to smuggle us to Austria. But how shall we get there? There isn't a passport in the house."

Then Jakov, the gray-bearded revolutionist, spoke.

"If Mlle. and M. Underwood"—(he seemed to utter the name with difficulty)—"will help us, all may be well. Let Constantin and Titania pretend to be Americans. Let our friends accompany them with their genuine passports to the station. They will be permitted to pass."

He looked at me and at Olga, and we both agreed. These people had saved our lives; we had become friends, and the service was not a very great one to ask.

Thus, early in the morning we four set out, Constantin disguised as far as possible. We made our way to the station without any interruption and there passed a cordon of gendarmes successfully. I admired the splendid self-possession of our two friends, who laughed and chatted in French, when a single recognizing glance would have meant certain death to both.

I went forward to apply for tickets, but the city was under martial law, and passports were asked for. A dazzling officer, all gold-lace and orders, looked at the two I handed him. Now, our plan had been not to let the inspector know that there were four of us, but to show the two passports and, under the protection of his nod, get the remaining tickets from the ticket-office. But the inspector was of an inquiring turn of mind. He wondered why we two Americans should be traveling through the country; he advised me not to go to Warsaw, where the disorders were even worse, and talking thus, he strolled with me to the ticket-office.

My heart sank, and from afar I saw Constantin and Titania watching us uneasily. I tried once more to turn the inspector away, and under his friendliness of manner I seemed to see a menace like the glint of steel.

"Well, *monsieur*, will you not purchase your tickets?"

"Presently," I said. "I wish first to arrange about some luggage."

I went back to Olga and our friends.

"You see?" I said. "He would not go."

"And he won't," Titania said bitterly. "It's Xanudiedoff. He's put here especially to catch people."

We waited and lingered about as naturally as we could, but the inspector stuck to his post. The buying of the tickets was impossible. We summoned a cab and drearily gave our orders.

Just when we had entered the vehicle Constantin jumped up.

"Robert," he said, "in what language did you give the direction to the cabby?"

"In French," I said, "I wasn't thinking."

"And did he answer in French?"

"Yes."

"Then he's a government spy. There are plenty of them. A Russian peasant cabby doesn't speak French. I've got to get out of this right away. Take Titania home."

With infinite caution he opened the door of the cab and jumped out into the street. I looked back, saw him recover himself and mingle nonchalantly with the crowd. Then I looked through the little window in front at our driver. A broad grin overspread his face. He had evidently noted all that had happened, and it would be further evidence. Then he whipped up his horse and drove us home. At the curb he stopped to observe the house, and noted down its address.

When we entered, Constantin was already there.

From the window he had seen the driver's action. He put his hand on Titania's shoulder.

"Dearest one, you must go from me now. You see that I can't escape this time. If I'm taken to-night, I'll be dead in the morning, and you'll be rid of a troublesome fellow."

Titania's skin grew gray.

"I can't bear it!"

"Then you shouldn't have married a terrorist, little girl. You shouldn't be one yourself. This generation of us is a generation of martyrs. We shall not even see the promised land."

"Have you no other hiding-place in the city?" I asked.

"No. It is get away, or bite the dust—especially now."

"Is there no way to save you, then?" Olga asked.

Constantin stood still, lost in deep thought.

"There is a way, but I would not ask it."

"Ask it!" Olga cried. "I will not stand by and see you two killed, if there is any way—any way."

"There is but one way. If you and Robert will let us have your passports we could escape. We would send them back at once from Warsaw with a trusty messenger. You would be safe enough. For even if you were suspected, you could appeal to your consulate."

"That is impossible!" I cried. But Olga looked at me with grievous reproach in her eyes.

"Would you have them murdered for such a little thing?"

Quietly I handed the passports to her. I did not like the arrangement—I thought it was foolhardy. But, what could I do? Not to give them was like condemning in cold blood, to certain death, the friends who had stood by us. Olga gave the passports to Constantin and Titania; and immediately preparations were begun, for even as it was, the greatest vigilance and prudence were required. The plan was to pretend that our friends were a newly wedded couple starting out on their wedding journey. Thus we could all, with apparent merriment, accompany them to the station and cover the whole proceeding.

At nightfall we set out. The streets were dark; only here and there glimmered a gas-lamp. We had been careful to choose cabmen who were obviously unsophisticated and innocent. Laughing, we rode off to the station.

All of our friends acted their parts magnificently. Apparently half-intoxicated, and carefully refraining from a word of Russian, as befitted foreigners, we went into the station. Train officers and gendarmes smiled benevolently at our party; the passports were merely glanced at.

As the train pulled out we threw handfuls of rice into the compartment that Titania and Constantin had taken, and an old white slipper. Then we wandered out, singing, into the street.

I kept close to Olga, for a fear possessed me. We were now without our papers of official identification, and my heart smote me that I had consented to the whole business. Still, on the day after the next the passports were to be returned—unless, indeed, our friends were taken.

I did not sleep much that night, and my brief and fevered dozes were broken by horrible dreams. I saw league-long

wastes of snow, and myself toiling over them, following the blood-stained imprint of small, bare feet that had trod here—the feet of Olga.

The next day passed, and with the dawn of the second I breathed a sigh of relief, for on that day our passports were to come back. In the meantime our house had not been molested actively. We knew pretty certainly that it had been watched, and every face at the window scrutinized. But the comrades had very cleverly made it appear that Constantin was in another part of the city, and there the houses were searched and suspects arrested. I was told that during the night Pavlov Sergievitch, the great terrorist leader, had visited the house. But now he had fled out into the open country, and since that, too, was known, the police contented themselves with keeping a spy about.

The day wore to noon and then to evening, and still no message came. We held a council, and it was concluded that Constantin and Titania must have been taken.

"Could not their messenger have been taken?" I asked.

"No," replied one of the comrades. "He is ostensibly a government agent, though really one of ourselves."

Our council broke up, for there was rioting in the streets. The "black hundreds," the hooligans whom the government lashed into a drunken fury against everything that smacked of culture or liberalism, were abroad. They were looting shops, especially those of the Jews, and since many of the student comrades belonged to that race, they all went forth to render what aid they could. Again that dreary tragedy was repeated. Again the wounded and the dying came in by scores, not only to us, but to dozens of other houses in the city.

With a great sickness in my heart I turned to Jakov.

"How can you bear it? Would it not be better to submit?"

He smiled a sad and weary smile.

"Little brother, you do not understand. There is no use crying peace where there is no peace. These must die, and we who remain, and a thousand thousand others; and then, perhaps, the day will dawn for this poor land. A hundred years ago the Czar's officers would take men and tear out the bridges of their noses with iron pincers, and then send them into the desert. Why isn't it done now? Because comrades have died, and more have died, and more, until at last the world has looked upon us and our oppressors have grown afraid. We must die that others may live."

He left me, and soon afterward Olga slipped for a minute into the room.

Thus she would come and talk to me in intervals of nursing. I took her hand.

"The passports have not come."

She shook her head impatiently.

"What does it matter in the midst of all this suffering?"

"It matters a good deal. It leaves us defenseless. The suffering is tragic enough, but we have our own lives to consider, our duty to ourselves."

"Ah, Robert," she said, "did I not tell you that I feel these people to be my people. I am even learning their language. Words and phrases come back to me as from a forgotten past. I seem to have seen, to have known, all this once before!"

"And the purpose of our coming here?" I said.

Her eyes flashed.

"I have not forgotten it; but a little time doesn't matter."

Then, for the first time, I said what was in my heart.

"Olga, I love you, and I cannot bear to see you in danger."

She looked at me almost, I thought, with pity.

"That's what Titania told me, and I wouldn't believe her. Ah, Robert, I don't think I know what love is. You have been very good to me, but—"

I turned away.

"You have said quite enough."

"What more would you have me say if I feel no more?"

I took her hand and kissed it.

"I can wait. But when our passports come, will you not leave this place and return to the hotel?"

"I don't know, Robert. If I am not needed, I may."

"Then, pray Heaven that you are not needed."

She left the room softly as she had

come, and I was alone. But not for long. Our friends returned, and again considered what had better be done in the matter of the passports. They decided, finally, to send a message to Warsaw to be passed by word of mouth from man to man, from village to village. They did not dare to write or telegraph, but they had brought this system of oral communication to a state near perfection, and they told me that, at the end of a few days, an answer might confidently be expected.

But it was weary waiting, especially as the disturbances became more violent throughout the city, and the police, in order to quell them, began to make an indiscriminate arrest of all suspected persons. We lived in momentary fear that our house might be entered by the gendarmerie, and I pondered the fact that, without our passports, Olga and I could be imprisoned and tortured with the rest.

That evening, at the coming of dark, a line of cabs halted before our door, and there entered a resplendent officer of the gendarmerie, followed by a dozen men. The doorkeeper had his orders not to resist such an incursion. Resistance was worse than useless—there was no chance of escape. None of us who remained in the house could be accused of anything definite, and arrest on suspicion meant, except in rare cases, only shorter or longer terms of imprisonment, with possibly a sentence of "free exile" in Siberia. The only real danger was torture in prison, applied for the purpose of discovering the whereabouts of the better-known revolutionists.

The officer and his men entered the house and demanded papers of identification. A few of our number handed him registration cards of the university. He smiled grimly.

"Students? That's bad, very bad."

Jakov stepped forward.

"We keep an emergency hospital."

The officer smiled again.

"The patients have been seen. They are all 'Reds.' These subterfuges are worse than useless."

Then I stepped up to him.

"Sir, I am an American. This young lady," I pointed to Olga, "is also an American. We claim the privileges of our nationality."

"Certainly; your passports, please."

"They are lost."

"No doubt. We will leave you to recover them, and take the young lady—who is really quite charming, and would render a very prison beautiful."

He looked at Olga in a way that made the blood of madness surge to my forehead.

"Dare to touch her! She will not be taken except over my dead body!"

He smiled still.

"The gentleman can be accommodated."

I sprang at him, and instantly received a terrible blow on the back of the head. My mouth filled with blood, and I fell forward.

Late that night I recovered consciousness. I was lying in one of the beds of the emergency ward, and Jakov was leaning over me. Slowly I recalled the events of the evening, but I was very weak, and I was afraid to ask what had happened—afraid with a sickening, deadly terror. Jakov saw the question in my eyes.

"Yes," he said gently, "she was taken, and she was very brave. Now, remember that you must save your strength and get well, so that you can help her. You must apply to your embassy at St. Petersburg."

"But, in the meantime?" I asked. And I covered my face with my hands, for into my mind came images that were maddening.

"In the meantime," he said, "you must hope for the best. The worst does not happen often in this world, bad as it seems to be. You are not the first; you will not be the last. There is one danger you must guard against. In these circumstances men often lose their reason. Then they can do nothing. Be warned, therefore."

I lay silent, and thought of that final phrase in the scrap of a note that we had found in the desk of my Uncle Anthony.

"It is difficult to preserve one's reason."

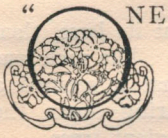
Then a great darkness fell again upon me and mercifully blotted out all thought.

(To be continued)

THE DAUGHTER OF THE ALVAREZ.

BY HERMAN SCHEFFAUER.

A SHORT STORY.



"ONE hundred and sixty acres of the loveliest land in the world," said Lafitte, editor of a little Californian monthly, as he traced his finger across the government map, "for the mere asking."

"We can build our bungalows there," remarked Witram, the writer, peering over Lafitte's shoulder, "and live like lords. We'll find our houses growing on —or, rather, in the redwood-trees on the land."

"It is a golden land," said Lafitte, his fine eyes drowned in dreams.

"Both picturesque and pastoral," remarked Horace Drake, third of this party at the club. He was a young professor of history at the State university.

"We must be hewers of wood and drawers of water," said Lafitte, "to comply with the homestead law."

"And if we don't want to lose our land," declared Witram, "we must first build our bungalows."

"Bungalows by courtesy — cabins, shacks, or shanties, in fact. Won't the land office accept tents?" asked Drake.

"Lazy pundit!" exclaimed Lafitte.

"Land-grabbers both!" returned Drake. "When *I* build, I shall build for a thousand years a sea-castle whose hearth shall be lit with eternal fires of hospitality. That castle shall be the monument to my valiant ancestor, *Sir* Francis."

"Peace to his ashes," said Lafitte, "and to the quacking of his descendant—who seems more gander than drake."

"You mean an eagle who has fallen in with vultures," Drake replied. "But if you would hear something ancient and interesting, lower your ears and listen. Last week I dug up some old Elizabethan manuscripts we have at the university. One was a copy of an old record of Sir Francis Drake's, a report to the admiralty, but not in his hand:

"'Returning we sailed south two hundred miles from the long inland sea that flowed into the great parent ocean, when, it behooveth me to relate to your Lordshippes, the Golden Hinde fell into a sore leakage, and so with difficulty and exceeding labor we careened her once more upon a slight sand-beach midmost to rampant headlands that brake into these waters right boldly. There rose to the east a great pointed white mountain whose summit was of marble stone and did constantly bear the semblance of snow.

"'With pitch from pine-trees we caulked again our vessel. There be an abundance of sea-otters and seals in the inlets. I flew her most puissant and most illustrious majesty's flag from a tree-top, and nailing a shilling of the realm to the trunk, I took possession of these lands in the name of our English crown.'

"That 'long inland sea' was Drake's Bay, the 'pointed white mountain' was Pico Blanco of the Santa Lucia Range. The 'slight sand-beach' was this strip right here," said Drake, as he pointed to the map, "right on my own land."

"Well, Drake ought to have a monument for discovering it, and you another for discovering Drake," said Witram.

"The monument will be the sea-castle aforesaid," answered Drake.

Two days later the trio stood where the stage road was lost in the fields, near the great Alvarez *rancho,* which dated back to the glorious days of the Spanish governors. The cattle of the Alvarez family still roamed a thousand hills.

"Now we enter our kingdoms," said Lafitte, kicking the ground with his heavy boots. "If Witram's fool Oxford ties hold out upon this granite, we'll be there in an hour."

"Wonder if Horrie will see the ghost of old Alvarez mounting guard over the tract he comes to snatch from him by challenge of law?" remarked Witram.

Drake scowled. The ghost of the dead claimant of the land was with him a sensitive subject.

They passed the open door of the Alvarez *hacienda*. Spicy smells of Spanish cookery clung in the air. Señora Alvarez came to the door, in her perpetual mourning, her deep-burning, black eyes full of questionings. Her hair had no trace of gray; heavy gold pendants dragged in her ears; at her throat gleamed an enormous brooch. Her manner was distant and dignified, full of a patrician haughtiness.

Behind this stately presence shone for a moment the radiant face of a young girl with long, loose hair and bare white arms. Upon her head was a chaplet of tiny roses. Such faces, thought Drake, look forth from tarnished frames round painted madonnas in the dim old missions.

A boy with wide, rolling eyes, shaggy hair and the malignant face of a goblin clung to the girl's dress.

"Go back, my children," said the mother gently; and angel and demon vanished.

"We are going to El Toro Cañon, Señora Alvarez," said Lafitte, gracefully lifting his hat, "could you direct us to the trail?"

For a moment a shadow of anguish darkened the eyes of the proud woman. She measured Lafitte with his roll of maps, his companions, and the shoulder-sacks they carried.

"There is no trail into El Toro Cañon now. We never go there any more. The trail is grown over since my husband, Simeon, was killed there. But that big rock is at the head of the cañon."

She pointed to a colossal white boulder that hung poised on a ledge on the hillside above the tops of the redwoods in the gulch, bowed, and passed within doors.

The young professor murmured half to himself:

"That was the divinity of the Alvarez family we saw; I thought her merely a myth."

The three men made their way on the horse-trail to the mighty rock that lay like a moon of silver upon the green of the hills. It was of snow-white marble.

"A tor," said Witram, "tossed down by Pico Blanco when playing marbles with the lower hills."

A stream babbled about its base, then fell sheer for twenty feet. The rock was so delicately balanced that it seemed a push would send it roaring down the cañon, bowling over the giant trees.

"If ever it fell," said Lafitte, "it would make an island in the sea."

"It is Nature's monument to Drake," remarked his remote descendant in admiration. "When I discover his landing-place, I'll cut an inscription on this stone."

"Drakie's daft on monuments," said Witram. "I hold this one to be a tombstone for Simeon Alvarez, ghostly squatter on your land, my noble Drake. 'Blest be he who spares these stones.'"

"Just remember, you timber-thieves, the old verse, 'Woodman, spare that tree,'" retorted Drake.

II.

THEY plunged into the somber, savage gulch, hewing a way with hand-axes. The rumbling of the surf rolled up the cañon from the beach; the salt breeze played with the huge ferns. Titanic redwoods leaned at all angles; some were ruddy with life; others, prone and black, like dead giants blasted with fire, sprawled across the stream. The vast trunks were like the pillars, erect or fallen, of some primeval temple of Nature.

The death and decay of endless years reeked from the damp ground; fantastic stones stood covered with robes of moss; and where the frantic stream ran madly down, the white bones of the hills lay disclosed like monstrous pearls in the thick forest gloom. The men felt the awful hush of the ancient presences about them; their intrusion seemed like a sacrilege. It was as if the earth and

the spirit of the dead Alvarez whispered insistently, "Forbear! Forbear!"

They broke at last into the sunlight of the blinding beach and stamped out across the smooth sands.

"We will get our timber here," said Lafitte, "and haul it to our tracts. Drake may build his shack where these trees grow."

"To fell trees that have grown for a thousand years," mused the professor of history—"trees that were centuries old when Drake landed on this shore, or the galleons of Cabrillo went by out there in the sea! It is a crime."

"No trees, no cabin; no cabin, no claim," said Witram succinctly.

That night, as they lay under their rude lean-to of redwood boughs, they listened to the everlasting rush of the surf over the sands and the sobbing of the retreating waters. The trees groaned, sighed, and whispered as if the coming of man meant doom for them. The whole forest trembled and was filled with the might and the majesty of deep, unutterable influences.

"These are the voices of the truly eternal things," said Lafitte in a hushed voice, "and we hope to master them and to own them—the forests, lands, and seas! Well, so we might for a wink of their own existences; then they own us, swallow and digest us, just as they now own Simeon Alvarez."

From the top of the cañon, rolling down in the night along the rock-strewn watercourse, there came a cry, a very shrill cry, broken and interwoven with piteous wails.

It tore the silence and sank and swelled in volume. A gust of wind—it seemed almost the gust of the cry—shook the trees, and they rustled.

"What was that?" asked the three men with one voice, as they sat up suddenly, with eyes shining wide in the firelight.

"Must have been a coyote on the hill," said Witram, "they howl like lost souls."

Then Drake exclaimed quite irrelevantly:

"Wish I knew how Alvarez died?"

In the morning he said he had not slept a wink.

Da Costa, a half-breed Indian whose father was a Portuguese, came with the saws and axes the men had ordered at his ranch.

"How did Alvarez die?" Drake asked the Indian.

"See that big hump o' rock sticking out from the point there, with the sharp rocks in the water right under it? Alvarez shot a sea-otter from there one day—fur o' sea-otters brings about a thousand dollars in New York. The animal wasn't killed at oncet, and dove, and Alvarez got excited and fell down on those rocks.

"As he didn't come home that afternoon, Señora Alvarez sent down her son, Pedro. The boy saw his father lying on the rocks and the tide rising. Couldn't do anything but watch. A wave came and washed Alvarez away. He was a fine man—a big man! The boy cried like a wounded wolf and went crazy. The next day they found the boy playing with the dead sea-otter on the beach. But they never found Alvarez."

The men were silent.

"Pedro's been crazy ever since," resumed Da Costa. "Loved his father very much. Simeon was wild about getting this and—some said—to do smuggling from the beach. He swore this land should never be owned by any one outside his family. But he died before he could make the homestead good. The boy, being weak-minded and not of age, can't take it up. But he's haunted by the idee it's his. Some say the cañon's haunted, too. Claim to hear Alvarez calling from the beach at night."

"Who is the young girl at the house?" inquired Drake.

"Marta, the only daughter of the Alvarez. She's the only one the boy will obey. She understands him. Mother Alvarez keeps her hid from all strangers."

Log by log the three cabins began to rise. Every noon Lafitte and Witram came wandering up the silver-sanded beach—one from the right, the other from the left—to Drake's clearing. Drake, being spared the walk, always cooked the midday meal.

One day he was driving wedges into a section of log wide as a table-top, while the pots bubbled over the fire.

"If only—if only—if only—" sang Lafitte, whose voice was splendid.

"If only what?" asked Drake, with reversed, uplifted ax.

"Sir Francis Drake,
Rover and rake,
Might see his descendant now!"

warbled Lafitte, who was also adroit at improvising rimes.

"His piratical shade would smile his blessing," avowed Witram. "The ghost of Drake has a prior claim over the ghost of Alvarez."

"But Horrie doesn't seem to be so sure now that this was Drake's landing-place," said Lafitte.

The wedge sank deeply home into the groaning fibers of the wood, and the block split suddenly asunder. The grained wood showed red as blood; the sap glistened in the sun.

On the side of the block was a black stain about a protruding point and a circular distortion of the grain of the fibers. Drake brushed his ax across it. Some object fell to the ground. Drake picked it up, rubbed it with sand, scanned it keenly, spat upon it, rubbed it again. Then he rose to his feet, trembling, and looked forth into the measureless distances beyond the sea with wide and vacant eyes.

"What's the matter, Horrie?" cried Lafitte, as he and Witram flew to his side.

Drake extended his hand. There lay upon it a silver coin with a ragged hole through its center. A few words could be deciphered along its edge:

ELIZABETH. REG. DEI GRATIA.

"By the grace of God!" exclaimed Lafitte in an awestruck whisper. "The shilling of the queen!"

"Drake's shilling! Drake's shilling! Think of it!" said his distant descendant in a mechanical voice. Witram stared in speechless veneration.

Drake, while the pots boiled over, began to reconstruct the thick disk he had just split, fitting the pieces together from center to circumference. A headless, rusty nail was still embedded in the wood.

"One, two, three, four, five, six," he began counting, tracing the point of a knife over the top of the block.

"What are you doing, Horrie?" asked Witram after a time.

"Counting the rings!" cried Drake. "Three hundred and twenty-seven, three hundred and twenty-eight, three hundred and twenty-nine—hurrah! Correct to a year—and every ring is a year!

"Deduct three hundred and twenty-nine from the present year and you have 1579, the date of Drake's coming to California! See, here is where they cleared the soft, spongy bark from the young tree and nailed this shilling against the naked wood. You know how the redwood grows. It began to overlap the coin and the nail, year by year, till both were buried in the side of the tree."

All that day Drake worked no more, but walked the air in pride and glory. He showed them what diameter the tree had attained when William the Conqueror invaded England, and its girth when Luther nailed his defiance upon the cathedral doors at Worms.

He drew majestic pictures of his free-booting ancestor plundering the opulent cities of Mexico and Peru, of his tiny war-vessels, storm-tossed and sunk, of the intrepid Golden Hind, the last of Drake's fleet, sailing bravely along the lovely Californian coast with all its weight of treasure and the seaweed and barnacles of unknown seas, his landing at the bay north of San Francisco and on this nameless beach, then his flight across the Pacific with millions of Spanish gold in his hold, "the first man to circumnavigate the globe!"

The men talked late into the night. Drake could not sleep. Again the wild, terrible and despairing cry of the coyote came echoing down the cañon.

III.

At last he could bear it no longer. He leaped into his clothes, seized a lantern and a rifle, flung a great log on the fire, and made his way up the cañon. The old trail had now been cleared. The unearthly cries came from the direction of the marble boulder. He looked backward down the steep descent beside the leaping water and saw the fire burning brightly on below. Near the top of the trail the white boulder gleamed pallidly

through the trees in the moonlight. He extinguished his lantern.

The horrible shrieks were silent for a space, then burst forth in gnashing, almost articulate fury. What animal had ever cried like that? He crept stealthily toward the stone, then stood in ambush behind a tree. A small figure suddenly leaped darkly from behind the mighty monolith. Drake raised the rifle, his eye flew along the bleak, blue steel of the barrel, his finger sought the trigger when these words came shrilly to his ears:

"Las tierras de mi padre! Las tierras! Las tierras!"

He lowered the rifle.

A boy's shape danced like a demon in the moonlight; he saw it beat the pale, spectral boulder with its small hands, crouch on all fours, then utter the appalling sounds that filled the cañon to the sea. The goblin creature turned its great head upward.

Drake saw the vacuous pupils in the distended whites, the black, straggling hair, the open, dog-like mouth of the lunatic son of the Alvarez. He saw the boy brace his shoulder against the house-huge rock, seeking to dislodge it from its bed. Then, running to the rear, the lunatic lad began pushing upon the stone in a frenzy of rage. He was seeking to loosen the stupendous mass and send it down the creek-bed, into the cañon, upon the camp-fire and the sleeping men beside it. Impotent, he whimpered and made wild leaps hither and thither, yelling and shrieking in helpless fury:

"Los gringos! Los gringos! Las tierras de mi padre!"

IV.

THE lands of his father! Drake recalled the strange tale Da Costa told of the elder Alvarez, his tragic death, and the dark obsession of his son. He slipped forth into the moonlight and confronted the boy. Pedro screamed and, with the leap of a deer, dashed down the trail and disappeared.

Drake returned slowly to his sleeping companions. But the voice returned, too, and for hours it wailed and clamored through the cañon. Then, when dim dawn lay gray upon the sea and the moon had sunk in the Pacific, it grew silent.

The next morning Drake walked to the *hacienda*. The stately mother received him with grave courtesy. In the great garden, amid the flowers and the bee-hives, he saw the graceful Marta, shining like a flower or a flame against the green.

"It is strange, but not unexpected, *señor*," said the mother of the Alvarez quietly, after she had listened to Drake's tale. "It will be necessary to lock Pedro up at night. He is very cunning. He must have left the house after we were all asleep and returned before we rose. He has been very quiet and sleepy the last few days. Thank you very much, *señor*. You shall not be disturbed again. *Adios, señor.*"

Drake bowed and left the house. He was conscious that the large and shadowy eyes of Marta were curiously fixed upon him from her covert in the flowers. He went down the garden-path, which was strewn with snow-white pebbles—down the road, down the horse-trail to the head of El Toro Cañon. The gigantic white boulder lay warm in the sunshine. The grass about its base had been trampled and torn by the frantic leaping and dancing of the mad Pedro.

Drake in fancy already saw blazing upon its seaward side, facing and reflecting the setting suns and following the ancient wake of the English corsair across the Pacific, like the glory of his fame, the golden letters he, his living descendant, meant to chisel there.

"Drakie's always been a haunted man—haunted and hell-harried," remarked Lafitte to Witram a few days later regarding their comrade's pensiveness. "Now it's some pedantic idea, now it's his ancestor, now it's a Spanish ghost, now it's a girl's eyes."

"He is rid of the yelling ghost, and he has made his great historical discovery. But since he went to the Alvarez *hacienda* he's been under some new spell."

"A thousand to one it's the girl we saw with the chaplet," said Lafitte. "Yesterday I saw her come galloping along the hill-trail, riding astride, with her hair flying, a young Diana in spite of her madonna face. She was riding like the wind toward the big white rock where Horrie was cutting his inscription to the memory of his piratical forebear.

When the girl came back she was leading the horse, and young Pedro was with her."

Drake appeared between the trees with a chisel and a mallet in his hand.

"Seems that inscription is taking a long time," said Lafitte; "better finish your cabin, Horrie."

"You can't cut marble like cold mush," replied Drake. "The cabin can wait."

Every afternoon Drake climbed the cañon to the rock, to work on the inscription, as he averred. Witram and Lafitte toiled away lustily on their cabins.

"Let us see how Drake's monument is getting on," said Witram one afternoon, as he flung away his low shoes, which had been torn to rags, and tied on a pair of moccasins Da Costa had brought him. So they went up the cañon through the green dusk of the woods.

When they were close to the tiny cataract below the white rock a horse whinnied. They climbed up the slopes beside the water, and the marble mass blazed forth in the sun. Sitting before it, they saw Drake, the dark-eyed daughter of the house of Alvarez, and the idiot boy.

Drake was speaking to the girl in fluent and melodious Spanish. The boy was peering into Drake's eyes with a strange dog-like devotion, and his look seemed to be alight with a new intelligence. Sharply cut into the smooth rock-face above the heads of the group these words stood forth:

ON THE BEACH
AT THE
FOOT OF THIS CAÑON,
THE IMMORTAL HERO AND
ADMIRAL, SIR FRANCIS DRAKE,
LANDED.

Mallet and chisel lay idly at the feet of the great admiral's descendant. In his hand he held a few tiny red roses, such as the two watchers remembered they had seen growing in the garden of the *hacienda*.

"What a picture!" Lafitte whispered to Witram; and together they crept back silently to the beach.

Though Drake, in a strange exaltation, went daily to work upon the monument, the inscription seemed to make no advance beyond the words:

IN THE YEAR

One night Lafitte and Witram announced the completion of their homestead cabins. The next day they returned to San Francisco to obtain a clear title to the land.

Drake, indifferent to all haste, remained behind, "to finish my inscription and my cabin," he said, "in my own time." His university vacation was not yet over.

When Witram and Lafitte were again in San Francisco, it seemed as though utter silence and unfathomable mystery suddenly engulfed the land they had left, and as though Drake had vanished from the world and become part of the dream of that beautiful shadowland. They wrote him barbed letters and made stinging allusions to Hercules and the distaff of Omphale, and to Samson and Delilah. They warned him that unless his cabin was completed within two weeks, his claim would be open to challenge.

Even at that moment two letters were flying northward. One went to the president of the university. It contained Drake's resignation from the faculty. The second went to Lafitte, who read part of it to Witram:

The cabin is finished and notice filed at the land office, cronies mine. But this cabin, mark you, is only the seed of the sea-castle of my dreams. That will be built, too, a castle in Spain, a castle in the air, for I will clear a site near Drake's monument, which is also completed now, a site five hundred feet above your huts, and look haughtily down upon you, like a feudal lord upon his vassals. For, be it known to you that I am now king of all these acres and hills, or rather prince consort of Queen Marta, the daughter of the Alvarez. She and I were married at the old mission at Monterey three days ago. The pebbly path to the *hacienda* has become a path of pearls to me. I will remain here to look after the Alvarez estate, which needs a manager. The ghost of Simeon Alvarez is at peace, for the land I took up is still in the family. And justice is done to the name of the great Drake.

No more for me the asphalt and cement and brick boxes of the city. There is a curse and a crime in every stone. I pity

you—until you come to dwell here in the houses your hands builded. Back, back to nature! This builder of a bungalow builded better than he knew—or you gave him credit for. Out of this land of my ancestor's discovery I've reared a house of life and love, and the fires on its hearth will never go out. Comrades, may you fare as well."

THE WHISPERING MAN.*

BY DANA K. ADAMS.

A SERIAL STORY.

CHAPTER XV.

AT THE END OF THE GAME.

JEFFREY must have done a good deal during his brief absence from my quarters, when I supposed he had gone to telephone, for upon emerging together from the great doorway of the Atlas we found his motor-car drawn up to the curb behind Madeline's brougham.

When we had put the ladies into the latter vehicle, I observed that there were two men in the touring-car. The chauffeur could account for one; but who could the other be? Jeffrey introduced him as Lieutenant Richards, and then climbed, himself, into the driver's seat, motioning the chauffeur to take the one beside him. That meant that the stranger and I were to occupy the tonneau.

I should have liked that seat beside Jeffrey myself, for I was bursting with questions. But it was evident that Jeffrey did not want to answer them yet, for his manner of seating us in the car was obviously the result of forethought; and after conquering a momentary pique I realized clearly that, with grave problems still ahead of him, my friend was right in not wishing to be bothered with those he had already solved.

My companion in the tonneau proved unexpectedly entertaining. He had been a member of the New York detective force for a good many years, and he told me a string of stories, which would have fascinated me had not the particular story we were actually living in, and whose solution still remained to be accomplished, made them sound rather tame. The most interesting thing I learned from him was that he and Jeffrey were old friends. In his newspaper and police-court days my oddly inspired artist friend had been a familiar figure in the "front office," and the police had often put his guesses to good use.

When we were crossing the Williamsburg Bridge, Jeffrey, with a nod of his head, interrupted our conversation, and summoned us to a council of war. First he inquired particularly about the location of the house in Flatbush.

"Now," said he, when he was satisfied that he understood, "this isn't a raid we're making. It's a surprise, and consequently we can't go clugging right up to the door in this car. We'll stop when we're about three or four blocks away, and I'll go ahead on foot. We don't know whether our man is in the house or out of it, so we'll have to find out how the land lies before we can set out about the business."

Then Richards made a suggestion.

"If your friend happens not to be in the house, but on the way there, and comes upon this car with three men in it, waiting at a lonely corner, don't you think he'll be likely to smell something more than gasoline?"

"Right," said Jeffrey. "When we get there I will slow down and drop off at the corner, and then Charles here can drive for ten minutes straight on down the avenue. Then he can turn round and come back. If you don't find me waiting on the corner, drive on for five minutes more, and come back again."

*** This story began in THE SCRAP BOOK—Second Section—for June, 1908.**

He gave his whole attention to the steering-wheel after that, and the lieutenant and I fell silent, too. I think that even this veteran, who had had so many adventures like the one we had now set out upon, felt a little thrill over the prospect that was before us. In my own veins I felt excitement mounting higher and higher with every mile which the flying car devoured between us and out destination.

We carried out our program to the letter. The chauffeur slid into Jeffrey's seat, slowed down, and Jeffrey dropped off at the corner I indicated. Then, for as long a ten minutes as I ever spent, we drove straight away from the scene which was to witness the solution of our mystery.

But we were not forced to repeat the maneuver and waste an interminable five minutes more going in the opposite direction, for on coming back to the corner again we saw Jeffrey nod to us from the shadow.

"Drive off," he said to the chauffeur, as soon as the lieutenant and I had scrambled out; "and keep driving. Don't come near here for an hour. After that I think it will be safe enough for you to wait here for us."

He set a brisk pace up the lonely, ill-lighted street where Gwendolyn and I had walked less than a week before.

"I think it's all right," he said presently, in a tone barely above a whisper. "He went out about five o'clock, and hasn't come back yet. He generally comes in late, the landlady tells me. But I imagine, unless he suspects something, he won't be much longer now."

The thing which seemed now most likely to cause a mishap to our plans was the possibility that "he," whoever he was, might see us walking toward the boarding-house, if not actually entering it.

The sight of us three at that time of night would be likely to suggest a good many disquieting things to a guilty conscience. The thought of this possibility made it hard to keep down to the unhurried, though rapid, pace that Jeffrey was setting.

The front door swung open the moment we set foot on the steps. In this particular, at least, the reconnaissance our scout had made was not in vain. Five seconds later it closed behind us.

Jeffrey directed a swift glance of inquiry toward the stout, shapeless, middle-aged woman whose hand was still on the door-knob. She was not beautiful, with her tear-reddened eyes and her worried expression; particularly not, as our visit had evidently interrupted her preparations for bed—a fact which a hurriedly assumed tea-gown was quite inadequate to hide. But she proved an efficient ally for all that.

She understood Jeffrey's glance without a word.

"No," she said; "not yet."

"We're all right so far, then, I think," my friend whispered. "Is the light still burning in Miss Carr's room, and are the shades drawn down tight?"

"Everything's just as you ordered it."

"In that case, there's nothing more for you to bother about. You'd better go back to bed, and try to get some sleep. It may be hours before anything happens. Pretend to, anyway, even if you think you can't; he mustn't hear or see anything about the house that will strike him as unusual. Come along"—this addressed to us—"he may be turning up at any minute now."

He led the way up to Gwendolyn's room without another word. It was on the third story, and at the back of the house. The stairway which led from the second story to the third was simply a continuation of the back stairs from the first floor to the second. There were two closed doors at the stair-head, but the light which came through the crack under one of them told us which room was Gwendolyn's.

Jeffrey opened the door and motioned us to go in. Richards and I started to obey his signal; and then, at the same moment, stopped, for both of us thought we saw a figure, covered with blankets, there in the bed.

"It's all right," Jeffrey whispered; "there's nothing there but a dummy. Our landlady has done a good job."

He, however, did not follow us into the room, but remained on the landing between the two doors.

I could see that he was puzzled.

"Anything wrong?" I asked.

"I don't think so, but I can't quite

figure this out. The other door, here, simply opens into an attic. His room's at the foot of the stairs on the floor below, and this straight, narrow stairway makes the place a perfect rat-trap."

"Well," said Richards, "if it's a rat-trap, we may as well use it to catch our rat."

"What do you mean?"

"Why, we were planning to grab him when he came in, but this room may not be as dark as we could wish. He may see us, and turn round and bolt. But there's a little niche just past the foot of the stairs that's as dark as a pocket. I can wait down there until he opens his door and starts to come up. Then I can close in on the foot of the stairs here, and we'll have him, sure."

Jeffrey frowned thoughtfully, and ruffled his hair.

"Well, that sounds like sense," he said at last. "You'd better do it."

All of us had our shoes off by this time, and the lieutenant vanished from the room as noiselessly as if he had been a ghost himself. Then Jeffrey took a final survey of the room.

It was too plain and prosaic a little place to be worthy of particular description. A white iron bedstead stood in one corner, with a small table beside it, and a washstand a little farther along, while against the opposite wall stood an ordinary oak bureau between two gas-jets, one of which was lighted.

Jeffrey closed the door, and whispered to me to put out the light.

"Only be careful," he urged, "not to let your shadow fall on the window-shade; that might spoil the whole thing. It's not at all unlikely that at this very moment he's watching that oblong patch of light, and waiting for it to disappear before he comes into the house."

When I had turned out the light, he himself raised the shade and opened the window a little, standing off to the side, however, in order not to risk exposing himself to the view of the keen-eyed watcher who might be waiting somewhere out there in the dark.

When the shade was raised, and the bluish-white rays of the big arc-lamp on the corner cast their patch of light on the floor, the room was not, as Richards had foreseen, as dark as we could wish. The reflection from that spot on the floor diffused a soft light through the small room, in which, though we chose the darkest corners, we could hardly hope to remain invisible. Jeffrey, however, soon thought of an expedient to remedy this difficulty. There was a square of dark-colored carpet beside the bed, and this he dragged out over the patch of light upon the floor. The rays were now absorbed instead of reflected, and the room darkened appreciably.

Each of us took one of the small, straight chairs with which the room was furnished, and sat down there in the dark to wait.

In confirmation of my friend's theory, that a pair of watchful eyes had been turned on that translucent window-shade, waiting for the light behind to disappear, it was not more than five minutes after the gas had been turned out that we heard the click of a latch-key in the street-door.

The newcomer let himself in, closed the door behind him, walked up the front stairs and down the hall to his room, at the foot of the second stairway. He did it all quietly, but not in the least stealthily—did it, in short, so exactly in the manner of an ordinary boarder coming home late, that I felt a momentary incredulity as to his being the man we were waiting for. Well, so far he was only doing a perfectly plain, law-abiding act; he had no need of silence.

I heard a whisper from Jeffrey, so low that it barely reached my ears: "All's right so far. He's got past Richards, in the lower hall."

I dared not risk an answer. The thing we were waiting for—whatever the exact form it might happen to take—could be expected to materialize now at any moment.

It was not until we looked at our watches afterward that I had any idea how long, in hours and minutes, that wait lasted. It seemed perfectly interminable—not only as if it never would end, but as if, somehow, it had never begun. If only that had been moonlight on the floor instead of the rays from the fixed lamp on the corner, its moving shadow would have given us some clue. As it was, the swift procession of my thoughts was all that served to mark

time. Perhaps I should have said rout rather than procession, for no effort of will that I could make in those strange circumstances would serve to bring my ideas under orderly discipline.

I may confess that as the time stretched out, longer and longer, I began to experience a perfectly irrational impulse of panic, the feeling that I must do something, even if it was only to shout aloud, to break that uncanny spell of silence and of mystery.

I had expected, and I think Jeffrey shared the belief with me, that some faint sound would give us warning in advance of the arrival of the man we were waiting for, something that would give us time to get to our feet and poise our bodies for a spring upon the intruder who was to appear.

A warning came, indeed, but not until it was too late to hazard the slightest movement. And it was not a sound at all—it was just a puff of cool air upon our faces. The door must have opened, but it had opened soundlessly.

I strained my eyes toward it, but saw nothing, nothing at all, unless that shapeless area of blacker darkness than the rest of the room could be called something to see.

My eyes were riveted on the place where I knew the door was, and I was still waiting to see some one come in through it—some person of flesh and blood—moving stealthily, no doubt, but in a human way, and with some faintly discernible sound.

And then, I don't know why, I looked at the patch of light in the middle of the room.

It was not self-control that kept me from screaming at the sight I saw there! It was simply the total paralysis of nightmare. I could not have uttered a cry to save my life. I could not even gasp, and I am sure that for a long second my heart literally stood still!

There, with the full white light from the street-lamp outside shining upon it, was the face—nothing but the face—of the man who had been murdered two weeks before in an up-town office-building in New York—of a man with whom I had often talked! But I had never seen it look like that, for now it was the dead, contorted face of a man who had been murdered. Above the short dark beard it was a livid white. The eyeballs protruded, sightless and expressionless, reflecting dully the light that shone upon them. The jaw hung perfectly slack, and the tongue was lolling out of the open mouth!

For a while—ten seconds, I suppose—it remained perfectly lifeless, perfectly motionless. During that time I could no more have commanded a voluntary motion of my body than if I had been carved in marble.

And then, very slowly, over that ghastly face came an indescribable change. Very, very gradually I saw it come back to life; saw the eyes light up with the activity of a living brain behind them; saw the lips draw into a sinister sort of grin which, though cruel and formidable, was human. What I was looking at was no longer a dead mask of unspeakable horror, but the face of a living man.

The eyes narrowed suddenly, and began shifting swiftly, furtively, around the room. The face, which was all that had been visible at any time, made a sudden move toward the bed—and vanished!

I caught a fleeting glimpse of that same irregular shape of deeper blackness than the shadows about the doorway.

I heard Jeffrey, with an oath, spring to his feet, and then I heard a door slam. In less than a second Jeffrey had pulled an electric-torch from his pocket, and its faint light made us visible to each other, but we were alone in the room.

His face was white and covered with sweat, and his hands were shaking so that he could hardly hold the torch. For myself, I was conscious of feeling the way he looked.

I was the first to reach the door, and flung it open.

"Richards!" I shouted. "Look out, below!"

I don't think it could have been more than three or four seconds between the vanishing of that face and the ring of my shout down the stairway.

We half ran, half fell down the stairs, only to find ourselves facing the glare of the lieutenant's bull's-eye, while our own torch revealed nothing but a look of utter bewilderment in his face.

"What are you doing here?" Jeffrey cried. "Have you let him get away?"

Richards's face looked, if possible, more astonished than ever.

"But he hasn't come out of his room at all," he answered.

"What do you mean?"

"Just that. I've never had my eyes off his door since he went inside. He locked it after him, and then his light went out. I tell you, that door hasn't opened since he shut and locked it behind himself."

Thought is, of course, infinitely quicker than the possibility of expressing it. For an instant I half believed that I had really slept—that the vision and the paralysis of nightmare which accompanied it had, indeed, been a dream; and that some passing gust of the night air had opened that silent door and then slammed it shut again.

Jeffrey's mind had been working as fast, but in another and more profitable direction.

"I was a fool," he whispered. "I might have known he wouldn't use the stairs. Break down the door!"

The lieutenant looked dubious for a moment, but Jeffrey's manner convinced him. Bracing himself against the wall, at the opposite side of the passage, he drove his heel, with shattering force, against the door. The blow was well placed, right over the lock, and there was no need of a second. The door swung slowly open, and we rushed in.

There was a faint light in the room from a single gas-jet, turned low. Standing before the bureau, with his back to us, was a man clad in a long-hooded robe, or domino, of black silk. I remember now, though I scarcely noticed it at the time, that he was in the act of setting an empty glass upon the marble top of the bureau.

"Stand where you are!" cried the lieutenant. "Don't move, on your life!"

But his words might have fallen on deaf ears, for all the effect they had. The man picked up a towel from the bureau-top, buried his face in it, wiped himself, in fact, as if he had just been washing.

When the operation was completed he turned for the first time, and looked up at us.

"I shall make no resistance," he said quietly. "You needn't worry."

He had spoken, but no voice had come with the words—only a whisper. The face that I stood looking into was the face of Carlton Stancliffe!

"Lieutenant," said Jeffrey, with a thrill of triumph in his voice, "permit me to make you acquainted with James Hyde, M.D., formerly of New York, latterly of Australia, and, last of all, of the stage. He merits your close attention and your watchful care, for he is the murderer of his former friend and colleague, Dr. Roscoe Marshall!"

The lieutenant was most businesslike. He pulled out of his pocket a pair of handcuffs.

"I know you said you didn't intend to resist," he observed; "but I'll feel better leaving you with these on your wrists while I go to telephone for a patrol-wagon."

Meanwhile Jeffrey, with a touch on my arm, drew my attention to the ceiling of the room. There was an opening up into the attic above.

"That's his route, you will observe," he said. "Evidently when the house was built the attics weren't finished off, and this was the only way of getting into them.

"It provided him with exactly the thing he needed. I noticed that he had oiled the hinges of the door leading into Miss Carr's room. If I had examined those on the other door, up at the head of the stairs, I shouldn't have made the mistake of supposing that he used the stairs at all. It's only an easy spring, you see, from the table up through the trap, and he could be still more expeditious about coming back. By the time the girl's screams had aroused the house, he'd be back in his own room, ready, if he chose, to unlock his door ostentatiously and inquire what the matter was.

"There's one thing we mustn't forget," he added; "and I think I'll go up-stairs for it now. That's the last one of that packet of powders, the one she would have taken to-night; and which would have sent her off, if she had taken it, into the sleep from which there is no wakening."

The lieutenant was about to leave the room, in search of the telephone.

"I can spare you gentlemen both those errands," said Mr. Stancliffe, in his

whisper. "You will not be able to find that powder up-stairs, for the simple reason that I have just taken it myself. And, for that same reason, it will be unnecessary to telephone for a patrol-wagon. The coroner is the man you want to talk to. I shall be dead in ten minutes!"

"The doctor, quick!" cried Jeffrey.

The lieutenant left the room with a rush, met the landlady in the hall, and got the telephone number of the nearest local practitioner almost before he had time to ask for it. She was an efficient woman, that landlady.

Mr. Stancliffe sat down comfortably enough on the edge of his bed, stretched his manacled arms up above his head to their utmost reach. Then he relaxed, and lay down quietly, as if composing himself for sleep.

"It's absolutely no use calling up a doctor," he said. "I shall be beyond his reach before he gets here."

Then he turned to us and smiled the faintly contemptuous smile of a man who lays down his cards at the end of an unprofitable game.

"I will confess," he said, "I didn't expect my riddle to be solved. I thought the world had grown too stupid. On the whole, I am not sorry to know that there will be a little leaven of intelligence left here when I am gone. I don't know which one of you two young men possess it. I am sorry I cannot hope to wait to clear up any little points about my mystery with regard to which you may still be in doubt."

His whisper had been growing fainter and fainter. Now it was barely audible at all.

"Already—I find—I—am—going. Good evening—gentlemen!"

CHAPTER XVI.

FOUR O'CLOCK.

JEFFREY emptied his glass and took a long pull at my pipe—the pipe he had set about cleaning so few hours before, and which had so unexpectedly provided him with the clue to our mystery. I had already made him a present of it.

"Well," said he, "it's four o'clock in the morning. "Do you want to go to bed like an only moderately disreputable citizen, or shall we make a night of it, thrashing out the whole tale?"

"You know what I want, well enough," said I. "When you took the driver's seat in the automobile coming home, and brought me all the way up here without a word of explanation, I began to wonder whether you ever meant to talk or not; whether you weren't going to leave me to wallow in my ignorance and stupidity to my dying day."

"I had to get my story in order before I could tell it to you," said he. "I knew there would be no use sending up my kite for you until I had tied a tail of reasonable inferences on behind it."

Really, I believe he had postponed his story until now for the purpose of providing us with a reasonable excuse for not going to bed when we did get home.

The events of the night had told rather heavily upon both of us. What had been specially hard was the last hour of our stay in that ghastly little room with the body of the murderer, dead by his own hand. We had seen the unsuccessful attempts of the doctors to revive him, and the search of the police among his effects.

This search, by the way, had produced three articles of capital importance to the completion of our case. One was the hypodermic syringe with the broken needle, whose strong, acrid smell of nicotine told the story plainly enough. It had undoubtedly been a part of the murderer's plan to secrete this damning bit of evidence somewhere among Gwendolyn's belongings after her death.

Of the other two finds of importance, one was Dr. Marshall's own case-book, which had disappeared the morning of the murder; and the other, a remarkable diary in the handwriting of Stancliffe himself, which was afterward found to contain a practically complete account of the murder, and of the attempt upon the life of Gwendolyn Carr. Neither of us at this time knew anything of the contents of these two documents. But they contained practically nothing, hardly a single detail which was not anticipated by Jeffrey in the story he told me this morning.

"You remember," Jeffrey began, "the evening we dined together, and you

found Jack Marshall waiting for you when we came back here? I left you immediately, for I don't know him well, and felt sure he wouldn't want to speak to me. The desk-clerk stopped me before I could get into the elevator, and told me there was a gentleman waiting in the reception-room to see me. It was Carlton Stancliffe, and I took him straight up to my quarters.

"I had never seen him before—not off the stage, that is—for the arrangement for the series of sketches and articles we were to do together had been completed through the magazine. It was a business call, and I was expecting it. I no more imagined a connection between him and Dr. Marshall than between him and the Shah of Persia. But he had a newspaper with him, and began to talk about the doctor; told me how he had been to his office that morning; told me, what was not in the paper, that it was supposed to be a case of murder. He also added that he was to go up to the office that evening to attempt to identify Pomeroy.

"Well, you may believe me or not, but it's true just the same, that before he got half way through talking about the case, I knew he was the murderer just as well as I know it now. I can't tell you how I knew; I just saw the facts sticking out all over him, and, I tell you, it gave me a mighty queer feeling. After he had gone I did my best to throw off the impression. I told myself that it was a judgment on me for the mad things I had been saying to you at dinner. But, for all that, it kept growing stronger and stronger, and finally I went out and followed you up to the Marshall house.

"I didn't reach there until after you and Jack had left, but Mrs. Marshall saw me. She is a remarkable woman. I hadn't intended saying a word to her, but, before I knew it, she had my whole belief out of me. Of course she was incredulous. She knew nothing whatever about Mr. Stancliffe that would furnish any sort of conceivable motive for such a crime. Before we got through talking, however, the firmness of my conviction had had an effect upon her. On the other hand, her incredulity, together with her disclaimer of any personal acquaintance with Stancliffe, either on her part or the doctor's, had an effect upon me. I saw how utterly foolish anything I might say must sound, especially to you, after the talk we had had that very evening.

"But that perception didn't in the least affect my certainty that I was right, after all, so I decided on a course of action. I would say nothing more to any one of this idea of mine—I pledged Mrs. Marshall to secrecy—but I would go to work, all by myself, to find out what motive Stancliffe could possibly have had for the murder, and how he could possibly have committed it.

"I got my first hint from you yourself, when you came home late that night with the full account of your evening's adventures. You spoke, then, of the man Hyde, whom Dr. Marshall had ruined long ago, and my mind jumped at once at a possible identity between him and Mr. Stancliffe."

"Well," said I, "I wish you had been in my shoes from the first. We should have got to the end of our mystery a good deal quicker. I had a hint at that identity myself, but never perceived it; for when I was talking to Stancliffe about Hyde, and how Madeline regarded him, he started, and knocked a siphon off the table. And two or three times when we were together he made the slip of talking like a doctor about hypnotism and other things. Then, too, the cool, scientific way he set about reviving Miss Carr, when she fainted up in Dr. Marshall's office, might have suggested a previous medical experience, except that I appear to have been impervious to suggestion right along."

"It was all natural enough," said Jeffrey. "An actor is the most inconspicuous person in a community, just by reason of his semipublic character. You never think of asking questions about him, of wondering what his real name is, or where he lived ten years ago, or what sort of life he is living now. He's the one sort of person in society who never has to account for himself. You think because you've seen him half a dozen times on the stage that you know all about him.

"But, you see, I approached the case backward. I knew, *knew*—for I can't express that certainty strongly enough—that he was the actual murderer. With

that knowledge I ought to be able to build up a column of evidence that would support it. I fully expected that the evidence brought out at the inquest would prove to be valuable to me, and there I was sadly disappointed."

"It was made pretty clear," I observed, "that a doctor must have done it. That should have strengthened your conviction that Hyde and Stancliffe were the same man."

"Yes, that was well enough so far as it went, but it wasn't what I hoped for. I came away from that inquest in an execrable temper, still at a loss to know how Stancliffe could have done it. I made the same mistake that everybody else did, namely, of assuming that because a whole series of patients—four, I think—were summoned in the regular way into the office, had their interviews and went away satisfied, that Dr. Marshall himself must have been the person who talked to them—must have been alive and well after Stancliffe had gone out. I hoped to find a way in which he could have gone back from the corridor at some subsequent time before twelve-thirty, and I wasn't able to find it.

"Just before you came in that evening I had received a note from Mrs. Marshall, which you chanced upon a little later, and which I fancy had the effect of directing your suspicions against both of us."

I had been waiting for him to come to that, and was feeling rather silly in anticipation of it.

"She wrote to me," Jeffrey went on, "solely out of regard for your feelings. She pointed out to me that it must necessarily be distressing to you to become aware that there was a confidential relation between herself and me in the case, from which you were excluded; and she suggested that, unless I wanted to take you as completely into my confidence as I had herself, I should not let you know that any such confidence existed. I meant, when you came in that night, to tell you the whole story, but you were off on another tack altogether, even hinting suspicion against Mrs. Marshall herself; so I closed up. I owe you an apology for that."

"I certainly owe you one," said I; "so, if you don't mind, we'll let them cancel each other. But go on with your story; I want the rest of it."

"Well," said he, "I had no trouble in identifying Stancliffe as James Hyde, beyond possible doubt. He posed for me the morning after the inquest, and I drew a sketch of him just as he was then. After he had gone I went over it and made it about fifteen years younger. Just on the chance, I drew in the sort of mustache that everybody wore in those days, and took the thing up to Mrs. Marshall. It only needed one look at her face, when she saw it, to settle all question of the identity.

"She told me then enough about him, and about the trouble he had got into, to enable me to start an investigation of my own. She was only a girl of fifteen when it happened, and her version of the story couldn't be expected to be very complete. Hyde wasn't at all the wronged innocent that she thought him.

"He was a very brilliant man, and a very fascinating one—that you will find it easy to believe—but he was almost utterly devoid of moral scruples. The thing that caused Dr. Marshall to drive him out of his profession, and out of the city, was practically blackmail. He had used knowledge that came to him professionally to terrorize a woman. All the money she paid him—which was nearly all she had—was for alleged medical services, but it was blackmail just the same.

"The best thing about the man was, perhaps, his inability to see that there was anything wrong in what he had done. He simply hadn't any morals; that was all.

"I succeeded in tracing him as far as Australia, and then I managed to trace Carlton Stancliffe back from the same place. It was there that he drifted on to the stage, and acting was probably the profession that he should have followed from the first. There are very few men who go on the stage as late in life as he did who rise so quickly to eminence."

"Well," said I, a little bit resentfully, "when you knew all that, you certainly had something to tell me—any amount of fact and inference to justify your suspicion—and yet you let me go blindly on, confiding in him, employing him even in the detection of the criminal."

Jeffrey laughed.

"I was rather taken aback when I found that you had done that," he admitted; "but, on second thought, I decided that it was the best thing that could have happened. The man would never be so completely off his guard, so completely unsuspicious that he himself was suspected, as when he was serving you in the rôle of detective. And keeping you in the dark as to what he really was, simply made it possible for you to act naturally the part that you would have been compelled to play had you known the truth.

"During all those days when he kept you entertained with the evidence he was piling up against Miss Carr, I was racking my brains—and pretty nearly wrecking them—in an attempt to work out a sane and plausible theory of the murder. I never got it until you made that remark about the tobacco."

"That's what I've been waiting for all the evening," I cried. "How in the world did my remark about the smell of tobacco give you the clue?"

He stared at me, evidently incredulous that I could be so stupid. "Why," he said, "that's really in your department. It's simply a case of fact and inference. You said that Gwendolyn Carr had remarked that the smell of tobacco in Marshall's office, more than the sight of the room itself, was what brought the terrible scene back to her. Well, of course, the odor wasn't that of tobacco, or was, rather, in a highly concentrated form. It was the smell of pure nicotine, the poison which the murderer used. It must be a very characteristic odor. Didn't you see Dr. Armstrong smell of that broken hypodermic needle when the coroner handed it to him at the inquest? That's the only means he had of identifying the poison.

"Obviously, then, if Gwendolyn Carr noticed that odor when she went in for her consultation with the doctor, it must follow that the murder had already been committed. And the man she talked to must have been somebody impersonating him. He could, of course, be no one else but the murderer. Naturally, with that fact to start on, it's easy to construct the whole story of the crime."

"Not for me," I protested. "Reconstruction doesn't seem to be my forte. I shall have to ask you to fill in the blanks for me."

CHAPTER XVII.

JEFFREY'S GOOD GUESS.

JEFFREY filled his pipe afresh, and settled back easily in his chair.

"Why, in the first place," said he, "Carlton Stancliffe was a real actor, and he had a real trouble with his throat. Evidently he went to Dr. Marshall as a bona-fide patient, upon the recommendation of some other physician. Of course, he knew who Dr. Marshall was. But, perhaps, the old enmity had died away; perhaps he was merely curious to see the elder man again. He couldn't have been sure, of course, whether or not Dr. Marshall would recognize him; but, then, he probably didn't care much. His own success had been great enough to make him indifferent to the doctor's opinion of him, and as for any real shame or regret for the thing he had done, he simply never had any.

"Dr. Marshall must have failed completely to recognize him. I think he must have told Hyde that his complaint was incurable, or, at least, have so clearly described it that a man who was himself a physician of no mean attainment could recognize the fact.

"Do you remember my telling you of Dr. Marshall's experience with a man who was doomed to go mad, and didn't know it? I am practically certain that Hyde, or Stancliffe, was that man.

"Now, just imagine Hyde's feelings, sitting there in the office of his old enemy, and learning that the disease he had thought lightly of was really incurable. Remember, that it spelled absolute disaster to him in his new profession. He must have heard that verdict with despair. And not only despair, but something else, for the man who sat there behind the desk, sentencing him so coolly to what might about as well have been death, was the very man who had caused his former downfall. But for Marshall's meddling in what was no affair of his, Hyde might be sitting there at the other side of the desk—rich, famous, secure.

"Possibly Mrs. Marshall may have been an unconscious factor in the situation. It's altogether likely that he had had her pointed out to him. He was a distant cousin of hers, remember, and very naturally, in that hour of despair, he counted her as rightly his, as one of the things that the cool, confident, successful man across the desk had deprived him of.

"I think the idea of his ability to fill the doctor's chair, and his place in society, his sort of potential right to possess all that the doctor possessed—I think it must have been with that idea that the notion of the crime came to him. And once it had come, it must have fascinated him. The thing was so perfect, so safe and, to his mind, never well balanced morally, so perfect a piece of retributive justice, that to think of it at all was to follow it, as a matter of course, by preparations for putting it into execution."

"I am surprised that you should call it safe," I objected. "The idea of waiting there in the office for an hour or more, with the murdered body of his victim tucked away somewhere, while he was admitting patients and talking to them in the character of the man whose life he had just taken, seems to me rash to the verge of madness. Either Dr. Armstrong or Miss Jerome could have come in at any time, and they would have detected him at a glance."

"But they wouldn't come in unless he summoned them; that's the point," said Jeffrey. "There's nobody whose privacy is so sacredly guarded as that of a physician in consultation with his patients. No, the only possible danger would come from some old patient of the doctor's who knew him well. That danger, however, he obviated by waiting his chance. The beauty of the crime he was planning lay in this, that he need not make any move until a favorable chance presented itself. He may have gone to the office three or four times, fully prepared to commit the crime he had set his heart upon, and only deferring it because he found that all the circumstances were not exactly to his liking.

"There is one thing I hadn't thought of, though," he added, with a puzzled look. "How about his voice? How could he be sure that wouldn't go back on him? I should think that consideration might have upset the whole plan. Evidently it didn't go back on him; certainly not—at least, when he was talking to Miss Carr. But how could he be sure it wouldn't?"

"Well," said I, "he told me that his trouble was purely nervous, and that his voice never failed when he was talking in another character than his own. He said that if he could only have made the managers believe it, he could have played his parts just as well as ever. That is the theory he diverted me with the night he smashed the siphon."

"Well, on that fateful morning," Jeffrey pursued, "everything went beyond his hopes. He not only had behind him a succession of patients, who he was able to ascertain were strangers to Dr. Marshall, but he also had Pomeroy; and, unless I am mistaken, he recognized the fellow."

"No doubt," said I. "He practically admitted as much to me."

Jeffrey looked at me with a rather rueful smile.

"I *do* begin to regret your opportunities," he said.

"At any rate," he continued, "Stancliffe went into Dr. Marshall's office that morning fully fortified against mischance, and fully prepared for what he had to do. He knew exactly, as a result of previous visits, what the doctor's routine of examination was. He had studied out the exact moment when his chance would be best—while he was lying back submitting to examination, and Dr. Marshall was bending over him. He had everything in his favor—a clever surgeon's skill and quickness, and a total absence of suspicion on the part of his victim.

"You know, from the testimony at the inquest, how that poison acts, and can imagine what happened as well as I can. Dr. Marshall went down without a cry. The murderer sealed up, with a piece of court-plaster the wound his needle had made. Then he proceeded, quite deliberately, to make up for the part he was about to play. Remember, he had all the time he wanted. He had no fear whatever of interruption.

"When everything was finally ready

he settled himself in the doctor's chair and rang for the next patient. He knew he was secure from detection.

"The next three patients who came in may not have received as valuable advice from him as they would have had from Dr. Marshall, but, at any rate, the impostor was a good enough physician himself to give them instructions which they would never call in question.

"When he rang the bell the fourth time he undoubtedly expected to see Pomeroy, and must have been a little taken aback when Gwendolyn Carr came in instead. He had made the mistake of not seeing that the recognition between himself and Pomeroy was mutual.

"But, of course, the moment Miss Carr told him who she was—namely, the young woman his son was anxious to marry—from that moment on things were easy for him. All he had to do was to quarrel with her violently, to make sure that she should leave the office in a state of the utmost anger against himself.

"Once he had dismissed her the thing was all but accomplished. He had to remove his own make-up and conceal the traces of it; to drag the body of the doctor out of its hiding-place and prop it up in the chair. Then he could watch his chance to slip out into the corridor without attracting attention, and get away.

"I am sure that when he did so he must have felt absolutely secure against suspicion. He was under no necessity to manufacture evidence, for he had what would protect him better—the irresistible presumption that Dr. Marshall was alive when the bell rang that summoned Gwendolyn Carr into his office.

"It was nothing more than a presumption, of course, for there wasn't a scrap of evidence to support it. The patients who followed Stancliffe were all admitted strangers. Armstrong testified that he had not been in the doctor's office since early in the morning. There was really some evidence against the presumption. Miss Carr told you that Jack had found it impossible to believe his father would have said the things to her that she reported. Yet so strongly were all our minds set in the other direction, that the only thing that occurred to us was to doubt the girl's veracity—never to dream for an instant that the person who said the things she reported might not have been Jack's father, but somebody else.

"Of course, the girl's knowledge of her own innocence was a protection to Stancliffe, for he could rely upon her to tell the truth under questioning, in spite of the strength of the case she would create against herself by so doing.

"But right there came in one little incident which he could not have foreseen—her testimony as to the hour at which she left the office. Her seeing the clock in the mirror, and reading it backward, left vacant an interval of forty minutes, and made possible the case against Armstrong. Of course, it was to Stancliffe's interest that a sustained case should be made against somebody, and it was possible to make a better case against Miss Carr, when all the truth was known, than against Armstrong. Also, he could additionally safeguard himself by getting the credit of successful detective work.

"It must have been a queer game to play—pretending to make a series of brilliant discoveries of things he had known all along, but apparently he played it well. Neither you nor Miss Carr suspected him, at least, that night in the office when he sprang his *coup* about the clock."

"Suspected him? I should think not!" I exclaimed. "Gwendolyn thanked him for having thought of the explanation, and for clearing the matter up. Of course, they had been the one insoluble mystery between her and Jack."

"What did Stancliffe look like when she thanked him that night?" Jeffrey asked curiously.

"I remember now," said I, "I didn't see his face. He was staring out the window all the while, leaning back on his stick, his hands clasped behind him."

"Now, why in the world," said Jeffrey, "didn't she identify his hands then? She is the most observing young woman I ever saw."

"He wore gloves," said I.

"In spite of the fact that it was a hot night?"

"Yes," I admitted reluctantly. "There's another of the queer things I might have noticed."

"I understand," Jeffrey continued, "that you put it up to Stancliffe to decide whether or not she should be allowed to go home, and remain quite free from surveillance."

"Yes," said I.

Jeffrey shrugged his shoulders, and shivered a little.

"I'm glad he's dead," said he. "He was a fiend, if ever one walked the earth, and I shall sleep better to-night for knowing that he has gone to his reward."

"How did it all come to you—this account that you've been giving me?" I asked. "Did it spring into your mind complete the moment I made that remark about the tobacco, or did it just grow up gradually, one detail at a time?"

"Why, I saw the main idea at once, of course, but I didn't know how to fill it up. The horrible danger that I knew Gwendolyn Carr must be in at that very moment didn't leave much leisure for contemplating Stancliffe's past villainies. He was even then in process of carrying out his most diabolical scheme, and we had to be quick if we could hope to thwart him."

"I was hoping you would come to that," said I. "What made you think Gwendolyn's life was in danger?"

"Why, she made that remark about the smell of tobacco to Stancliffe as well as to you, didn't she? Well, that told him she had in her hands the clue that would destroy him, although she herself didn't recognize it. It was only a question of time before she would make that same remark to some one who would catch its import, and so long as she was alive, and in possession of that knowledge, his life couldn't be safe. Wasn't it after she made the remark about the tobacco that he told her she could go home alone?"

"Yes," said I.

"And she announced, didn't she, that she was going in the surface cars? Well, of course that assured him of his opportunity to get out to Flatbush ahead of her. It was he, as I suppose you have guessed, who passed you on the sidewalk out there. Had you not been with her, he would, very likely, have killed her then and there on her own doorstep, in some way that would have made it look like a case of suicide. Being foiled in that scheme, he simply thought of a better one—slower, but surer."

"It seems to me," said I, "he ran a good deal of risk in taking a room there in her boarding-house."

"I don't know," said Jeffrey. "His only risk was an encounter with her, which really must have been rather easy to avoid. And then, if she had seen him, she would have thought of nothing more than that he was playing the spy upon her."

"I still don't see exactly what he meant to do—what he could hope to do—unless he could literally scare her to death or out of her wits."

"The only wonder to me," said Jeffrey gravely, "is that she wasn't found dead the second morning after you left her out there. Stancliffe knew, didn't he, that she had been taking something to make herself sleep?"

"Yes; she mentioned it to both of us."

"Well, what I suppose he did was this, and I shall be greatly surprised if I am proved wrong: He got into her room during her absence, and substituted for that packet of powders a number of perfectly neutral ones that could have no effect upon her whatever, and one at the bottom of the package which contained the concentrated dose that should have been distributed through all of them.

"The natural thing for a person to do in her state of mind—half mad with terror, and altogether in despair—would be to seek sleep at any cost—take one powder after another, until she could get some effect. She would get no effect until she took the last one, and that would kill her! And when they found her in the morning, a half-dozen empty papers would be taken for sufficient proof that she had committed suicide.

"Then, when the suspicion which pointed against her in the Marshall case came out, as it inevitably would, Stancliffe would have a second irresistible presumption to fortify his first one. It was the most utterly fiendish scheme I ever heard of, and it was only thwarted by the incredible courage and sanity of that young girl."

We sat and smoked a while in silence after that. Then I picked up the conversation where Jeffrey had dropped it.

"Yes, she's the true metal—no doubt about it. What a veritable refiner's fire she has come through! She can't have known an untormented hour since she left her lover that morning, full of high hopes for the innocent ruse they meant to work on his father. Think what an accumulation of horror has been piled upon her since then. Shaken, as she must have been, by Stancliffe's attack upon her, and by her quarrel with Jack, tired out with the strain of the inquest; to have that white-faced, wild-eyed young lover of hers as much as accuse her of his father's murder; then to have that accusation backed up by facts that seemed to justify it! The only support she had was the consciousness of her innocence."

"Do you call that a support?" said Jeffrey. "I think it would have been easier for her if she had been guilty, for then she could have confessed and taken the consequences, and got the thing off her mind. It must have taken a good deal of courage not to confess, anyway—not to have made a lying admission that she had committed the crime. That happens sometimes, you know; happens, I believe, oftener than we suppose. But she isn't the sort of person to do a thing like that. She wouldn't make a lying confession, and she wouldn't destroy herself. She just sat tight and saw it through. I hope the man she marries will be good enough for her."

"He's in love with her, anyway," I said. "He's a good, clean sort of chap. I think they'll be very happy."

Jeffrey assented rather grudgingly.

"Well, he's got a heavy score against himself. He's the one man who ought to have seen straight through the presumption that protected Stancliffe. When she told him things that he knew his father couldn't have said, he ought to have reached then and there the true conclusion, that the person who said them was some one else than his father. And when she said twenty minutes before twelve, instead of twenty minutes past, he should have assumed that the clock was wrong."

"Well," I protested, "that's easy to say afterward, but there certainly was evidence enough."

Jeffrey caught the word out of my mouth.

"*Evidence?* There was evidence against every single innocent person in this case—Pomeroy, Armstrong, Gwendolyn Carr. The only person against whom there wasn't any was the guilty man himself. No, evidence doesn't amount to much until it's tied on behind the right guess."

Then he laughed and stretched his arms.

"Well," he said, "that takes us back to the point we started from—the very matter we were discussing before we read the paper with the account of Dr. Marshall's death in it. And as for me, I'm not going around the circle again. I've been around once, and that's enough for me. Stancliffe's dead, and I've fixed it up with the lieutenant to get Armstrong out. He's got all the facts.

"I am going to sleep for three hours, and then I'm going to take a color-box and go up to Bronx Park and paint, and the reporter or any other person who thinks he's going to get another word out of me about the Marshall mystery is seriously mistaken."

"But," I protested, "you'll have to tell it once more, to Madeline and Miss Carr and Jack. You promised them a report at breakfast time, you remember. It's nearly that now."

"And do you think I've gone all over this once for you with the intention of serving it up again, *réchauffé,* at the breakfast-table? No. From now on any one who wants to know anything about Dr. Marshall and the 'Whispering Man' will be gently but firmly referred to you."

I may add that my friend has remained perfectly inflexible in this resolution. As a consequence, I have been kept busy telling the story over and over again, until now, in self-defense, I have sat down and written it out. Hereafter, any one who wants to know about the story will be referred by me, in turn, to these pages, upon the last of which, or nearly the last, I am now writing.

There is, indeed, but little more to say. At the earliest decent and reasonable hour I went up to the Marshall house, where I found Madeline superintending, as if they were babes in the wood, the breakfast of her convalescent stepson and his fiancée.

In answering the first of the eager questions they showered upon me, I am afraid I ruined my tale by beginning it wrong end to. But once their first curiosity was satisfied they demanded the whole story from beginning to end, and, upon my assent, we adjourned to the library, the room where Madeline was first introduced into this tale.

The hour was still early, and the spring morning not very warm, so the fire which glowed on the hearth had a good practical justification for itself. I should have held it justified had the room been stifling hot without it, just for the way it caressed Madeline's face.

The two young lovers occupied the sofa at the farther side of the library; Jack, in consideration of the early stages of his convalescence, half reclining upon a heap of pillows, while Gwendolyn sat near—oh, very near, and—well, that needn't go into this story.

The face I watched was Madeline's, as she watched them. I could hardly tell my story for looking at it—half eager, half regretful, yet wholly tender, and all alight with a new understanding.

Jack took an even more severe view of his credulity regarding Gwendolyn's guilt than Jeffrey had. Evidently it would be a long while before he forgave himself for not having seen the thing that seemed so obvious to all of us.

My recital was a heavy strain upon him, as indeed upon Gwendolyn herself. So, presently, I cut it short, promising the rest at some later day.

I took my leave, and left them in the library, but Madeline followed me down the stairs.

"Aren't they delicious?" she said to me, referring to the couple we had left behind. "Didn't it almost make the tears come just to watch them? I hope they'll be charitable, and let me watch a good deal, for that's all I've got left. Well, it's something to have the real thing at last, even if it's second-hand. I've learned a good deal in two weeks."

"Madeline—" said I.

But what I said to her, and what she said to me, then and afterward—what she said when, leaning over the back of my chair, she saw what I was writing on this page—is no concern, positively none, of any living creature in the world but our two selves.

(The End.)

A CITY DAWN.

FROM out the south a wavering breeze comes creeping,
To cool the molten silver of the east,
Whose radiance dims the brooding stars in heaven,
And warns the watchman that the night has ceased.

Tall spires of smoke arise, like incense burning
Within a censer swung in Mammon's name.
And clattering carts awake the sleeping echoes,
While eastern windows flare with sudden flame.

The blowsy maids, all heavy-eyed and yawning,
Appear with brimming pail and laggard broom,
And sniff the fresh breeze—grumbling to the newsboy
That they of all the world must rise so soon.

The surly whistles call the wan-faced toilers
While yet the morning haze obscures the sky.
A church-bell rings its deep-toned, solemn warning,
And all the city wakes—but with a sigh.

From out its heart there comes a mighty throbbing,
Where dreams have filled the quiet of the night.
And greed and lust and hot-eyed eager striving
Come with the dawn and goad men to the fight!

Grace Van Braam Gray.

THE UNLOCKED CELL.

BY JAMES J. CARROLL.

A SHORT STORY.

THE chief pointed to a chair. "Sit down, Ryan," he said.

The prisoner shook his head.

"I'm taller standin'," he returned with uncompromising sullenness.

At a sign from the chief, the prisoner's escort withdrew.

"Why did you take up with Ben Torrance?" asked the chief, when the door had closed behind the retreating policeman.

Ryan grinned defiantly.

"Ye can't get nothin' out o' me," he said.

The chief regarded him thoughtfully.

"Would you like to be set free?" he asked.

"What's the price?" asked Ryan.

"I'll let you go if you'll tell where the Harris jewels are," returned the chief, watching his prisoner narrowly.

"I don't know nothin' about the junk," Ryan answered sullenly.

"You were in Torrance's company prior to the burglary," insisted the chief. "And we know you had a hand in it. We have sufficient evidence to convict you both; but owing to the fact that the break wasn't reported till several hours after its occurrence, we are unable to say, at present, how you disposed of the goods. We know, however, that they have neither been pawned nor 'fenced.'

"This is your first offense, I believe, Mike," he went on, "and I believe that if you were well out of it, you would think twice before again breaking the law."

"A lot ye know about what I'd do!" jeered Ryan.

"I know more about you than you imagine," said the chief, with a slow smile. "When I was a patrolman in the Sixth, I knew you as a little red-headed tad playing about the streets. You were never vicious, Mike, but you hated restraint. You do still, I think," he finished meaningly.

As his prisoner showed no desire to speak, the chief went on musingly.

"In those days I knew your father, too. He did a good turn once—for a man that now holds a high position. And because he did, I am going to give you a chance."

Ryan blinked furtively. But he remained silent.

"In the week that has passed since the burglary," the chief pursued, "Mrs. Harris has become impatient for the recovery of her diamonds. We have assured her, of course, that we'll eventually recover them; but, womanlike, she doubts. Now, if you will tell where they are, I'll let you go. What do you say, Mike?"

"Did ye make that offer to Torrance?" asked Ryan suspiciously.

"No," the chief returned, "I did not. Torrance has a record, and I couldn't, if I would. But I'm willing to take a chance on you. Come, Mike, don't be a fool. Where are the jewels?"

Ryan shook his head stubbornly.

"Yer men has been trying, ever since I got pulled in, to get somethin' out o' me," he returned defiantly. "They couldn't do it, though—an' neither can you."

The chief smiled inscrutably.

"I'll give you twenty-four hours in which to change your mind," he said as he looked at his watch. "Then, if you are still defiant, I'll see that you

get the limit. By twelve to-morrow I'll expect an answer. Now return to your cell."

The chief snapped his watch shut and turned to busy himself with some papers, and his face hardened into lines of stern determination.

II.

As Ryan shuffled to the door, he expected to find the officer that had escorted him from his cell to the chief's office awaiting him on the outside. But when he opened the door the corridor was deserted. Incredulously he glanced up and down. There was no policeman in sight! Wondering, hoping, doubting, he flung a glance across his shoulder at the chief. That worthy seemed to have forgotten Ryan's existence, and was intent only on perusing the papers on his desk.

Ryan slipped into the passage and closed the door softly behind him. For a moment he stood listening; then he tiptoed toward the outer office. If he could reach it undetected, he intended to make a dash for the street-door, and, once outside, trust to his legs—and luck.

As he crept along the corridor he wondered at the unnatural stillness that prevailed. The place might as well have been deserted, for all the sound or stir his ears could detect.

With wildly beating heart he approached the door of the outer office and cautiously drew it open a few inches. Hearing no sound from within, he ventured to open it a little wider. Then he thrust his head in and peered warily around the office.

The desk was untenanted, and the outer door stood ajar!

Ryan gasped.

"Gee!" he muttered, "this is rich!"

Entering cautiously, he approached the desk and peered behind it. He was acting like a fool, he knew; but the whole thing was so inexplicable that he couldn't make himself believe there was not somebody *somewhere* in the room.

"This gets me!" he muttered as with distended eyes he took in the unwonted emptiness of the place. For a moment he stood staring helplessly around; then he tiptoed to the door and looked out into the street.

There was no blue-coated figure anywhere in sight; nor did any of the passers-by look like an officer in plain clothes.

Ryan paused in the doorway. Behind him was the seemingly deserted police office; in front, the open street—and freedom. There was apparently nothing to prevent his escape, yet because of that very fact he hesitated.

Although momentarily expecting a policeman to step from *somewhere* and detain him, Ryan made no move.

"Am I goin' nutty, or what?" he muttered as he stood in the doorway scratching his head. "Has all the cops melted into thin air, or—? Aw, it's a plant! This couldn't never happen if it wasn't. I don't know what kind of a plant it is," he finished, with a cunning leer, "but I ain't goin' to help the gardener. Nothin' doin'."

He stepped inside and retraced his steps. Pausing at the door of the chief's office, he opened it, and suddenly thrust his head into the room.

"Me guide ain't here, chief," he grinned, "an' I'm afraid I'll take the wrong turn."

"Follow the passage to the right, descend the stairs at the end, turn to the right again, and your cell is the fifth on the left-hand side," said the chief explicitly.

"Thanks," nodded Ryan, and he closed the door and walked noisily a few paces in the direction of the stairs. Then, suddenly turning, he tiptoed back, and again softly opening the door, peered in. The chief was apparently intently studying the papers before him.

"Holy smoke!" muttered Ryan, as he noiselessly closed the door again, "this is the limit! What are they tryin' to do—lose me? Nix! Think I'll make a break an' get the junk, maybe. Well, I won't. Me for the cage!"

III.

RYAN followed the passage to the stairs and, descending, soon reached his cell. He could have found it without assistance, of course, but a certain waggishness had driven him to act as he had. Moreover, he had been curious to note how the chief would act when informed that the policeman was not in

evidence. But the chief's matter-of-fact way of treating the incident had only served to heighten Ryan's bewilderment.

Ryan entered the cell and, closing the door to within a few inches, went and sat on the plank bed. He tried to puzzle the matter out, but could not. Finally he stopped trying. Then he climbed on the bed, and gazed wistfully across at the small, grated window that supplied the cell with light and air. It was slightly above the level of his eyes, but he was able to see a small, sunlit strip of wall opposite.

Many times since his arrest Ryan had gone through the same performance, and as often had he cursed himself for listening to Torrance. Had he not allowed himself to be led into the burglarizing of the Harris mansion, he might have been out in the sunshine, following where his vagrant fancy dictated. The wanderlust was strong in the blood of Ryan.

For several minutes Ryan gazed hungrily across at the meager patch of sunlight; then he descended, and began to pace his cell. Several times he stepped out into the passage and debated with himself whether he should not make another attempt to steal away. But though he strongly desired his freedom, he could not make up his mind to venture another attempt. Perhaps the strangeness of his position had much to do with his timidity.

After long pacing of his cell, Ryan threw himself on the bed. He recalled, then, that he had eaten nothing since morning. He had been used to long fasts, and, ordinarily, took them philosophically. But since his arrest he had received food three times a day; and it was now long past the hour when his midday meal was usually brought him.

Had they forgotten him? Or was it possible, after all, that the place was deserted, save for himself and the chief? Or was it a "plant"? This last seemed to him the most reasonable supposition.

"Well," he muttered finally, "whatever the answer is, they won't get nothin' out o' me. She took the bag to keep because of—because I axed her to, an' I ain't goin' to send no cops there to get her into trouble—not me."

Having thus reaffirmed his determination to remain silent as to the whereabouts of the jewels, he closed his eyes and tried to sleep. But in this he was not very successful, for in spite of himself his ears would keep strained for a sound from above—for the footfall of the man who usually brought his meals—even for the sound of some newly arrested prisoner being brought down to the cells. And his eyes would open and wander wistfully to the grated window above, and from there to the unlocked door. Even when he turned his face to the wall and placed his hands over his ears, sleep refused to come.

When at length it seemed to him time for his evening meal to be brought, Ryan sat up and listened eagerly; but, though he waited with strained attention for fully an hour, no welcome footfall sounded in the corridor without. Then he went to the door and listened, but he could hear no sound from above.

For several minutes he stood thus; then he crept along the passage to the stair-foot and listened again. The upper floor might as well have been untenanted, for all the sound or stir he could hear. Finally he returned to his cell, and sat on his bed till darkness set in. Then he lay down and tried to sleep.

But again slumber evaded him. Other nights since his arrest he had slept soundly—even with noisy, drunken unfortunates in neighboring cells; to-night he could not.

As the hours wore on, he felt miserable and dispirited. A great longing possessed him to mingle with his kind. He desired strongly to see human faces, to hear human voices and footfalls. He had often heard ex-convicts tell of terms spent in prisons where complete isolation was the rule, but he had not fully grasped the terrors of the punishment. He was beginning to now.

Occasionally his thoughts reverted to the unlocked door, and the very fact that it remained unsecured made him feel farther removed from his kind. If at any time since his return to the cell any one had put in an appearance to lock him in, there would have been tangible evidence that he was still a recognized unit among his fellows. And he would have felt himself no more a prisoner than he now did.

At dawn Ryan left his bed, unrefreshed. He crept to his cell door and listened. He wondered why no prisoners had been brought down during the night. Other nights since his arrest the cells had been filled, and the inmates, noisy and ribald as many of them had been, were, by their very nearness, some sort of solace to him. At the time he had hardly realized this; he did now.

Once again Ryan stole to the foot of the stairs and listened for some sound from above, but, though he strained his hearing to the utmost, nothing reached him that would indicate that the upper floor was tenanted.

For some minutes he stood there, wishing he had courage to venture farther; then he dejectedly stole back to his cell. Instead, however, of pacing up and down, as he had a part of the preceding day, he went and sat miserably on the bed. Much as the continued silence depressed him, he felt that the sound of his own footsteps echoing hollowly through the place would be still more unbearable.

As the hours passed, Ryan maintained his position on the bed. He longed for his breakfast to be brought —not so much because he was hungry as that he desired a break of some kind in the monotony of the situation; but no welcome footfall sounded in the corridor. Then, when it was long past the usual breakfast hour, he flung himself, limp and nerveless, face downward, on the bed.

If he slept after that, Ryan did not know; but he was unaware of the passage of time until a firm hand was laid on his shoulder and a gruff voice said:

"Come. The chief wants ye."

Ryan gathered himself together and shuffled after the policeman to the chief's office. Then the policeman withdrew.

The chief took out his watch and snapped open the case.

"It's ten minutes of twelve, Ryan," he said, significantly.

Ryan leaned weakly against the desk. But he remained silent.

Still holding the watch open, the chief spent a minute or two examining the papers before him. Then he looked up and addressed his prisoner.

"You have only a few more minutes of grace, Mike," he began in a not unkindly tone; "take my advice, and use them wisely. I have no desire to send your father's son to jail; but if you remain silent until the time I set for you has elapsed, I'll show you no leniency."

Ryan still maintained silence. The chief went on:

"If you say the word I'll send a man with you, and when you place the jewels in his hands you can go where you will."

If Ryan heard, he gave no hint of it.

The chief glanced at his watch.

"You have but five minutes in which to save yourself," he warned.

Ryan's hands trembled, and his face twitched convulsively. But he uttered no sound.

"Four minutes, Mike."

Ryan set his jaws together, and clenched his fingers tightly into his palms. Otherwise, he made no sign.

"Three minutes!"

The prisoner's face set into more dogged lines, and his fingers clenched until the knuckles showed white. His eyelids quivered.

The chief watched him intently.

"Two minutes!"

Ryan's head and shoulders sagged forward, his forehead dampened, and one hand unclenched and tore at his collar. But he remained mute.

"One m—"

An inarticulate cry escaped from Ryan, and he cowered as if from a threatened blow.

The chief leaned forward and placed a hand on the man's shoulder.

"Speak, Mike," he said kindly. "It's your last chance."

Ryan lifted his head and gazed unseeingly at the chief; his lips moved, but no coherent sound escaped them.

The chief reached quickly for the pitcher of water on his desk, and filled a glass.

"Here, drink this," he said.

Ryan reached out a trembling hand, seized the glass, and drank greedily; then replacing the emptied vessel on the desk, he drew his coat-sleeve across his brow.

"I suppose me time is up?" he said with a wan smile.

"You have half a minute left," re-

turned the chief without, however, removing his gaze from the prisoner's face.

"I'd 'a' told ye before now where the junk is, if I had only meself to think of," began Ryan.

"You needn't consider Torrance," said the chief curtly. "We have a strong case against him. Even if we hadn't, he is wanted in several other places."

"I wasn't thinkin' of him."

"You are shielding somebody else, then?"

"Nobody that's guilty."

"Well, let me be the judge of that. If this other party had no hand in the burglary, and is not keeping the jewels, knowing them to be stolen property, I promise not to proceed against—her."

"I didn't say a woman had them!" Ryan protested with incautious vehemence.

"No," the chief smiled, "you didn't—in words. But tell me who she is, and I'll send a man after the goods."

Ryan gulped.

"I guess I'll take me medicine," he said stubbornly.

"Are you sure you know what that means?" asked the chief.

Ryan's mind reverted back over the past twenty-four hours.

"I've had a taste of it," he shuddered.

"You are a fool, Mike, to throw away your last chance of freedom, for—"

"Chanst!" blurted Ryan. "I've had no chanst! Gimme one, an' I'll show ye!"

"For Heaven's sake, Mike!" gasped the chief, "what other chance do you need?"

"Lemme go an' get the junk—with nobody spyin' on me. That's the chanst I want—the only one I'll take. If ye will, I'll promise to be back here in two hours with Mrs. Harris's jewels," he finished with desperate eagerness, his eyes aflame.

"You wouldn't attempt to escape?"

Ryan threw out his hands, palms upward, deprecatingly.

"I ain't much good, chief," he said humbly, "but I wouldn't throw nobody that trusted me."

For a minute the chief regarded Ryan as if he would read the man's very soul; then, leaning forward suddenly, he pointed to the door.

"Go!" he said. "You won't be followed!"

As Ryan turned from the desk, the chief glanced at his watch.

"That was a long half-minute," he muttered with just the shadow of a smile playing around the corners of his mouth.

Then, as the door closed behind Ryan, he said:

"It appears that the 'third degree' has its limitations—when there's a woman in the case!"

A PROOF.

I SOUGHT you often and I found you kind;
You were my friend, faithful in weal or wo.
But were you to my faults so strangely blind,
That for a second's weakness you could let me go?

I am but weak, while you are bravely strong.
I leaned upon your strength, its depths I know.
And yet I think, had you been in the wrong,
I had remained your friend—I loved you so!

Gertrude Brooke Hamilton.

MORE THAN BAIT.

BY THEODORE ROBERTS.

A SHORT STORY.

THE children were asleep in a corner—three of them on a bed of sacking and tattered quilts. The man and the woman sat at the open door, gazing down at the starlit waters of Jar Seal Harbor. The man's jaw was set stubbornly; the woman's eyelids were red.

Again the old question had been brought up, again to be driven back into the woman's heart by bitter words. Again the brief but bitter storm had come and passed without striking—the storm that had its center in the thumb-worn letter which the woman still clasped in her hand.

The letter was from her brother. It had been in her possession, and the message of it in her breast, for more than three months. The lad had gone away from Jar Seal Harbor, with his wife and baby, a summer ago; and now, over in Nova Scotia, he was as safe from death by hunger or cold as any merchant. He had work for every day of the week, and wages for every stroke of work. His family fed full and housed warm. Ah, to eat without fear and feed one's children without stint! To be free of the terror of death by hunger, and death by cold, and widowing by the fogged sea!

"I'll be turnin' in," said the man, with a note of sulky shame in his voice. "Peter an' me has to be early at the squid or we'll get no catch o' fish this season." He glanced at the woman, and angrily away again: "Jar Seal Harbor was good enough for me father, an' it be good enough for me," he added. "We was all born here, an' bred here about the dryin'-stages an' the bay. They be more nor food an' drink to me—them things."

There is deep water off Jar Seal Harbor. Thereabouts, in pits and valleys in the ocean's bed, all manner of grotesque and unusual creatures lurk and feed, far beneath the stirrings of the upper tides.

Tim Nolan and his son, Peter, breakfasted early, on tea and bread, and then pulled out of the little harbor to a likely spot on the seaward side of the Skipper Rocks, and there began jigging for squid. They used hand-lines and leaden weights encircled with wire barbs and painted a vivid red. The morning was warm and clear, with not so much as a draft of wind. The level sun-rays from the east, flooding across a thousand miles of open sea, heartened the man and the boy like a tonic, and made even the gloomy buttresses of the Skipper Rocks and the cliffs to the southward look cheerful in their eyes.

"This here be's a grand country altogether—a desperate fine country," said little Peter, gazing up at the golden fire on the face of the big rock that shut off the harbor from his view. He was deeply thankful for the quiet of air and sea, for the brightness and color, and for the warmth of the sun on his narrow shoulders. It did not seem at all out of the way to little Peter Nolan to feel, and even to express, gratitude for warmth and cheer of any kind.

"Aye, Peter, I's heard tell o' worse places nor Jar Seal Harbor," replied his father. "I's heard how, 'way down north, the folk don't get so much as a blink o' sun for half a year on end."

He leaned over the gunwale of the skiff and jigged with a will, though as yet no squid were in sight. As it was a fine morning and every sign of nature pointing to a good season for the fishing,

he had allowed himself the luxury of a pipeful of tobacco; but, for some reason or other, it did not have its usual fine flavor on his tongue.

Peter knelt in the bows with his line over the shoreward gunwale, his back to the sun, and his gaze piercing deep through the clear water. His eyes were in search of squid; but his mind was on a less prosaic quest.

"Aye, sir, it do beat all what queer, unnatural countries some folks has to live in," he said. "There be the poor Huskies, now, wid scarce enough sun to see by; an' up-along, in Brazil an' Chiny an' all such furrin parts, they do say as how the folks don't feel real comfortable as often as once in a year. The waters be's warm, there, like tea, they say—an' big orangers grow right on the trees. But we be mighty lucky, I's thinkin', to dwell in Jar Seal Harbor."

Tim Nolan drew silently on his pipe, staring seaward. To hear little Peter talk like that, so brave and contented, sent a twinge of pain through his heart. He winced at the sudden-felt pity of it, and his eyelids smarted.

Well he knew that there were places in the world where men had work and wages for all the year 'round; where children learned nothing of toil until they were grown almost to manhood; where the wind and the sea held no terror to wife and child and hunger was a rare thing, and priest and doctor could be called at any time, day or night, by rich and poor alike. It came to him, as he stared blindly across the shining water, that perhaps this contentment with one's own harbor was not a thing to be proud of, after all. Against his will, a thought came to him of the woman in the cabin ashore, with the pale-faced baby in her arms; and of little Peter's toil-worn hands and ragged clothing, and thankfulness for dwelling in so fine a place as Jar Seal Harbor. Again he winced at the pity of it.

II.

"HERE they be!" cried Peter cheerily.

In a few minutes, the bottom of the skiff was covered with little red squid, and wet with the inky liquid with which they cloud the water to blind their enemies and befog their prey. For about a quarter of an hour the run lasted, and the squid twined their arms around the barbs of the bright lures—and then, as suddenly as they had come, they vanished.

Tim Nolan drew in his line and wiped the palms of his hands on the front of his jersey.

"That be's a proper little tow o' bait, an' a mighty easy got," he said.

"Aye—an' here comes some more to the top," said Peter, who still gazed over the bows into the green and amber depths.

The father took up his coiled line, ready to heave the jigger over side again.

"This be's marchants' luck, for sure," he said. "We'll be log-loaded, b'y, widout so much as a crick in our backs."

At that moment, Peter uttered a sharp cry and crouched away from the bows.

"It baint squids!" he cried.

Tim took a step forward. He felt a soft thud against the bottom of the skiff, felt the thrill of it pass aft and under his feet, and saw Peter snatch a billet of wood from under a thwart. Before his astonished gaze, the skiff lifted a little by the head and listed a trifle to port. Then a gray, serpent-like thing swung up a yard or so above the gunwale, waved blindly in the sunlight and sank slowly across the bows of the skiff. A second arm arose from the sea, and took a six-foot hold across and along the other side.

Tim knew that these terrific arms belonged to a creature of the squid family—the king of all the squids. Legends of these monsters were not scarce along the coast. Once in a generation, perhaps, the depths gave up one of the most terrible of its children to astonish and confound the toilers of the shore-fishery.

"Come aft, b'y!" cried Tim.

The boy, spellbound with terror of the great arms, did not move.

Then another gray, mottled thing waved upward and into the skiff, touched the boy's legs and twined round. With a harsh cry, Tim strode forward and fell upon the great tentacle with his naked hands. He kicked it and trampled it with his heavy boots, holding the boy firmly against him; and the boy, whimpering, beat it with the little birch-wood club.

"It be's haulin' on me!" he screamed.

The horror of that cleared Tim's mind. Letting go his grip of the boy, he sprang into the bows, across two great arms, and snatched up the chopper. He had put it aboard that morning, with a view of cutting a load of fuel from a drook in the southward cliffs before his return to the harbor. The chopper was short of haft, but broad and keen of blade.

As Tim turned, with raised weapon, he saw Peter struggling against the gunwale—and, in the same blink of time, he felt a cold grasp and pull upon his own legs. The great tentacle that held him lay across the starboard gunwale and within sure swing of the chopper.

One well-placed cut severed it, and next moment he was close to the boy, hewing like a woodman. The ends of the severed tentacles fell in-board and writhed over the bait and around the thwarts. The skiff came to a level keel. Tim glared 'round, his great face twisted with rage and horror. Suddenly he dropped the chopper, slipped a light oar over the stern, and began sculling desperately toward the mouth of the harbor.

Little Peter crawled to his feet over the squirming things.

"I be's fair terrified," he whimpered.

The father lowered one hand for a moment from the oar and touched the head against his knee.

"When it took a holt o' me, my heart ran like water," whispered the boy. Something like a sigh escaped the man, but he continued to sway to the oar without a word. "Look aft!" cried Peter. "The sea be's black as ink, where we bested him. He were naught but a desperate great squid, after all." But the father did not answer.

They rounded the southern shoulder of the Skipper Rocks and saw Jar Seal Harbor bright and peaceful before them, with its green waters and gray fish-stages and the three gray cabins.

As they slipped through the narrow tickle they saw a woman, with a tiny baby in her arms, standing in front of one of the cabins.

Tim Nolan beached the skiff, took Peter by the hand, and walked slowly and in silence to where his wife waited at the top of the tide-wash.

"Kate," he said thickly, "I has no fear o' work, nor hunger, nor rough weather. Me father stood it—an' I can stand it. But I was give a warnin' today, girl. Aye, 'twas like seein' little Peter dead at me feet. The Lard sent one o' His monsters up from the deep to turn me heart from its blind sin. Now ye'll have yer way, Kate—for no child o' mine will ever again drop line off Jar Seal Harbor."

Then, freeing his hand gently from Peter's clasp, he walked to the cabin like a man just awakened from a dream.

PROMISES.

I.

"Your feet shall find the roses' path,"
I said, long years ago;
And yet, for all my promises,
Your feet have found but snow.

II.

"Your gown shall be but cloth of gold,"
I said with laughter soft;
Your garments, love, are old and thin,
And mended oft and oft.

III.

"Your hands shall wear but rings of pearl"—
Ah, love, how vain the phrase!
Your little hands are hard and worn,
And scarred in many ways.

IV.

And yet, at times, when even comes,
I look across at you,
And see your silver silken hair,
Your eyes so deeply blue;

V.

Then somehow, in your angel face,
I find content and rest;
And, though I planned so differently,
Perhaps just love was best!

Lilla B. N. Weston.

A KNIGHT OF TO-DAY.

BY BANNISTER MERWIN

A COMPLETE NOVEL.

CHAPTER I.

THE END OF A JOURNEY.

I COULD hardly wait to see Marcia. The stuffy train roared into the tunnel that meant the approach to Mancasset station, and I held my breath, as I had so often done before, in an effort to draw in as little as possible of the distressing combination of smoke and dust. But my heart soared above all dust and soot — soared high and beat only for Marcia—Marcia whom I had not seen for six long months.

There had been a blunder—on my part, of course. Only a fool would have written his love for her when the gods had given him the happy luck of constant sight of her; only a fool could have kept himself from pouring out to her in one of those blessed meetings the love that filled his heart. And I had been that fool.

But it was over now; the mistake had been explained, and in my waistcoat-pocket there lay a note that had summoned me post-haste from the wilds of the Canadian Northwest back to Marcia.

That lost letter of mine, its belated finding, the anxiety that had beset my darling when she knew that I had frantically hurried off to shoot big game in the wild hope of forgetting her—all that was set forth in pathetic incoherence, and the words lay against my heart and warmed it as the train bore me on through the rolling country toward Marcia.

And so we rattled through the tunnel, out into the clean, sweet air, and alongside Mancasset station. I was already at the end of the car, a porter at my heels with my bags, as the train came to a halt.

I leaped to the platform, half hoping, half fearing to see her. But she was not there, and I was glad, for it meant that I could see her alone at the very first—alone where I could tell her half, quarter, the tiniest bit of what meant to me her writing of the letter that had brought me home.

A Pine Shore groom came forward and took my hand-luggage. The somber garments he wore brought to me a vivid realization of what had been consciously in my mind only at intervals of my journey—the fact that Marcia's father was dead. A wave of genuine grief swept over me, and close upon it a promise to myself that I would be more than lover, more than husband to Marcia; that I would protect and cherish her beyond the lot of most women, for the sake of the old man who had been a tender and devoted father.

A telegram had followed Marcia's letter to me—a telegram that reached me, indeed, as I was reading her dear penciled words:

"Father, suddenly. Do, do come."

Elliptical as was the message, I understood. The word death had seldom been on Marcia's lips. A creature of life, she craved life for everybody, everything.

For a moment my joy at the thought of her nearness was overwhelmed by a wave of pity. She had had to look death in the face. There could be no evading it as the word had been evaded; sudden and swift the blow had come, and old John Graham had fallen beneath it.

Only her aunt, Miss Trevis, had been

with her, and she, faithful soul, had, I felt sure of it, proved herself the stanch friend, the wise counselor, she always had been to the motherless girl.

The black mare took us smartly along, her hoofs thudding on the soft earth, and I threw off the momentary sadness that had claimed me. Was not Marcia nearer with every hoof-beat?

We trotted swiftly to the crest of the hill and came in sight of the well-remembered view—the woods to the left, green fields, ripe with grain in the middle distance, and over on the right, near the horizon, a glimpse of blue—shining blue—the waters of the sound.

I drew a long sigh. The groom had scarcely spoken during the drive, and I had been too occupied with my eager thoughts to break the silence.

"Mr. Graham's death was very sudden?"

The half interrogation brought immediate response.

"It was sudden, sir. Very sudden. He was took in the night. I galloped Black Betty, here, two miles for the doctor—the wires was down after a hard storm, sir. I got back to the house inside a half-hour, but the old gentleman had gone, sir—gone as quick as that."

I could not bring myself to speak of Marcia, to mention her name in commonplace sympathy. I felt that I could not keep out of my voice the thrill that no one but she must hear.

I sighed.

"We're almost there, Mr. Bruce," said the man, as if he divined my eagerness.

"Yes," I said. "I could travel every step of the way in the dark, I believe."

After all, he had seen Marcia and me together. Even a groom has eyes, and I felt a sudden warming toward the man.

"I hope Miss Graham is well," I stammered.

He touched the black mare suddenly with his whip-lash. It was a totally unnecessary incentive, and was resented by Betty. In his efforts to pull her down to an even stride again, I did not notice his neglect of my question.

We dashed through a short wooded cut, out into the open, around a curve—and there was the house. A big gray-stone affair it was, gabled, and ivy-grown. We entered the lodge-gate, and the cart sped along the gravelly drive.

It was early afternoon, and the house seemed deserted. There was no one to meet us at the veranda steps—no one except a footman whom I did not recognize. He took my bags from the cart, and I forced myself to go slowly up the steps and say quietly: "Tell Miss Graham that Mr. Bruce has arrived."

I waited in the library. Memories crowded in with anticipation of the immediate future. There was the big leather couch where we had studied together the Japanese prints that Marcia was so fond of collecting. How I had teased her about them, only giving in inch by inch to her appreciation of them, finally to grow as enthusiastic as she. There was the round table to which we had smuggled the chafing-dish late one night, and, with good Miss Trevis to chaperon us, had concocted indigestables, laughing like mischievous children, hushing each other to silence and pretending that her father would be violently angry if awakened by our fun-making.

I heard a soft little whine, and from under the big couch poked the head of a small fox-terrier.

"Tony!" I called.

But Tony looked at me askance. I thought he remembered that he had several grudges against me. I had persuaded Marcia to leave him home on various trips we had taken.

"Shake and be friends, old man," I said. "I'll forgive you for chewing up my note to the lady if you'll overlook the times I had you shut up in your paddock when you wanted to go along."

The little dog crept nearer.

"What's the matter?" I asked. "Come on, boy. Don't you remember me?"

He came close to me, and I could see that he was trembling.

"Some new servant has been cuffing him," I said to myself, and imagined with a smile the speedy retribution that would overtake the offender when Marcia should discover her pet's ill treatment.

I pulled him to my lap, and he stuck a cold little nose against my cheek.

"Why, Tony!" I said, pulling his ears. "This won't do. Where's your spirit, boy? Nobody's going to hurt you."

He huddled down in my arm, still trembling.

"It's all right about the letter," I went on. "You didn't know what a valuable thing that was, did you, Tony, when you ran into the lake with it? And the lady didn't, either. She thought it was some stupid verses I was going to copy for her—that foolish letter that you chewed to a pulp and then swam round with. Anyway, you had enough sense to leave part of it where she could find it, the part that told her. Yes, you have sense, pup. And, better late than never, her letter reached me at last—and here I am!"

The dog reached up and licked my cheek; then he whined.

"Tony!" I cried. "What's the matter, old boy?"

I set him down and walked away a few steps, whistling to him; but he cringed along against the floor, whining softly and rolling pitiful eyes at me.

I picked him up again, and a chill crept over me. The sunlight streamed in at the window, the shadows of the vines on the porch flickered on the polished floor, but there was a strange coldness in the air. I turned impatiently toward the door, listening for Marcia. Her presence would dispel this sudden, terrible, intangible something that gripped me.

Then I heard a footfall on the stairs, and I laughed softly at myself for my folly. I moved nearer the hall, and I felt my heart jump in response to the soft silken rustle of a gown that was sweeping toward the portières.

I clung foolishly to the little dog. It did not occur to me to put him down.

"Marcia," I heard myself whisper, and again, "Marcia!"

A white hand pushed aside the hangings; a woman's figure, slim and tall, entered.

My eyes swam in sudden mist. I stood like a fool, rooted to the spot.

But the face I looked at was not delicately fair and oval, the hair that crowned the low, fine head was not golden and curling in little tendrils. It was an old, tired, frightened face, and the white hair above it was scarcely whiter than the blanched cheeks of the woman who came swiftly toward me.

"Miss Trevis!" I gasped.

"John," she cried in a low voice that trembled. "Oh, I have watched and waited for you. You can help; you must help. It can't be—"

Tony fell to the floor with a cry of fright. I had grasped Miss Trevis's hand in a clutch that must have hurt her.

"*Marcia!*"

She read the agonized question in my eyes, for she cried quickly:

"*No! No!* Not dead. At least, it can't be. Oh, *Marcia!*"

The poor lady dropped into a chair, and, covering her face with her hands, broke into a storm of sobs. The dog crept close to her and crouched on a fold of her dress.

"Tell me," I demanded roughly. "Don't waste time crying. What has happened?"

I shook her arm in no gentle fashion. Then I controlled myself.

"Miss Trevis, Marcia is ill, and you don't dare tell me. But I can bear it. I could call her back from the grave, I believe, now that she has said she cares."

Miss Trevis choked back her sobs.

"John," she said, and her face, strained and worn, looked tragically up at me. "Marcia has disappeared."

"Disappeared?"

"Last evening. She went down to the shore, and—"

"Nonsense!" I must have shouted it, for Marcia's aunt shrank back, and again I tried to control myself.

"She often went for an evening swim," I said.

"I was on the veranda when she went. She was dressed as she had been for dinner. I—we haven't seen her since."

"She went back into the house another way."

"Her door was open all night. Her bed has not been slept in."

"Her old school-room—" It was a favorite haunt of Marcia's.

Miss Trevis shook her head.

Again a chill swept me from head to foot.

"She went out in one of the boats," I gasped.

"Our boats are all accounted for. But there was another boat near our shore last night."

"What of that?" I asked. "There are always strange boats about."

"But not in our little cove."

I knew that to be true. There had been a breakwater built to insure calm anchorage for Marcia's pleasure-boats, and it required skilful maneuvering to creep inside it.

"There have been so many abduction cases lately," faltered Miss Trevis. "And Marcia has received anonymous letters with veiled threats and demands for money."

"It's absurd, ridiculous!" I thundered. "You are all afraid that something's happened to Marcia. Nothing can have happened to Marcia—"

But, as I spoke, the little dog whined, and suddenly a great fear gripped my heart. I pulled myself together with an effort.

"Tell me about it," I said quietly. "I must know every detail."

CHAPTER II.

MISS TREVIS'S STORY.

FAR from being reassured myself, I tried to reassure Miss Trevis.

"It will be all right," I said. "Just tell me all—everything. You have been through a fearful strain, and have had no one to help you bear it."

Miss Trevis held out her frail hands that shook.

"Shall we find her?" she cried, in sudden childish appeal.

"I will find her," I promised. "There is probably some simple explanation," I went on, and tried to believe my own words. There is a blunder somewhere. She has sent a message, and it has been neglected. Oh, we shall hear. And, meantime, tell me what you know, and we can set to work."

"Detectives are already at work," said Miss Trevis.

The childish appeal was gone from her voice. She was once more strong and brave.

"That is right," I said. "It is better to err on the safe side. Probably there was no necessity, but—"

"There *was* necessity," said Miss Trevis.

She drew a deep breath and, with her long-fingered hands clenched tightly in her lap, began her story.

"About nine o'clock Marcia came out on the veranda. I was lying in the hammock. She walked over to me and bent down and kissed me.

"'Just think, auntie,' she said, 'this time to-morrow night he will be here.' She looked so happy as she spoke. I knew, of course, she meant you.

"'Yes, dear,' I said; 'and you'll be happy, won't you?'

"'Happy!' she said. 'Oh, auntie, I never expected to be so happy. And father would be happy, too, wouldn't he?'

"We had a little talk, and she said she had ceased to mourn that he was taken so suddenly; 'for,' she said, 'how could we bear to see one we love suffer? I used to think death was cruel, auntie, but now I believe it is often merciful.'"

I caught my breath. I would not let myself think for a moment that this was one of the times when death would have been merciful.

"She said," went on Miss Trevis, "that she would walk down to the shore. She thought that in spite of the clouds the moon might show, and she wanted to see it come up out of the water.

"As she got part way across the lawn she called to me that there was a strange motor-boat moored inside our breakwater.

"'How did they get in?' I called back.

"'I don't know,' she laughed; 'but I know how they'll get out, and right soon, too.'

"Marcia is so generous, and yet so quick to resent an intrusion like that.

"She disappeared. Presently I heard the chug of an engine, and I smiled to myself, because I knew Marcia had sent the interloper flying. I sat there thinking of the dear girl, of her sweetness and courage, and loving tenderness to me—she has been like a daughter to me since her babyhood—and I thought suddenly that I would go down to the shore and meet her and walk back with her.

"I went across the lawn, as she had gone, and out to the breakwater, but I

could see no sign of her. I called, but she didn't answer. I saw a dark spot out on the rocks, and went slowly toward it, thinking that the lapping of the incoming tide might drown my voice; but the dark spot was only a shadow, and I hurried back.

"Even then I was not alarmed. I thought she had gone back to the house by another way, and I went in leisurely, pulling the hall-door shut behind me. I even went to my own room first, and turned on my light, thinking I would read. Then I went to Marcia's room. Her maid was turning down her bed, and arranging things for the night.

"'Where is Miss Marcia?' I asked her.

"'I am waiting for her,' she said. 'She told me she would retire early this evening.'

"I did not want to let her see the alarm that unaccountably took hold of me. I went down-stairs. She was not in the library, nor on the veranda. The door to the little glass-parlor was locked, because all the windows there were left open for the night. It was very early then. There was really no reason why I should have been so worried. But what I felt was more than worry; it was a sort of terror—terror on account of some danger to Marcia.

"I rang for Jensen. You know Jensen?"

I did. He was the old butler who had been with the Grahams from the time that Miss Trevis had taken charge of the motherless little girl and the disordered household.

"I said to Jensen that there was absolutely no cause for alarm, but that I could not find Miss Marcia, and that he was to look quietly over the grounds. When he saw her he was not to let her know I had been in the least disturbed.

"He turned away, and I made the rounds of the house again. In Marcia's sitting-room I found her maid holding Tony in her arms.

"'He ran in dripping, just now,' she said. 'It's strange he would go into the water at night. And something has frightened him, too. He's shaking, for all I've rubbed him dry.'

"I dropped into a chair.

"'Miss Marcia hasn't come in?' I asked. Then I spoke to Tony. 'Where's Marcia?'

"He lifted his head and whined."

As Miss Trevis said: "Where's Marcia?" the little dog lifted himself from the fold of her gown where he lay and whimpered.

"Oh, don't, Tony," begged Miss Trevis, covering her ears. "Oh, if only he could speak. I believe he knows something.

I soothed the dog, and urged her to go on.

"Jensen went quickly around the grounds, then came back to me. He seemed to be strangely disturbed, but tried to reassure me.

"'There isn't the least cause for alarm, Miss Trevis,' he said; 'but I am going to take two of the grooms and go over the place thoroughly. I sha'n't say that I'm looking for Miss Marcia. I shall tell them to keep a sharp eye out for any intruders that may have come in by the water-gate. The lodge entrance has been closed since before dinner, and every one who has driven in to-day has been seen to drive out again.'

"'Very well,' I said. 'You are right, Jensen, in not arousing any fear on the part of the servants. And, of course, there is nothing to fear. Miss Marcia has strolled about the grounds, and we have missed her at each turn; that is all.'

"Jensen assented, but we both knew that was not all; it was not even any of it. Strange, preposterous as it seemed, the old man and I both knew that *something had happened to Marcia!*"

My heart threatened to choke me. She had put it into words. I knew it was true. But I fought down the wild impulse to rush off everywhere, anywhere, searching for her. Time was valuable, but as much of it as was necessary must be spent in listening to Miss Trevis's story. Some clue she might have that had not been recognized by her as a clue. I must listen closely, weigh every word.

"While Jensen was searching, an unnatural quiet seemed to settle down over the place. I have always loved the silence of this big Pine Shore, but now a horror of it shook me. Every little sound broke upon it in exaggerated contrast. Up-stairs a window was closed, and, below, the laugh of one of the

housemaids sounded like a cannon in my ears.

"Then I thought suddenly of Micah Graham."

"Marcia's uncle?"

"Yes, John Graham's older brother. He is across the sound, you remember. You can get over to his place by water in an hour or so."

"He is rather—eccentric?" I asked. "Thought Marcia always seemed to like him."

"Marcia as a child always loved him, in spite of his eccentricities. And he always petted her, and seemed to love her in return. But now he lives alone with his servants. He has become crabbed and miserly, and—well, I believe he is practically insane."

I had heard something of this. Less than a year before Micah Graham had surprised some of his friends, and scandalized others, by shutting himself away from the world under peculiar conditions. He purchased from an agent the big estate called Morton's Point, made many and inexplicable changes, engaged four servants—three men and a woman—closed the gates that barred all entrance to the place, and became a recluse.

His friends received word of his self-imposed retirement in an oddly worded circular letter, which stated that having lived in the world of men for over eighty years, he considered himself entitled to dispose of his remaining time on earth in whatever way he chose. And he had chosen to spend it on the most secluded and beautiful spot he had been able to find namely, Morton's Point. He would be grateful if those to whom he wrote would respect his wishes and refrain from communicating with him.

He added that, in consideration of their interest in him, he would explain that his intention was to devote a considerable portion of his leisure to writing a book. This book he promised should teem with interesting anecdotes of Lincoln, Hawthorne, Lowell, Thoreau, all of whom had been friends of his youth and early manhood.

And he further added, without any consideration whatever, that should any of his friends so far forget themselves as to intrude upon his privacy, they would find that a high fence had been erected about the place, and that on top of the fence was a new device for keeping out those whose presence was not desired.

These letters had raised considerable discussion among those who received them. Opinion had been divided as to whether the old gentleman should be haled from his snug retreat and put into another where his actions could be legally supervised, or whether, after all, he was a harmless lunatic to whom indulgence was due, in consideration of his long and busy life and his considerable public benefactions.

John Graham simply shrugged his shoulders when questioned, and explained tersely that he had always expected his brother to make an ass of himself before he died, and was only surprised that he had delayed so long in doing it.

So no one did anything, and for nearly a year Micah Graham had lived shut away from the world, his only communication being an occasional telephone message, transmitted by a servant, to one of his former friends or acquaintances.

All this I remembered quickly as Miss Trevis was telling me, that not even his brother's death had brought the old man from his hermitage, and that no word of sympathy or condolence had been received from him.

"I wondered," Miss Trevis was saying, "if it would do any good to try to get him on the phone. I was pretty sure it wouldn't, but I had to do something, so I got Morton's Point, and tried to make old Micah speak to me in person."

"Would he?"

"No; all I could hear was the voice of Banks, his man, saying: 'I am speaking for Mr. Graham, who wishes me to take your message.'"

"What was the conversation, word for word?"

"I told Banks that I was a little anxious about Miss Marcia, who had evidently gone beyond our own grounds, and had not returned.

"I heard his voice, as if he were repeating my words to some one. Then he said: 'Mr. Graham wishes he could do something to allay your anxiety, but he feels quite certain that she will return soon. He would advise that as much secrecy as possible be kept as to Miss Graham's temporary disappearance."

"It seemed good advice, in spite of the fact that I distrust Banks. I don't know why. I have never seen him, and have only heard his voice a few times, but I don't trust him.

"Well," went on Miss Trevis, after a pause, "I hung up the receiver, and when Jensen came in for the second time, with 'no news' written on his scared face, I was frantic."

The poor woman shook with suppressed excitement. She wiped the dampness from her face, and I tried to help her regain her composure before she went on.

"Two detectives came down this morning," she finally burst forth. "I telegraphed, telephoned—oh, I don't know what I haven't done. They say to keep still—keep quiet. They are watching the harbor, the boats; they are finding out what hired boats were out last night; they—they say she has probably been abducted; they think we shall soon receive a demand for ransom. But, from whom? Oh, Marcia, my baby girl; it is too cruel. Who could want to harm you?"

She fell to sobbing. I took a quick turn about the room.

"I can't bear it," cried Miss Trevis. "I can't wait while these stupid men are doing nothing, just *nothing!*"

I stopped beside her chair.

"Listen," I said; "I am going to hunt for her myself. Now! This very instant!"

"But where?" questioned Miss Trevis. "Where are you going to look for her?"

"At Micah Graham's first."

"But she isn't there. They would have told me—"

"She may not be with her uncle, but at least I will make him act with us. I've got to do something. At any rate, I am going there. I want a time-table."

"But why not go by boat across the sound?"

"Because, if there is anything like abduction in her disappearance, the places watched most carefully will be all waterways that lead out of these harbors."

A time-table was brought. There was a quarter of an hour to catch a train to town. I could doubtless get a late afternoon express for Soundport, the station from which Morton's Point could be reached.

I called up the stable. Black Betty was hitched to the trap. My bags were thrown hastily in, and, bidding Miss Trevis keep up her courage and wait for speedy news from me, I hurried down the steps.

As the door closed I heard the ring of the telephone-bell. The sound halted me, and for a moment I was inclined to go back and learn whether any message were coming that might affect our search. But I realized that there was little time to catch the train. Afterward I thanked Heaven that I had not waited.

We drove out at the gates. There was terror in my heart, but a certain relief also at beng able to do somethng, after the painful inaction.

"Whoever had done this thing is going to pay well for it," I promised myself.

CHAPTER III.

SOUNDPORT.

THE train went slowly enough from Mancasset to New York. My feverish haste would have found any speed inadequate. But I planned and plotted as we went along, and though I could not figure out in detail what I should do, still my idea of getting to Micah Graham's without delay seemed more and more the right step to take.

At the Grand Central Station I took a cab and drove to the Long Island Ferry. I bought a ticket for Soundport, and crossed the East River to Long Island City.

I found that I had caught, as I had hoped to do, the afternoon express. It was crowded with business men, shoppers, and week-end visitors, all hastening to the beautiful North Shore of the island.

I got a place in a forward car and flung my bags up to the rack with a sigh that so much time must elapse before I could take them down again at Soundport. I sank into the stuffy plush-covered seat, thankful that, temporarily at least, I had it to myself. At Jamaica, I knew, the hordes from Brooklyn would be upon us.

True enough, the Jamaica platform was crowded. Men, women, and children streamed aboard.

My attention was attracted by a woman who took the seat across the aisle from me. Two sticky children had just been piloted by their mother in front of my knees and jammed down by the open window, and I had turned my back as nearly as I could upon them.

I found myself staring at a strange, contradictory face. The features were placid, but the eyes alert, consuming every detail about them. The man next to this woman stared at her interrogatively over the top of his spectacles, drew slightly away, and went on reading his paper.

She was a strong-looking creature. Her high cheek-bones suggested Indian ancestry, and her narrow mouth looked as if it held close all the secrets ever poured into the busy brain back of those black eyes. She carried several cumbersome parcels, holding some in her lap and stowing the rest on the floor in front of her. The name of a large drygoods shop of Brooklyn stared at me from a big dress-box in the aisle by her seat.

The woman wore a rough, brown dress, badly fitting, somewhat shabby. A soft felt hat was pulled tight over her head, with not a feminine attempt to make it becoming. I commented mentally on the easy quickness of her movements. Every motion seemed to count for something. The parcels were placed to best advantage; her skirt pulled decidedly about her with a few deft touches; and then her whole body seemed to relax like a tired animal's.

In spite of the impression she made upon me, I forgot her after a few moments in the anxiety which kept coming over me every time I allowed myself to think of Marcia. My only idea was to find some place at Soundport where I could get a room, and then, by hook or crook, force my way to the presence of Micah Graham.

We stopped a few times and started again; but at last we rumbled into Soundport station. I was on my feet and had seized my luggage when, turning, I found myself face to face with the strange woman, who was getting off. Seen thus directly, there was a physical strength and determination about her that impressed me disagreeably.

Preoccupied though I was, I found myself hoping that I should never have to pit my wits against a woman of that type. She would stick at nothing, I said to myself; and then I was at the car door. A moment later I had boarded the trolley that runs from the station to the village.

We had to wait a few moments, and to my surprise, the ill-dressed woman carried her bundles over to a large motor-car, briskly stowed them away in the tonneau, climbed in herself, and, with a word to the chauffeur, the motor started. They passed us, and the big goggled, sandy face of the man at the steering-wheel turned for an instant toward me. Then the motor and its occupants disappeared down the road in a cloud of dust.

I experienced a singular repulsion. Who were these strangers—servants, evidently—to affect me so singularly?

Our car rushed along over the uneven grade. We went through a long tract of woods, high old oaks and elms on either side. Presently, we came out where white houses were set back from the street in the midst of vines and shrubs, and so, finally, to the heart of the village—an ugly main street lined indiscriminately with shops and houses, the roadway thick with dust.

I questioned the conductor as to a hotel. There was only one in town, he said—the Barton House, close to the trolley terminal. The car came to a stop, and I climbed the wooden steps of the dingy brown tavern. A veranda crossed the entire front, affording a resting-place for groups of loungers, who eyed me curiously.

I made my way quickly to the office. Mr. James Barton was both proprietor and clerk. Introducing himself, as I asked for a room, he swung the register around and handed me a pen. After this courtesy he resumed his half-smoked cigar and gazed speculatively from the window. I was about to sign my name when it occurred to me that it would be wise to travel incog. for a little while, so I signed, "John Bolton." That would account for the "J. B." on my bags.

Mr. Barton now assumed the rôle of bell-boy. He picked up one of my bags, ungenerously overlooking the other and heavier one, and I followed him meekly.

Somewhat to my surprise, the room to

which he assigned me was neat and clean. Mrs. Barton, he told me with a touch of pride, looked out for this end of the business.

"Guess you'll find everything all right," he said, and rather reluctantly closed the door behind him.

After a few quick changes I went down-stairs. I was not hungry, but realized that I must eat something. A cup of strong coffee, at least, might brace my nerves for the evening's work.

As I went through the office, Mr. Barton hailed me.

"Supper's ready," he said, and again he led the way.

For the first time I noticed him particularly. Gray-haired and fat he was, with a white shirt innocent of a collar, and his round face beamed with good-natured curiosity.

"Buying or selling?" he questioned, as he led me down the bare dining-room.

"Just looking about," I replied.

"Then you're buying," he asserted. "Thought you didn't look like the selling kind. Well, real estate's gone up some lately."

"Certainly has," I agreed safely.

He left me then, and I sat down at the table. I was seized with a terrible impatience. Here was I dining in a sordid little country hotel—thinking of myself—of conserving my own strength, when all the time Marcia needed me—must need me. But common sense urged upon me the prosaic course I was taking.

At that moment the waitress brought the coffee I had ordered, and I gulped it down, ate as much as I could of what was set before me, and hurried out.

From the veranda of the Barton House one gets an excellent view of Soundport Harbor. Its opposite picturesque shore is dotted with beautiful estates, and private docks reach out into the water. Many and varied are the craft that ply about—sailboats and canoes glide gracefully and noiselessly to and fro, and motor-boats chug saucily among them. While I looked, two stanch oyster-tugs came slowly to their moorings.

I became aware that my host had been speaking to me.

"Lookin' for anything special?" he asked. He was seated in a big rocker, and had just lighted a fresh cigar.

"Don't happen to know of a good little place to build, do you?" I asked.

"Might," he replied dryly. "At any rate, my brother Bill would. I turn all the real-estaters over to him." He chuckled appreciatively. "Between us we about run the place—us an' the livery-man. I house 'em; Smith, over there, he drives 'em round, and Bill sells to 'em—mebbe."

"You ought to make a good thing out of it," I said idly. I was casting about in my mind for the easiest and quickest way to get to Micah Graham's place. One thing, certainly, Smith could not drive me. My actions in this village, it was easy to see, would be blazoned from the housetops, or at any rate from the veranda of the Barton House.

Mr. Barton was looking at me shrewdly.

"We don't make such an awful lot," he said. "We don't aim to skin anybody."

"Of course not," I agreed.

Mr. Barton ponderously offered me a cigar.

"'Tain't so bad," he observed. "One of the sellers give me a box of 'em."

I accepted with thanks. It was not so bad.

"Beautiful harbor," I remarked after a few puffs. "Nearly landlocked, isn't it?"

Mr. Barton nodded.

"The other shore, over there"—he extended a fat forefinger—"runs straight out to the real Long Island coast at the point called Cape Weatherwise. They tell me that at one time the harbor was just an open bay. You see that little mass o' land, 'way out there? That's Morton's Point. It makes this side of the harbor entrance. Well, once that was an island, they tell me. Then a long sand-bar formed—we call it Morton's Neck—and connected Morton's Point with the mainland. Quite a curve, you see. I guess Morton's Neck's been high and dry a good many years, though."

I fastened my eyes on the distant mass of land which he had indicated.

"Looks attractive out there. Morton's Point, did you say?"

"Yes; but there's nothin' doin' there in your line."

"Occupied?"

My landlord nodded again.

"Old man Graham's place."

"Micah Graham?"

"Uh-huh. D'you know him?"

I hedged.

"I've heard of him, of course. Queer old chap, isn't he?"

"Well, yes." Mr. Barton removed his cigar and spoke judicially. "It's accordin' to the way you look at it. He's been livin' out there nigh a year, an' there ain't a soul in this village has ever heard him speak a word. He comes over from his place in his motor, an' whenever they stop anywhere for anything, Banks, his chauffeur, or the other feller, Smith, does all the talking. His housekeeper comes over, now an' then, and she's about as mum as the old fellow himself."

A near-by lounger spat vigorously over the veranda rail and volunteered a remark.

"She went to town to-day. I seen her get off the five-o'clock with a lot of bundles. Banks met her with the autymobile." He spat again and relapsed into silence.

"Queer lookin' woman," commented my landlord. "Reminds you somethin' of an Injun."

So that was the woman! A sudden conviction, followed quickly by dread, took hold of me. She had been in town shopping. The dress-box! Could its contents be for Marcia? Naturally she would need other garments, having been carried away in her dinner-gown. Crazy though the old man might be, he would hardly run the risk of buying even a temporary outfit for Marcia in the village.

I kept on with my inquiries.

"Has Mr. Graham a large place?"

"Well, not so very large—a couple of acres; but it's fixed up so peculiar."

"Peculiar?"

"First thing he did was to build a ten-foot brick wall round it—water-side and all—excepting about a twenty-foot space on the sound side, where the walls run out a ways into the water."

"That must make a nice little harbor," I suggested.

Mr. Barton shrugged his fat shoulders.

"Good enough harbor as it was," he said.

"Maybe he's exclusive."

"Hey?"

"Perhaps he doesn't want company."

"You're right there." Mr. Barton brought his tilted chair forward with a bang. "What do you think!" he exclaimed. "He's got two iron bars, a foot or so apart, all around the top of the fence. They charge 'em with 'lectricity every night. There's bulletins up sayin', 'Danger! Hands off!'"

"He must be a pleasant person."

Mr. Barton tilted back again and puffed at his cigar. "After all, it ain't anybody's business. He pays for the 'lectricity. The 'lectric light and power company ain't kickin'." The loungers on the veranda rewarded this witticism with a loud guffaw.

"But what do *you* think of it?" I persisted.

"Oh, he's just an old crank. Banks says he wouldn't harm a fly."

"So Banks will talk, then, will he?"

"Some. He gets away from the place now and then, an' chews the rag with us. He's a pretty good fellow—don't give away any of the old man's business. But then, mebbe the old man don't have any business."

"'Cept tryin' to 'lectrocute folks," put in one of the listeners. A mild chuckle came from the loungers in response to this rally.

"Banks," Mr. Barton went on, "is one of these professional chauffers. He's run cars in France and England."

"An', say," broke in another member of the audience, "old man Graham keeps a searchlight going every night—turns it first on the harbor and then on the Neck Road. Seems as if he thought the devil was bound to get in one way or the other."

"Kind o' discouragin'," remarked a sympathetic soul from the corner, "for the boys and girls that go buggy-ridin' over the Neck Road."

The sun had set, and the harbor lay all purple and rose-colored in the afterglow.

In the distance Morton's Point looked like the black hulk of some marine monster.

"It must be quite a drive down over the Neck," I hazarded.

"'Bout three mile," said the landlord.

"Nigh onto three and a half," amended some one.

I yawned ostentatiously.

"I think I'll take a look around before it gets too dark," I said; and descending the steps of the veranda I walked in a direction obviously away from Morton's Point.

"Not by water," I muttered. "I can't go that way."

A small boy approached me, whistling.

"Where does that road lead after it gets over the hill?" I questioned him, pointing to a steep hilly street that ended seemingly in the air.

"Back into the valley," said he, "and on to the old Neck Road."

"Thank you."

I went on a few steps, and when the boy had disappeared I wheeled and strode up the hilly street, which would give me access to the "old Neck Road."

My mind was in a whirl. John Graham's fortune was now Marcia's. Her uncle could not want it—did not need it; I kept telling myself this. But in spite of myself, the dreadful suspicion had seized me that Micah Graham did want Marcia's money, and that herein lay the secret of her danger.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SEARCH-LIGHT.

AT the top of the hill lay a sandy stretch of unimproved road, apparently little used. It led on for a short distance and then dipped abruptly. Doubtless this hill bore some of the sites to which my host of the Barton House would have called my attention, for it was bare of houses, and I caught the faint whiteness of several large real-estate signs.

Certainly it commanded a wonderful outlook. As I stood at the top of the dip, I looked out across the waters of Long Island Sound. A fresh breeze was blowing, and here and there, in the dusky purple tinge that had succeeded the afterglow, I caught the tiny flashings of whitecaps.

At my left lay the harbor. The village was cut off from my view by the hill on which I stood, but the expanse of the bay itself was spread before me like a map, dotted with the lights of boats.

I had, however, no eyes for the attractiveness of the scene. Straight before me, at the foot of the dip, a narrow strip ran out, dividing the harbor from the sound, and curving in a long sweep toward the left to the far-away dark spot which I knew to be Morton's Point.

Even as I looked at the distant goal, a faint dot of light shone out. It could come only from Micah Graham's house. I drew a long breath, and swept with my eye the long line of Morton's Neck. Amid the dark of its low-growing shrubs I could distinguish the dim gray of a road springing, apparently, from the base of the hill on which I stood, and disappearing, some distance away, in dark perspective. Evidently that road wound around my hill and entered the village by a more level route.

I descended the slope and set out, following the long procession of telephone-poles. There might lie danger ahead. Of that I scarcely thought. I was more puzzled than troubled. By this time I felt convinced that Micah Graham had possession of Marcia. A possible motive for his theft of her was the old man's eccentricity, which would account for the wildest action. And every one was agreed that Micah was harmless.

Well, at least I would proceed with the greatest caution. If the old man thought an attempt to rescue his niece was in progress, he might be driven to a frenzy. It would be wiser to humor his whim—if whim it was.

Just what course I should adopt when I reached Morton's Point I did not know. I might feign some message from Miss Trevis. I might reconnoiter quietly and try to get to the house unseen, in order to verify my conviction that Marcia was there. In that case the dangerous wall must be negotiated. But I knew that I had better leave my action to be determined by events. It would never do to make plans for dealing with circumstances of which I knew so little.

With these thoughts, I covered some distance. The wind had grown stronger, and the leaves of the shrubs about me rustled continuously.

There should be a moon before long. Only twenty-four hours before, I had watched it rise from the window of the car that was bearing me, as I so happily thought, nearer to Marcia. But to-night

ragged patches of cloud were flying down from the northeast in larger and larger masses, threatening to obscure the sky. The night would be stormy. Well, so much the better.

Just at this moment the tip of the moon suddenly sprang up in the east. The clouds quickly cut it off, but in the instant of light with which it uncovered my surroundings, I had time to see what was apparently a rise of ground, not more than a quarter of a mile ahead. Near the ground was a band of lighter color.

"The wall!" I exclaimed. I made out that it cut straight across the neck, and that above and beyond it lay masses of trees.

It would not do to go much farther without considering. The neck had narrowed to the merest strip, not more than two hundred feet wide. I could hear the waves of the sound beat on the outer beach with a murmur that had become constantly louder while the wind rose. I hurried along. The night was growing very black.

Suddenly before me a shaft of white light shot out. It struck upon me like molten silver, and made everything in its path as bright as day. I noted in that instant how mysterious was the sharp definition of this startling radiance. Beyond it, on either side, the darkness weighed heavily, and now flecks of mist rolled in, to be transformed like magic into wraiths of incandescence.

The search-light! I had completely forgotten it. So busy had I been with my surmises as to Micah Graham's motives and the problem of passing the electric fence, that this extra precaution of the old man's had escaped my memory.

Only for an instant the light swept me. Then it traveled on down the road, and I could see its bright bar narrow a little above my head.

But in that instant I knew my danger. If they had caught sight of me from Morton's Point, I must either disappear quickly, or else proceed boldly and announce myself as a visitor. The latter course might have seemed the more sensible. Surely they could do no more than refuse to admit me, and I could depart, with some trumped-up excuse for my visit, to attempt another entrance later in the night.

Some intuition, however, warned me to make the most of my present opportunity. If Marcia was there, and I felt sure she must be, I could not endure the thought of turning back. If I could convince old Micah that the search-light had frightened me away, he would feel more secure in his mad plan than if I proceeded.

More than that, Micah Graham might recognize me. I had known him slightly at one time, and doubtless he had heard my name connected with Marcia's. Yes, I must remain unseen.

While I stood, the shaft of light came back, found me again, and rested.

So I had been seen!

Quickly I turned and ran at top speed down the road. The light followed me; I could not seem to escape it.

Then, ahead of me, I saw a little curve. As I darted round it, the manipulator of the light lost me for a moment.

Here was my chance. I darted to the left, plunging into the shrubbery on the side of the neck toward the sound. Then, back toward the wall I rushed—toward the enemy.

I raced along through the bushes, unmindful of the rough surface. Once I stumbled and fell, but quickly got my feet again. The shaft of light, now well above my head, was playing on the road far behind me, trying to pick me up. I was prepared, at any instant it might be deflected, to throw myself behind a bush. But all the time I kept on running.

The wall, which I now could make out quite distinctly, was only a little way ahead.

Suddenly I stopped short. For a space fully a hundred yards wide between me and the wall, the ground had been entirely cleared of growth. It was a bare stretch of sand, which I could not pass without being seen by any watcher at the gate.

The shaft of light was now stationary. I turned and saw that it rested upon a bare belt some distance down the road.

The tactics of the person in charge of the search-light were plain. Failing to find me among the shrubbery, and not suspecting, after my apparent sudden fright when the light first struck me, that I would turn back toward the point, he had illuminated an unprotected space far-

ther away, knowing that I must cross it to leave the neck.

A sound from the direction of the wall attracted my attention. It was the rumble of a motor. I lay down in some thick bushes near the side of the road at the edge of the cleared space between me and the wall, and strained my gaze in the direction of the gate.

The mist was now coming in more thickly, and a fine drizzle had begun. I could hear the water pounding on the beach with a greater fury than before. There was enough diffusion from the shaft of light above me, however, to make the wall and the gate faintly discernible.

And then the gate swung open, and a big motor-car came sliding out. Its lamps were unlighted.

Evidently my appearance had created alarm. I was glad that I had not decided to go boldly forward as a visitor, for Micah Graham and his men were not satisfied with my flight, but were going to track me down, and it was more than likely that they intended to deal with me in some unpleasant way.

As the car came nearer, I distinguished two figures seated in the front. Presently it loomed up within a few feet of the spot where I lay, and then stopped with a slight jarring of the brakes. A man spoke.

"I'll hold the car here, Smith, while you beat up the bushes. If he tries to get past the light, Mag will see him and warn us."

The other man did not answer, but I heard him jump to the road. It was a relief to me, peering cautiously from my hiding-place, to see that he had got down on the other side of the car.

For the moment I seemed to be safe, though there was no telling when the man in the seat might look down. The noise of the waves and the fine rain were in my favor, but I was too close to be missed if my pursuers should realize that I had doubled back toward them.

I heard the man who had left the car plunge into the shrubbery on the other side of the road. Certainly he would not come back at once.

But the chauffeur was a more immediate menace. If he got down to the ground, I might attack him and put him out of the fight. Only one fact would have deterred me, and that was the knowledge that I had no real evidence to back my suspicions. After all, these two enemies might be only the servants of a harmless old crank who would have no trespassing. And yet—Micah Graham had no right to keep people off the neck, as long as they remained outside his wall.

However, the man did not descend. He stood up, and then climbed upon the seat and peered down the road. Apparently satisfied, he turned to watch the other. I heard him call out:

"Look at that clump there to the right, Smith." And then he began to whistle a tune. I caught enough notes to recognize it. It was "The Last Rose of Summer." What put that song into his head on this wild night was more than I could guess.

Every moment increased my danger. The searcher would work down to the illuminated track, and then come up through the bushes on this side of the road. Ultimately he must reach my little clump and with the help of the other man could easily overpower me.

I peered again at the chauffeur. His eyes were fixed on the road ahead of him. He was watching, I guessed, to detect me if I tried to cross the road and find safety in some spot which the other man had already passed by.

Now I looked at the car itself. It was like the one that I had seen the woman enter at the station in the afternoon—a large touring-car, with a hood at the back of the tonneau. The hood was down, dropping in heavy folds over the back of the car.

My one chance flashed upon me—a slim chance, but not impossible of success. If I could get into the folds of that hood, they would never think of looking for me there!

The left front wheel of the car was not more than three feet from me. Again I looked up at the man. He was standing on the farther side of the seat still watching the road. As I looked, he once more began to whistle his plaintive melody.

Very, very slowly, I edged into the road on my hands and knees. He did not alter the direction of his gaze.

One more movement, and I was close to the wheel. He could not see me now

unless he changed his position. Slowly I crawled toward the rear wheel, keeping almost under the car, and in a few moments I was at the back and under the hanging hood. Even now I was not safe. The other man might return at any moment.

Worse than that, I now realized that in climbing to the hood I was almost certain to make the body of the car move noticeably on its springs. I crouched there, endeavoring to think how to act. Right before my eyes was the white number board. I read the number—"137,-463 N. Y.," and so vivid were my impressions at that moment that I never forgot the figures.

A slight jar at the front of the car brought me new alarm. The brakes had been released. While I wondered at this, the car began to move slowly forward. With a plunge I seized the number-board and walked along behind, the upper part of my body concealed in the hood.

It is doubtful whether I would have been noticed, even by the other man when he approached. But if the car put on speed, I should not be able to keep my hold.

And then it came over me that now was my time to climb into the hood. I reached for the upper edge of the tonneau, caught it, and swung myself up. In an instant I was concealed.

A moment later the car stopped, and I heard the voice of the man Smith.

"I watched the road, Banks, while you came. Nobody crossed it, and I'll swear there's nobody in the places I've looked over."

"All right," said Banks. "Beat up the other side, and I'll run the machine slowly along the road after you."

The car backed and turned, and soon we were creeping over the road toward the gate.

I was now well satisfied. Not only was my hiding-place practically certain not to be discovered, but—and this to me was all-important—my enemies must solve for me the problem of the electric wall, and themselves carry me within the boundary.

As we neared the gate, Smith came to the side of the car.

"Not a sign," he said. "The fellow must have got away before Mag set the light down there. She ought to have picked a spot farther on."

"Oh, well," said Banks, "we gave him a scare. I guess he won't bother us. Hang this mist, anyhow!"

"What could we have done to him out here?" queried Smith.

"Run over him, of course," Banks replied dryly. "Accidents will happen, even on Morton's Neck."

I shuddered at the shameless deviltry of this remark. Here was no ordinary servant, but a villain—perhaps, for that reason, the more pleasing to his master. Micah Graham must be a monster.

"Get into the car," Banks continued, "while I unlock the gate."

"Sha'n't I do that?" asked the other.

"Nobody handles that key but myself."

The men changed places, and presently we jerked forward. Then we stopped short, and I heard the big iron gate clang to behind me. Footsteps passed me.

"When will you ever learn to run a machine right?" I heard Banks say. "You yank the heart out of her every time you start her."

The reply was unintelligible. Then Banks continued: "Well, no one will get in here to-night—or out."

As he climbed into the car, I dropped lightly to the road behind. Crouching there, I saw the big bulk move noiselessly away from me, outlined against a misty glow of light which came from the windows of the house, not more than a hundred feet ahead.

I looked over my shoulder. A few feet behind me was the gate, a heavy construction of sheet iron.

Without more ado I slid in among the trees that lined the road. I had come to Morton's Point. And now for Micah Graham—and for Marcia!

CHAPTER V.

MICAH GRAHAM.

SOMEWHERE above my head the beam of the search-light still shot out over the road beyond the gate, but down among the trees everything was black with a dense and impenetrable

blackness. Even the faint glow from the house quickly spent itself in the mist, which was now quite thick.

My impulse was to make my way quickly toward the house, but reason warned me to look first for a way of escape. If I found Marcia, we should probably have to run for it.

I turned to the gate. It was set in firmly—a solid black square, a little lower than the top of the wall at each side. This I could see, because the top of the wall was outlined against the bar of light beyond. I was thankful that they had kept the light going, though why they did so was hard to comprehend, since it could have little penetrating power, now that the night was so thick.

Above the wall ran, one a little above the other, the two bars whose purpose I knew. Where the gate was set in, they turned down in such a way as to rest against the gate when it was closed, thus acting as a switch. So the gate itself was charged, and to touch it might mean death. I took a step backward.

And Banks held the key! I inferred that the lock must be insulated, and I thought I understood his unwillingness to let any one else handle it. Of course, when the gate was opened the current was automatically cut off.

It was a good nine feet to the top of the gate. The wall itself was about a foot higher, and the electric bars added fully a yard more. Even if I could get to the top, there was no apparent means of evading those deadly bars.

I groped my way along the inside of the wall in the direction of the sound, testing every step for obstructions.

Presently the noise of the waves told me that I must be near the northern boundary, and I worked to the left. So slowly did I move that it must have been half an hour before I came to the gap that opened on the sound.

It was as I had been told at the hotel—the wall turned sharply out into the water. The mist had been blown away for the time, and there was enough light to see that on the other side of the gap, which was about thirty feet wide, the other end of the wall was also turned out. By this means two parallel breakwaters were formed.

I looked down into the opening. Two dark shapes were bobbing there — two boats, snugly moored. One of them, I guessed, was that which had carried Marcia. As they were both mastless, I judged that Micah Graham kept two motor-boats.

I have not yet mentioned that from the little harbor back to the house the ground was open. The trees had been cut away for a space, perhaps a hundred feet wide, which ran back about twice that distance to the house. Several lighted windows shone murkily into the night.

To cross the open lawn would be dangerous. The best plan that occurred to me was to work up toward the house through the trees. And yet it was important to examine the boats and their moorings, for there seemed to be no escape for me except by water.

I crouched closer to the wall and began to crawl toward the harbor. It was necessary to pass over nearly a hundred feet—in full view from the house, if the sky should clear long enough to let the moonlight through. I counted on the neutral darkness of the wall to give me moderate protection.

I had covered about half the distance to the boats, when suddenly I was startled by the sound of whistling. The strains of "The Last Rose of Summer" came to me distinctly from the direction of the house. Throwing myself flat and pulling my coat up over my white collar, I peered toward the whistler. The vague bulk of a man was strolling in leisurely fashion down toward the harbor. Banks, of course.

He passed within twenty feet of me, his hands in his coat-pockets. He still whistled like a careless schoolboy. I saw him glance up at the sky; and just as he passed the point at which I was still within the angle of his vision, the moon shot out for an instant.

Yes, it was Banks. I noted the breadth of his hulking shoulders, the easy power of his long stride. His hair was sandy; his face was large and flat, with small features—small eyes, a small nose, a small mouth—a man significant in his size, insignificant in his detail. The suggestion of good nature in his manner made him something more for-

midable than a mere brute. I concluded that Micah Graham had chosen his lieutenant well.

He went on down to the boats, disappearing behind the angle of the wall. Cautiously I retraced my way, crawling backward, ready at any instant to throw myself flat if he should reappear. I regained the trees safely, and waited.

After a time Banks came back, walking slowly toward the house. I remained where I was until I saw him ascend the veranda-steps, and heard the door close noisily, swung to by the wind.

The most difficult part of my work remained to be done. I knew in a general way the geography of the ground. The only escape was by the water-gate. In so far as I was able to form a plan, it was to find Marcia, get her from the house, and leading her down the edge of the lawn, to make a dash for one of the boats. The waters were wild to-night, but the chances of the storm would have to be taken.

Among all my doubts and surmises, stood out one reassurance. If Marcia was here, no harm had yet come to her—else why all these extreme precautions? Eccentricity might account for the fence and the search-light, but it would not account for Banks's cool intention to run the car over a stranger. Only the desperate necessity of concealment would explain his conduct. So there was something to conceal; and what could that be but the presence of Marcia?

I worked my way toward the house, which proved to be a two-story structure of stone. The wide veranda extended only across the side that faced the sound, and at the end toward the Neck was a porte-cochère. There were three windows at the end of the house which I was approaching. The farthest one showed a light. I was glad that the wind had freshened again. The sound of the water against the shore would cover the sound of my footsteps.

Tiptoeing across the gravel-drive, which apparently ran all around the house, I took a position under the lighted window. It was open a few inches at the bottom. I heard some one speaking, and knew the voice to be that of Banks.

"Everything is tight," he said.

"We are never safe as long as we keep the girl." The speaker was a woman. She must be the strange creature I had seen on the train, and yet her voice was a soft contralto, beautifully modulated.

"That's right, Mag." A third voice—Smith's, I thought—entered the conversation. "I've said all along we ought to put her out of the way. We can get along very well without the ransom."

"My dear Smith, will you never understand fine points?" Banks showed some irritation. "Don't you see that the ransom is the quickest method?"

"The other is safer," insisted Smith.

"No, that is just what it is not," said Banks smoothly. "I am very doubtful whether we can carry it through at all. We can get the ransom money and keep on with the other game until it becomes too dangerous. Then a quick jump."

Strange talk, this. I wondered if old Micah knew how free his servants were with their knowledge of his scheme.

But now I *knew* that Marcia was here. I could hardly restrain an impulse to burst into the house and demand her.

"I don't like that fellow's nosing around this evening," said Smith apprehensively.

Banks laughed.

"Oh, some village loafer," he said; "probably that demented fellow who wanders round. He won't come back."

"But even if we get the ransom—" Again Mag's rich contralto.

"Easy," said Banks. "We'll get the money, but we won't give up the girl. She'll never go back. We may have to show her, though. That's why I'm keeping her at all."

"I don't like it," said Mag.

Banks let a hard note creep into his voice.

"Perhaps you don't," he said. "But listen. Before I met your train this afternoon I drove the car all the way to New York and telephoned to Pine Shore. I got that woman there, Miss Trevis, and told her to put out to the middle of the sound to-night at one o'clock, in the Graham launch, with sixty thousand dollars. She is to bring one man with

her. They will show three lights, and we will come to them and get the money."

"Folly!" broke in Mag. "How could they get the money together?"

"I was ready for that. She carried on about the lack of time. I told her I knew there were jewels worth that much at Pine Shore, and she could bring them."

"You ran a big risk," interrupted Smith. "Central might have overheard and had you nabbed."

"Not the way I managed it. And the Trevis woman was too flustered to give anything away."

There was a clatter of dishes.

"Absolute folly!" exclaimed the woman.

"Now, look here, Mag; you are pretty wise, but you don't look as far as you might. I don't want to give them time to form any plan to beat us—to get a swifter launch, for instance. We can beat that old tub of theirs. I told her this was her only chance, and you bet she'll take it. If she has put detectives on the job, they won't have time to act. The water is rough. So much the better; there'll be fewer boats out, though the weather is clearing, and there'll be some moon. Smith and I will go, while you stay here with the old man."

"Will you take the girl?"

"Of course. Can't you see it? We draw up alongside; they toss us the jewels, expecting us to transfer the girl; we manage it so that she drops into the water. If necessary, we'll ram 'em and light out."

Mag's voice took on a note of resignation.

"Well, you've committed us." Then, after a pause: "Does Micah approve?"

Banks laughed.

"Micah approves," he said.

Oh, the cold-blooded villainy! What monstrous perversion had come upon the old age of Micah Graham, that he could turn so coolly to crime? He must be mad. And in his madness he had drawn about him others who, if not mad, were as wicked as he.

Banks had shown his knowledge of feminine psychology in dealing with Miss Trevis. She would follow any suggestion to regain Marcia, even to putting out on the water this wild night. Banks could not easily be traced from a public telephone-booth in New York, especially since he had worn the effective disguise of a linen coat and a chauffeur's goggles. And, undoubtedly, he had frightened Miss Trevis into secrecy.

I had heard enough. Moving away, I went around the corner to the back of the house. On the lower floor the only light came from a window which was evidently on the other side of the room in which the servants were talking. There was, however, a glow from one of the farther windows of the upper story. Was it Marcia's light? That I must determine, and quickly, for the two men would be setting out on their errand within the hour.

For a moment I entertained the scheme of finding some weapon—a stick or stone—of making a noise that would bring the two men from the house and striking them down in the dark. But the risks were too great. Even if I got them both, Micah and the woman remained, and doubtless there were arms in the house. Failure would ruin all hope of saving Marcia.

My best plan was to get to Marcia's window. I must see her, talk with her. So I prowled around at the back of the house, looking for a ladder, or something that would serve as one.

Near by was a small building, used, in all probability, as a garage. I went to the back of it, and found myself again among the trees.

Returning to the open space behind the house, I searched among the litter of the yard. There was nothing like a ladder, so far as I could see in the gloom, but after a time I came across a pole. It must have been twelve feet long—stout and a little springy, yet not very heavy. Doubtless it had been intended for a small flagpole, to extend from the front veranda, perhaps. At any rate, it was the only thing that would do my work.

I carried the pole to the house, under the lighted window of the second story. The hazard was obvious. The night had been steadily growing lighter. The clouds were thinner, and the fragments of mist infrequent. The drizzling rain

had stopped some minutes before. At the present rate, the moon, the position of which could be seen by an area of dull light in the sky, would break through and flood the yard with its silver. Some one might come out of the house. In that case, I could do no more than make a fight for it.

The pole reached almost to the sill of the upper window, which, I observed, was slightly raised. The blinds were thrown back, but heavy lace curtains made it impossible to distinguish anything within.

Digging at the gravel with the toe of my boot, I found good footing for one end of the pole. The other end I rested against the house. Then, noiselessly, I climbed up. It was something of a tug, especially as the pole and my clothes were wet and slippery; but at last I got high enough to throw first one hand and then the other to the ledge and draw my chin to the level of the sill.

I looked through the net-work of the curtains into a large, well-furnished chamber. In the farther corner stood a huge brass bed—the shine of its knobs was the first thing that caught my eye. Directly opposite my window was a closed door.

After these first details I turned my head to the right. Back against the wall was a table, with an electric reading-lamp. A big chair had been drawn close to it, and seated in the chair—almost concealed in it, so small was he—sat a little old man. His brow was high and bald. White hair hung down over the ears. The face was wrinkled, the mouth a mere gap. The eyes were timid, empty.

It was Micah Graham. I knew him from my old memories. But what a change! The bright, alert expression of the eyes was gone; the dignity and pride of bearing were no more.

What kind of a villain was this to cringe in solitude? Surely this was no kidnaper, no murderer, this vacuous remnant of a dead intelligence. He had known Lincoln, had Micah Graham. It needed but a glance to show that he would not know his own niece now. The shell of his great eccentric lawyer's brain remained, but the light that once made it so luminous had disappeared.

Suddenly he started, and his lips moved in a strange mumbling. The door opened. I noticed that he shrank as he turned to see who was entering. And then his face lighted up, and he clawed the air with his hands like an eager animal.

It was the woman who came in. Her manner was contemptuous, indifferent. In her hands she bore a large bowl of bread and milk, which she placed in the lap of Micah Graham, first tucking a napkin under his chin. He seized the spoon and, uttering weird chuckles, began to eat like a ravenous child.

The woman looked at him for a few moments. She seemed to be appraising his vitality, studying him as one will study tangible resources. Then she left the room.

I slid down the pole to the ground. A great pity had come over me—pity for Micah Graham; for was not he as much a prisoner as Marcia?

CHAPTER VI.

MARCIA.

SO Banks was the real commander at Morton's Point. He and his two confederates were in complete control of the senile old man. Afterward, I was able to piece together the story and see just how insidiously this clever criminal had made himself a necessary servant, and then had introduced the two others.

He it was who had conceived for Micah Graham the scheme of retiring to Morton's Point and writing a book. At first, doubtless, he had flattered his master's vanity, and then, little by little, as the old man's mind weakened, the servant had become master. And always the pretense of Micah Graham's strong-minded eccentricity had been maintained, so that the unsuspicious outer world had no excuse to take action.

But I still had to find Marcia. She was in the house—that much I knew—and, considering the security of the place, it was very unlikely that she had been shut into any windowless room.

Carrying the pole warily, I went around to the farther end of the house—the only one which I had not yet visited.

As at the opposite side, there were three upper windows. To my disappointment none of them was lighted, but I soon observed that, while the two corner windows were closed, the middle one was open a little way at the bottom. Surely, if any one of these rooms was occupied, it must be this one.

The moon had now come out full, obscured only now and then by scurrying patches of cloud. The wind, too, was dying down, coming in fitful gusts that shook the hanging moisture in tiny silver globules from the trees.

I stood looking up at the middle window. Suddenly it framed a white figure. Two hands had pushed aside the curtains, and there, looking out into the night, was Marcia.

Even in the moonlight I knew every detail of that dear face. The golden hair waved down over the ears; the lovely lips held their well-remembered frankness and sympathy. Her lips were parted.

She did not appear to be distressed or frightened; merely patient and a little tired. I could have stood there indefinitely, gazing on the vision I had for so many months yearned to see. But a voice, calling faintly within the house, brought me to my senses.

Pole in hand, I moved out from the shadow in which I had been standing, and looking up, placed a finger on my lips.

She saw me. At first indifferent, doubtless thinking I was one of the men about the house, she was caught by my action and looked at me more earnestly. An instant later she was on her knees, her face at the window-opening.

"John!" she exclaimed.

"Hush!" I cautioned. Then I placed the pole against the house, and in a moment my face was level with hers. I threw my arm over the window-ledge; for the first time our lips met.

"Oh, John, how glad I am that you have come!" Never music so wonderful as those first words.

I did not answer in words.

"But, John, why do you come in this strange way? And you are all wet."

How trivial, I thought, are the things we often think of in great moments. Her solicitude for me was sweet, but she seemed strangely to disregard our present danger.

"I climbed up the quickest way," I said tamely. "And, my dear girl, it has been raining this evening; that is why I am wet."

She put out a soft hand and patted my cheek. I had found footing on the upper ledge of the window below, and was content to rest there while I dared. But there was different work to do, and time was precious.

"Marcia, dear," I whispered, "open the window wider."

"I can't," she replied. "Uncle has had nails driven in so that it won't go up any farther."

I wondered why she said "uncle," but I went on: "Then we must find some way to break it, so that I can get you out of this."

"Yes," she replied, to my astonishment, "isn't it horrid?"

I looked at her in amazement, and she continued: "I wasn't willing to come at all, till Banks said that uncle's life might depend on it."

"What do you mean, Marcia?" I demanded. "Tell me just what happened."

She looked at me in surprise.

"Haven't they told you?"

"I know nothing of this."

"Last evening, after dinner, I went for a little stroll on our shore. There was a strange motor-boat in our harbor, and I walked out on the dock to find out what it was doing there."

"Yes," I whispered, "I know that much."

"Well, Banks was on the breakwater. He told me that uncle was very feeble, and very sorry that he had so long secluded himself, and that he wanted to see me.

"Banks said that uncle's life might depend on my coming across with him at once. He would not even let me go back to the house, but promised to telephone Aunt Eva as soon as we got to Morton's Point. He was so urgent that I got into the boat and we came across the sound —just *raced* across."

I muttered something, and Marcia paused.

"Go on, dear," I said, and she continued her remarkable story while I perched there at the sill.

"When we got here, Banks brought Mrs. Buckingham to me—the housekeeper and nurse. She has a beautiful voice. She told me that uncle was sleeping, and she would not disturb him. Any shock might mean—you know how suddenly dear father went." Marcia's eyes were wet. I leaned forward and kissed her.

"So she brought me to this room and asked me to stay overnight. It seems that, if he can see me just at the right time, they think he may get well. Banks went to the telephone and called up Aunt Eva. I heard him explaining and telling her not to worry. So I stayed. It was very hard to think of not seeing you this afternoon, but Mrs. Buckingham said that they would try to get you to come and take me back. She has been kindness itself."

I smiled grimly. The resourcefulness of Banks was apparently unlimited. So cleverly had he managed the abduction that, if it failed at any point and Marcia had to be returned, his case would be perfect. Micah's condition would bear his statements out.

His telephone ruse was a convincing piece of rascality. So easy to call up a wrong number and deliver the message, charging the error to the difficulties of long-distance conversation!

"This morning," Marcia added, "Mrs. Buckingham brought my breakfast and said that uncle, while he had insisted on dressing and moving about, was not quite in his right mind, and she could not risk his seeing me just then. Would I wait for a normal moment? It might come at any time. I said I would, if they would send for you. She said that she would send as soon as possible, and—well, I felt that I simply must stay.

"She asked me to remain in this room until she came for me, for fear that uncle might come upon me somewhere about the house. I agreed, and promised to keep the door fastened, as she suggested. When she knocks four times—this way—" Marcia gently illustrated the method on my hand—"I go and unlock it. I hope uncle is better by now. But why are you at the window like this?"

"Marcia," I whispered, "they didn't send for me."

"Oh!" she answered, "then you just came. I'm so glad. And I don't believe it will hurt uncle even if he sees you."

"No," I replied, "it won't hurt uncle."

Marcia suspected nothing, so cautiously honeyed had been their treatment of her. I thought of her danger, and a wild rage surged through me. How I would make them pay!

But it must be nearly time for the motor-boat to set out. It flashed upon me that the weak point in Banks's story was his demand for ransom. Then I saw how easy it would be to ascribe it to unknown blackmailers, who might have got wind of Marcia's disappearance before Miss Trevis was informed of her whereabouts. A weak explanation, perhaps; but there would be no proof to the contrary.

I must make Marcia aware of our situation. At the same time I must not frighten her.

"Marcia," I said, "is your door locked on this side, now?"

"Yes," she replied.

"Then go and unlock it, and open it, and don't be alarmed—above all, don't be alarmed at anything."

She looked at me for an explanation which I did not give; then she crossed the room. I heard her turn the key and fumble with the knob. Soon she came back to the window and whispered tremblingly: "It's locked on the outside."

"Did you relock it on this side?"

"Why, no."

"Then go and do it quickly, dear."

She obeyed unquestioningly, and returned to the window.

"What does it mean?" she asked.

I took her hand and held it firmly. "Marcia, your uncle is a very sick man."

"Is he? Oh, he is the only one left of father's family. I can't bear—"

"No, dear, it isn't that. But he's very old and—childish. He doesn't know what he does."

She pressed my hand.

"That's what Mrs. Buckingham said."

"But suppose I should tell you that two bad men and a wicked woman had got possession of him and were taking his money?"

Marcia started.

"And suppose you learned that those

same persons had persuaded you to come here in the hope of getting money from you?"

"Oh, it can't be!" Marcia exclaimed. "It simply can't. That sort of thing doesn't really happen."

"Marcia, it is true. There isn't time to explain. We are in danger. You must take me at my word and do exactly as I tell you."

She looked at me aghast.

"Yes," I went on, "I have had a hard time to get here at all. Now, we must find a way for you to leave the house."

Marcia was trembling.

"Oh, John, it must be true if you say it is. But I don't understand it at all."

"Never mind that now. We must act." I kissed her tenderly. "Now," I said, "look quickly at the nails that hold the window, and tell me if they are too tight for you to pull out."

She tugged at the nails.

"Isn't there anything you can pry at them with?" I asked.

She went across to the dresser and returned with a shoe-horn. Desperately she worked; but the nails were long and the wood into which they had been driven was tough. The job was too hard for her slim fingers.

"It's no use," she said at last. "I can't budge them."

She was breathing hard from the exertion, and her eyes were shining with excitement.

There was no way for it but to break the pane.

"Well," I said. "I am going to leave you for a few moments and get into the shadows. As soon as I am down, take a chair and break the glass. Then wait. If any one comes to find out what the matter is, tell them that a chair fell against the window. Don't unlock the door. Say that you have retired."

I slid to the ground and took my pole over among the trees. I could hear Marcia moving about her room and presently I saw her approach the window, holding a light chair, which she thrust forward with considerable force. There was a crash, and the pieces of glass came tinkling to the ground below.

I waited. In a few moments I heard Marcia call out, evidently in response to questions from within the house: "Yes? Is that you Mrs. Buckingham? Why, I knocked my chair against the window. I sha'n't mind, it's so warm—what? Can't you wait till morning?—well, I'll get ready as fast as I can—Fifteen minutes—yes."

She came over to the window and beckoned. Fool that I was, I went over with my pole, and again mounted to the ledge.

I should have realized that what would satisfy Mrs. Buckingham, might not satisfy Banks. I should have known that he would come around to investigate as soon as he had her report, but in my eagerness I ignored everything except the fact that there was no longer any barrier between Marcia and me.

"Come," I whispered. "Climb over the ledge, put your arms around my neck, and hang on."

She got to the sill, and I felt her dear arms over my shoulders.

"Oh, John," she whispered, "are you sure this isn't just some horrid nightmare?"

"Quite sure," I answered; and, indeed, my blistered hands felt real enough.

I was about to lower myself, with my burden, when of a sudden I heard the crunch of footsteps on the gravel of the driveway. The person approaching was still around the corner of the house.

"Get back—quick!" I whispered to Marcia.

She climbed back over the sill, and I turned just as Banks sauntered into view.

He gave a low whistle.

"Well, my friend," he said, "I'm glad to see you—yes, very glad!"

CHAPTER VII.

ADVENTURES WITH A POLE.

THERE was nothing malevolent in his easy nonchalance as he stood there in the moonlight. He was grinning with seeming good-nature.

From my position on the ledge I looked down at him with as much calmness as I could muster. He was still at the place where he had halted—about a rod away, at the corner of the house. I did not answer his first greeting, and he spoke again.

"What do you mean, trying to break

into a young lady's room at this time of night?"

I answered with a question:

"What do *you* mean by stealing the young lady and locking her up?"

Banks laughed.

"My dear sir, you are dreaming. She is here of her own will. This is her uncle's house, in which she is an honored guest."

"Oh!" said I; "that's the way of it, is it?"

"That's the way of it." Again the laugh.

Marcia was kneeling at the sill. Banks could not see her, though I heard her quick breathing. And now she touched my shoulder lightly.

"John," she whispered, "he may be right, after all."

Without turning my head, for I dared not take my eyes from the waiting figure below, I muttered, "Wait."

Then to Banks: "My name is Bruce."

He bowed ironically.

"Doubly glad to meet you, I am sure. If you are Mr. John Bruce, your trespass has more warrant."

"It has every warrant," said I; "as you well know."

He appeared to consider.

"May I ask," he said at last, "whether you came by water?"

I might have gained time by evading the question, but his insolence had irritated me to the forgetfulness of caution.

"No," I blurted; "I came in by the gate."

"By the gate?" His insolence left him.

"Yes," I went on; "I had the pleasure of riding in at the back of your motor-car after you failed to find me in the brush."

"Clever!" he laughed. "Very clever!"

While this conversation was going on, I quietly twisted my legs around the pole, and now I quickly let myself down to the ground.

Banks took a step toward me.

"Keep back," I said, grasping the pole.

He stopped.

"Mr. Bruce," he said, "we have fooled long enough. Much as you may have wished to see Miss Graham, you had no right to intrude yourself in this way. Her uncle is a very sick man. Your presence, if he learns of it, may be dangerous to him."

"Micah Graham's condition is known to me," I said.

"Mrs. Buckingham, the nurse," he continued, ignoring my interruption, "has decided that he had better not see his niece at all. We are going to take her back to Pine Shore to-night."

"Yes?" I questioned.

"And making all allowance for your impetuous visit, we shall be glad to take you back in the boat with her." He spread his hands as if to ask whether any offer could be fairer.

I had a vision of Marcia and myself in the boat with Banks and Smith! Weaponless, I would be no match for the two of them at close quarters. And no matter how vigilant I might be, the assumption of friendly relations with them would necessarily give them a dozen opportunities to overpower me.

With the pole in my hands, I stood a fair chance of holding my own for some time, even against both of them. Something might turn up to my advantage. I might even succeed in disabling the enemy.

I pushed the pole well out toward Banks, resting the end on the ground, a little to his right, in such a position that I could either strike or thrust. Then I called: "Marcia, are you there?"

"Yes," she answered.

"Whatever happens don't unlock your door unless I come. Barricade it with your dresser. And don't let any one in at the window."

"But, John—" she began.

"Please, dear—just believe me."

"I will," she said.

Banks had lost all appearance of good nature. His voice was sharp, and his words came fast.

"Mr. Bruce, I have made you a fair offer. If you persist in being unreasonable, we shall have to use force. I can't let you risk Mr. Graham's life any longer. Will you go quietly to the boat?"

The moment had come.

"Drop this lying," I said. "I heard you speak of running over me in cold blood out there on the Neck Road."

"Well," he said.

"And I heard you talking with your accomplices in the kitchen a while ago."

"Ah!" There was understanding in his voice.

"You spoke of ransom-money and of drowning," I went on.

Like a flash his right hand went to his side-pocket, and was thrust out toward me. There was a spurt of flame, but I stood unharmed!

Before he could fire a second shot I swung the pole. He leaped back, but my blow caught his hand, and the revolver was sent spinning some distance into the blackness of the trees."

"Curse you!" he shouted, wringing his hand. He began a bull-like rush at me, but I had raised the pole to bring it down on his head, and he stopped short, just out of reach, and began to laugh.

"You're worth fighting," he said.

I had been conscious that Marcia was screaming at the window above, and I called to her: "All right, Marcia! Remember what I said." It occurred to me how fortunate it was that I had gone on that hunting-trip, for the exercise had put me in good condition.

"Let's parley a bit," said Banks, eying me.

I was nothing loath, for time seemed to be the only thing that could help me. But I saw him look past me, and I turned just in time to see Smith and the woman coming on the run around the other corner of the house.

I feinted toward them swiftly, and they stopped. Then I backed quickly against the house-wall and seized the pole in the middle, so that I might strike in either direction.

The main thought in my mind was to save myself, in order that I might save Marcia. Her distress I could imagine. Banks's shot at me was the first real evidence to her that anything was amiss. Before that there had been the belief that my suspicions might be wrong.

The dear girl had doubted my judgment, but she had been ready with her trust. My heart warmed with the remembrance of how she had accepted my word, even when it was opposed to everything that she had reason to believe. Oh, if I had only waited to see whether Banks would come to investigate the breaking of the window!

But these thoughts were secondary to my recognition of the situation as it was. At my left was Banks—cool and dangerous; at my right, and between me and the harbor, Smith and the woman. I was not afraid of Smith, but any attack on him would bring Banks to my back.

"Let us parley," said Banks again.

I stood silent, glancing first at him, then at the others.

"We're sure to get you," he went on. "You can't leave the grounds. If you try the water, we'll pot you. I was hasty in shooting a moment ago. Frankly, I don't wish to kill you. You have surprised our plans. Well, we are after money—yes; but what I said about drowning the girl was only bluff. We don't care to have murder on our hands. If you will see to it that we get the ransom, I'll let you both go."

"How?" I asked.

"By the boat, as I suggested before. Come, Mr. Bruce, you're a gentleman, and your word will be enough."

So fair-spoken was he that I hesitated. It was not unreasonable that he should have softened his first intentions. And then I remembered Micah Graham. Marcia out of the way, her fortune would go to her uncle. Once his, it would be theirs.

On the other hand, if they let us go, they would have to content themselves with the ransom, and with what loot they could get together quickly at Morton's Point, for they would have to run to cover. And in Paris, South America, wherever they went, they would always be under the risk of capture.

No, as Banks had said in the kitchen, the ransom was to be merely an incident in their plan. To a man of his type, the game was worth murder. Marcia and I would be done away with, and then old Micah, who was doubtless as amenable as a child to Banks's dictation, would sign checks until they were through with him.

I thought how easy it would be for them to place me on the electrified fence, or against the gate, and attribute my death to curiosity. Their original plan would serve for Marcia.

While I was thinking, Banks edged slowly around to my front. I should have perceived what he meant to do, but

I was struck with the notion that, if he got far enough from his original position, I could lunge at him, and then, with no one behind me, by a quick dash at Smith, get to the boats.

They would have to catch me, once away from the grounds, or their game would be up. If I got away, they were unlikely to harm Marcia. The time it would take to break in upon her would be too valuable to them.

Even as I was about to rush, Banks turned and ran in among the trees. At the same moment Smith stooped and picked up two large stones. The woman stood motionless.

I saw Banks groping in the underbrush. He struck a match. It may be wondered why I did not follow him. To go among the trees would have made me helpless, for in there a stone or a short stick would do better service than my pole.

Banks struck another match. I saw him stoop and pick something up. Then he came to the open again, holding the revolver in his hand. The moonlight, barred by the leaves of a tree beside him, threw on his face a shadow which oddly distorted his cheerful smile. It was as though nature had unmasked him.

"You see," he said, "fortune favors us. Your case is quite hopeless, and you might as well agree to our plan."

"You would be two against me in the boat," I said.

"True; but you have my word."

I laughed.

"But you are armed."

For answer, he broke the revolver, let the cartridges fall to the ground, and tossed the empty weapon at my feet.

I stared at him in amazement. Nothing could be fairer than his action, and yet I simply could not believe in him.

I puzzled vainly for a moment; then the solution came to me. The secret lay in the man's extreme caution. But for that he must have been behind bars, perhaps on the scaffold, long ago.

He would kill, but not with bullets. No capital offense would he commit unless he could cover his tracks. He may have inferred that I was known to have set out for Morton's Point, and he did not intend that my body should be found with a bullet-hole in it.

At this point Smith spoke up.

"Quit this monkey-business, Banks."

"Yes," I said, "quit this monkey-business. You sound fair, but I don't believe you. Take care!" for he had stepped toward me. I raised the pole.

He looked at me with a new expression. "Very well, Mr. Bruce," he said. "Your blood be on your own head—your blood and the girl's."

With uncanny deliberation he put his hand inside his coat and drew out another revolver.

Even now I did not believe that he would really shoot. And yet, in a moment of anger, he had shot before.

"I don't intend to shoot unless you attack us or try to get to the boats—that is, until we are ready to set out. Then you must go with us, or—" he did not finish.

I stooped and picked up the empty revolver at my feet.

"Drop that," said Smith, menacing me with a stone.

With the air of referring to his supreme authority, I looked to Banks.

"Throw it down," he said. "It won't do you any good."

I put it into my pocket.

"Oh, well," he said—"if you will, keep it." He squatted down and began to pick up the cartridges which he had dropped. "Just as well not to leave these lying around," he observed.

While this was going on, I moved slowly to the corner around which Banks had come—the corner away from Smith and the woman, away from the harbor. There was no clear motive in my mind, but I called: "Marcia!"

"Yes, John." I was delighted to hear how controlled was her voice.

"Don't forget what I said."

"I'll remember."

"And don't trust a single promise that any of these people make."

"I won't."

Banks stood up, holding the last of the cartridges for which he had been searching. I had counted as he picked them up—one—two—three—four—and the empty shell which he filliped to one side. Now, as he pocketed the last one, he grinned at me and remarked: "That's mannerly of you, Mr. Bruce, to ask a young lady not to believe me."

I had now reached a position where I could look sidewise along the back of the house. I noted that the light was burning in Micah Graham's room. Doubtless the old man was still babbling in his chair, forgotten by his nurse.

From the point where I stood the driveway ran straight along the back of the house and on to the iron gate, which was outlined against the moonlit sky at the end of the long gap which the road made in the forest growth. The search-light had been turned off.

The move which I now decided to make was purely strategic. If I dashed down the drive, as if to run around the house, Banks might follow me. He would keep his word not to shoot, I felt certain, unless I actually ran for the boats. Meantime, if I could get out of sight, I might be able either to elude him or to spring on him as he ran after me.

Apparently, he alone was armed. It was characteristic of his caution that Smith and the woman should be allowed no weapon.

Suddenly I turned, holding the pole by the middle, and sprinted along by the back of the house. I rounded the corner and waited. For a moment he did not appear. Then I heard a laugh and looked about. He was strolling leisurely from the direction of the harbor, his revolver in his hand.

While I ran along the back of the house, he had walked around in the other direction. His thoughts were all of the harbor. I realized that his real wish was that I should go in among the trees, where, as I have already explained, my one weapon, the pole, would be worthless.

"No use," he said, advancing. "And now, Mr. Bruce, it is time to begin our little journey." His voice became hard. "Unless you come, I will shoot."

I knew by his manner that he had been driven to the last resort, much as he disliked to employ it. Yes, he would shoot.

My glance traveled again down the roadway that led to the gate. I stood near the point where it split to encircle the house, and I noted how smooth and straight it ran, carpeted with a tremulous design of leaf shadows, to the barrier charged with deadly fluid.

The gate, as I had estimated, was at least nine feet high, not so high—the thought came like a flash and brought a vivid picture!

I saw myself standing again on Yale field, a long pole in my hands, even as now. I wore a jersey and short, loose running-breeches, and my shoes were spiked. A short distance away two uprights supported a cross-bar. How high it looked! But I had shifted the pole in my hands until it was balanced as I desired; then, with a swift stride, raced forward and thrust the point of the pole into the ground. I flew high into the air, wriggled over the cross-bar, and dropped on the other side. I heard the applause of the stands, and the announcement, "Eleven feet, one inch!"

Ah, that was a dozen years ago, and here I was, tired, trapped, and facing the advancing menace of the man Banks.

I had vaulted higher than this gate—but only after careful training, on prepared ground. Here it would be death to miss. But there was no other chance.

At this moment Smith appeared behind Banks.

"Come on!" he shouted impatiently to his commander. "Quit playing him. This ain't sport; it's business."

"You're right," said Banks, and I saw his mouth shut hard.

With a sudden turn, I bounded down the driveway, toward the gate. I shifted the pole in my hands, so that what I estimated as ten feet of it was thrust before me like a lance. I thanked Heaven for that stout pole!

"Let him alone," I heard Banks shout to Smith, who had evidently set out after me. "We'll drive him into the trees."

I rushed faster and faster. The gate seemed to fly toward me—now it was almost on me. What if the pole should slip in the gravel? What if I should graze the top of the gate?

But I could not hesitate. I struck the end of the pole into the gravel. It held. It shot up, on the circumference of a circle of which the pole was a radius.

The agony and doubt of that moment is something that I have never forgotten. I sped toward the top of the gate. I looked beyond it and saw Morton's Neck spreading out before me.

It seemed as though I should not get clear. I heard a shout and the sound of running feet, and suddenly there was a report and a bullet went singing by.

Then, lifting my legs under me, I went over the gate. I let go the pole, which fell back with a clatter—and I dropped, outside of the gate and a foot away from it, down to the gravel of the Neck Road.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE WOMAN.

I GOT to my feet quickly. The run had winded me, but the fall had not jarred me enough to speak of. I noticed the big white sign of warning on the gate.

In one sense, I was little better off than before. Banks and Smith would quickly open the gate. If I set out to cover the three miles to the village, Smith would doubtless follow me alone, while Banks went back and brought out the motor-car. Then there would be another game of hide-and-seek among the bushes, with the chances against me, tired as I was. They simply had to catch me. Otherwise, their whole scheme would fail.

The best course that I could think of was to try to reenter the grounds by way of the little harbor. They might suspect this, but it seemed more likely that they would first search the Neck.

At either side of the road the soil was soft sand. My tracks would show plainly in the moonlight. Accordingly, I ran down the road across the space from which the shrubbery had been stripped, digging my toes in hard, as though running fast. At the first point, where the gravel was so smoothly packed that my feet left little trace, I leaped sidewise, landing in a little bush.

From this I jumped to another bush, and to another, and so on toward the sound, until, looking over my shoulder, I saw the gate swing open. Then I dropped to my hands and knees and crawled the remaining distance to the water. The bushes on which I had stepped were so wind-tossed and scraggly that it would take the eyes of an Indian to see in them a human trail.

From my position at the water's edge I saw Banks and Smith follow my tracks on the road. The nickeled mountings of Banks's revolver threw out a succession of glints as his hand swung back and forth. When they came to the place where the tracks ended, I saw them stop and examine the sand at either side. Then Smith proceeded along the road at a jog-trot, while Banks circled among the nearer bushes.

The tide was coming in, and the waves were still pounding on the shore. I dared not keep to the beach, so I crawled out into the water a little way and, buffeted by the choppy waves, made toward the wall, with frequent glances back at my enemies, who were still busy near the road.

The wall on the side toward the sound was, I discovered, heavily buttressed with stone, and the water dashed against its face. A little distance ahead I could see where it turned out to form a side of the harbor. It ran out forty or fifty feet—farther than I had supposed — and still farther out I could see the line of a detached breakwater, set at right angles.

The water was not yet so deep but that I could wade through with some difficulty, along the course of the wall, at a distance of several feet from it. As I proceeded, I found myself wondering why, with all his care to guard the land approach to the house, Banks had left the water entrance open. Surely, many a pleasure-boat from Soundport and neighboring villages must put in there for protection. This weak point could be explained only on the ground that a constant watch was kept from the house.

I thought of Marcia, waiting in her barricaded room. At no time since I vaulted the gate had there been any apprehension of immediate danger to her. They would not dare harm her while I was at large.

But the dear girl's own state of mind —her anxiety, her distress—how it enraged me to think of the manner in which Banks had imposed on her! He had made the one appeal that would bring her, unprotesting, to Morton's Point—an appeal to her splendid sympathy for others. She never hesitated

an instant when she knew that others needed her. But how had Banks become aware of that trait? Doubtless through some babbling talk of old Micah's.

How well Marcia had taken the discovery that she had been trapped! How brave she was!

I had come to the angle where the wall turned out. To get around it and into the little harbor, I should have to swim. Fortunately my clothing was light and, soggy though it was, would not weigh me down too heavily, for a distance so short. I could have wished my shoes off, but I decided to keep them on.

Boldly enough, I struck out toward the sound, and in a minute or two, helped by the vagaries of a current, I swung round the end of the wall.

Now I saw why the water-entrance was not guarded. Clear across the space between the parallel terminals of the wall stretched a lattice of iron. Above it the two deadly bars completed their circuit.

Was the lattice charged? I knew little about electricity, but a moment's observation showed me that at no point did the bars touch it. However, I could not climb over it without establishing a connection.

The only way was to go under. I seized the lattice and felt with my feet for the lower edge, but could not touch it. Evidently, the iron-work extended to the bottom. Then I noticed that the central portion was a double gate, large enough to admit of the passage of the motor-boats which rode at their moorings within.

I worked my way along to this gate. Above me was a lock, with a foot or two of sheet metal around it. I shook the gates; they did not budge.

It now occurred to me that, if the lattice originally had been sunk to the bottom, the currents might have scoured out an opening beneath it, particularly near the center. So I pulled myself down under the surface at the gate. There must have been at least a foot of water over my head before my toe finally ran free under the bottom of the gate. I pushed down still farther, and found that my feet did not strike the sand until my knee was against the lowest bar of the gate.

Back at the surface I filled and refilled my lungs with the clean air several times, preparing for the plunge. If there were any sharp projection at the bottom, it might catch my clothing, so I decided to go under feet first.

With a final long inhalation, I pulled myself rapidly to the bottom, pushed my feet, then my body, under the gate, and swung the rest of my body after. Suddenly my progress was checked. Freeing one hand, I groped desperately, and found that a button on my coat had caught. It was easily released; and with a final effort I got my head through the opening and rose quickly to the surface—inside the gate.

Clinging to the lattice, I gasped for air. Everything seemed black for a moment, but the ozone-laden wind soon restored me. I reached up to the lock. To my delight, I discovered that on this side it opened with a catch. No key was necessary to leave the harbor.

I swam to the little landing and pulled myself out of the water. It would have been a relief to rest for a time, but Banks or Smith might return soon. And then, there was the woman to be dealt with.

At the landing lay a short boat-hook. Taking it with me, I climbed the steps to the lawn and ran, without effort at concealment, up toward the house.

I had almost reached the veranda, when, of a sudden, I was halted by a voice—a well-modulated contralto.

"So you have come back, Mr. Bruce."

It was Mrs. Buckingham. She stepped out of the shadow of the porte-cochère and advanced toward me slowly. Her bearing was perfectly assured.

"Yes," I said, "I have come back."

She glanced at the boat-hook, which was swinging idly in my hand.

"You won't need that, Mr. Bruce. I sha'n't attempt to interfere with you."

"I am glad to hear it," said I. "But you won't blame me if I don't trust you. Be so good as to lead the way into the house and to Miss Graham's door."

She nodded.

"I know. Appearances are against me. But you must let me explain. I really am a trained nurse, and—"

"I've no time to listen." My tone was harsh. "Don't try to keep me until the men return. Come; lead the way."

She did not move.

"You've plenty of time. Banks just came back and took out the motor-car. Listen."

Sure enough, I heard the machine purring somewhere in the distance. Had I not been blocked by the water-gate, I should have met him when he returned for it.

"I simply *must* explain," she went on, "because—because I want you to take me with you, Mr. Bruce."

She was quite close to me. Her eyes were luminous, earnest, and her masculine face was strangely softened. I did not trust her, and yet I felt compelled to hear her, anxious though I was to release Marcia. So I nodded my consent to listen.

"Be quick, then," I said.

"I am a trained nurse." Her words came with an eager breathlessness. "I was with Mr. Graham before Banks came, and I was suspicious of that man from the first day he entered the house. That was in New York, before we moved here.

"Soon I noticed that he was getting a powerful influence over Mr. Graham. I tried to check it, but the old gentleman's mind was weakening, and I suspect that Banks gave him some drug. It wasn't long before this place was bought, and here we all came, for Banks had brought Smith in to act as an underservant.

"I won't stop to show you how I gradually came to understand what Banks was doing. Little by little it became clear, and then one day he had a long talk with me and told me everything—or as much as he ever does tell. He gave me my choice of acting with him or leaving the place. I knew what that meant. If I left the place, I should not live to tell others.

"It was wicked of me, Mr. Bruce, but I gave in. My part has been passive, but I have had to stand by and see terrible things done. I would have helped you there in the yard this evening, if I could. And now I do hope that you will let me go with you. I haven't a friend or a relative in the world."

Her voice, her manner, breathed truth. It was easy to see how Banks might have forced her to become his accomplice. But her own latent force of will was so evident to me that I wondered how even Banks could drive her into any path she did not choose to take. The confession of her own weakness was the unconvincing element in her story.

Yet it might be true. For that matter, even if she had been more willing than she now admitted to join issue with Banks, it was by no means impossible that she had since regretted it. In that case she might well hesitate to condemn herself any more strongly than was necessary to get my help.

I could not decide whether to trust her or not, but I leaned toward a belief in her. At least it seemed wiser to accept her for the time.

"Well," I said, "I am glad you have told me this, Mrs. Buckingham. We shall be glad of your help. Where is Miss Graham's room?"

She ascended the veranda steps and led me into the house. A few lights were burning, and I saw that the furniture was simple and cheap. Banks had not permitted much money to be spent on household luxuries.

Up the uncarpeted stairs we went, and along the upper hall. Mrs. Buckingham unlocked a door and knocked.

There was no answer, and after a moment I called: "Marcia! Marcia!"

A glad cry sounded from within the room, and we heard heavy furniture moved away from the door, which was quickly flung wide. There, on the threshold, stood my beloved.

We forgot Mrs. Buckingham; we forgot our peril. For a long moment we stood clasped in each other's arms. Then, reluctantly, I told Marcia that we must hurry. I whispered to her that Mrs. Buckingham professed to be our friend. Marcia's hand in mine, we began our return journey down the hall. Suddenly Marcia stopped.

"I must see Uncle Micah," she exclaimed.

I sought to draw her forward, for I was anxious lest Banks and Smith should return. Motor-cars are swift, and they would soon discover that I had taken to the water.

"Oh," said Marcia again, "I can't go without seeing him, John. We mustn't leave him here. Take him with us."

"My dear," I said, "I am afraid it is not practicable. He is in no condition to go with us."

"But think what those men may do to him."

"They won't injure him." I tried to be reassuring. "They won't bother to do that. When they learn that we have gone, they will simply disappear, and we can get your uncle to-morrow."

Though partly convinced, she was still reluctant to leave him there.

"He wouldn't take much room in the boat," she pleaded, "and we can wrap him up warmly."

I looked at Mrs. Buckingham, who had been standing in silence. As though she had been waiting for the opportunity, she spoke as soon as I turned to her. Her voice was soft.

"Mr. Bruce, while Miss Graham does not wish to leave her uncle, I am unwilling to go without my husband."

"Your husband?" I hardly caught the force of her words.

"Yes, Mr. Bruce."

And then Marcia, divining the truth with her woman's intuition, exclaimed: "Oh, it can't be!"

I saw the loathing with which Marcia was staring at the woman.

"I can't believe it," said Marcia again.

"But it's true, Miss Graham. He is my husband."

"What do you mean?" I demanded. "Who and where is this husband?"

Mrs. Buckingham laid her hand on the knob of the door near which she was standing.

"He is in this room, Mr. Bruce."

"Micah Graham!" I gasped.

"Yes." Her eyes were steady, her manner was composed.

I looked at Marcia, and Marcia looked at me.

CHAPTER IX.

THE ESCAPE.

AT once I realized why Mrs. Buckingham had been willing to throw in her lot with ours. My appearance on the lawn had proclaimed me master of the situation. Single-handed, she could not oppose me, and Banks and Smith were beyond reach.

True, she might have signaled to them with the search-light, but Marcia and I would have been free before the two men could reach us.

If she really was the wife of Micah Graham, she could afford to help us; for the case, as she undoubtedly perceived, would gladly be compromised out of court to avoid notoriety and scandal. She had played a safer game than Banks, and was prepared to outwit him at the last.

"When did this happen?" I asked coldly.

"Yesterday," she answered readily. "While the men were going across the sound to get Miss Graham, I put Mr. Graham in the motor-car and took him to Brooklyn and found a justice."

"But Mr. Graham couldn't answer the questions intelligently."

"I told the justice that he was dumb. I also told *him* not to speak—and he always does as I tell him. We were back at the house long before the men returned."

"But how did you get past the gate? Banks has the key."

She smiled and drew a key from her pocket.

"I had this duplicate made long ago for just such an emergency."

She replaced the key; then with a change of front, she boldly showed her hand.

"I know that the marriage won't hold in the courts, but I also know that Miss Graham will be glad to buy me off. You can't prove that I have done wrong here. There—that's the truth of it. Think of me as you please."

Marcia shrank to the protection of my arm.

"Oh, it's too awful!" she whispered.

The woman unbolted the door of Micah Graham's room and entered, beckoning to us to follow.

The old man was still seated in his chair, as I had seen him from the window.

I went over and touched him on the shoulder. He looked up at me vacantly, and his lips moved.

"He thinks he is dumb again," said

the woman. Then to him: "You can talk now, Micah."

At the sound of her voice, he started to his feet.

"Auntie!" he cried in a high and empty voice. "Auntie! Auntie! Micah wants auntie!"

Marcia had held back when we entered. She had been almost overcome by the woman's story. But now she ran forward and took the old man's hands in hers.

"Do you know me, Uncle Micah?" The appeal in her voice was heartrending. "It's Marcia! Marcia!"

He regarded her with his wavering eyes and squeaked: "Who-o? Who-o?" Then he laughed like a child.

With a dry sob, Marcia turned to me.

"Be brave, dear," I said gently. "Make the best of it." I gathered blankets from the bed. One pair I handed to the older woman.

"Wrap him up," I said.

The other I threw around Marcia's shoulders. The night was cool for early September, and it would be cooler on the water.

We went down-stairs, Mrs. Buckingham—I can call her by no other name—leading. I supported Marcia.

The boat-hook was still in my hand. Mrs. Buckingham observed it.

"Have you kept that empty revolver?" she asked.

For answer I took it from my pocket. I had forgotten that it was there.

"Wait," she said, running back up the stairs.

In a few moments she returned and dropped into my hand some cartridges.

"I knew where he kept them," she explained. "Give me the boat-hook. You'd better load the gun."

Thus we went—a strange procession—from the house and down to the boats. On the way I filled the cylinder of the revolver and put the few remaining cartridges that I possessed into a convenient pocket.

Marcia and I have never forgotten that moment. The moon had passed the zenith. There, on the silvered lawn, with the ominous shadows of the trees at each side, we looked to the bobbing boats silhouetted in the luminous moon-path of the water. Behind us the house, no longer guarding its sinister secrets, seemed strangely forlorn. We had left lights burning; but with our knowledge that the place was empty, the false appearance of occupancy but added to our feeling of its ghostliness.

As we reached the landing, I heard a distant hum. The motor-car! Banks and Smith were returning. They must have completed their search. They would understand how I had tricked them.

"That boat," said Mrs. Buckingham, pointing to the larger of the two.

I pulled it to the float, for it was moored close, and untied the painter.

"Quick! Get in," I said, helping Marcia over the gunwale. I hoped that she had not heard the returning motor-car.

Suddenly old Micah created a diversion. He had been docile enough, coming from the house, but the sight of the water near his feet and the rocking of the boat terrified him. He uttered a loud wail, and, breaking from Mrs. Buckingham's grasp, went pattering back up the lawn.

The woman was after him quickly. I saw her come up with him and take his arm. He resisted her efforts to lead him back to the boat and set up a frightened babble. Then we had a glimpse of the woman's strength. As easily as though he were a bundle of feathers, she lifted the old man into her arms, brought him struggling to us, and put him in the boat.

He could not have weighed much more than a hundred pounds, but her feat was none the less unusual. Her breath did not seem to come at all faster after her effort.

The motor-car now sounded very near.

"What is that?" said Marcia from the boat.

"Banks and Smith returning," I answered. "We shall have to hurry."

Taking up the boat-hook, which the woman had dropped on the landing when she ran back after Micah, I jumped into the stern of the boat and pushed off. Then I ran to the bow and seized the lattice-gate just as we came to it. I reached up to the latch. It moved back easily in my fingers. But to my consternation the gate would not budge.

Again and again I pushed at it vainly. In my nervous haste, it was some moments before I saw where the difficulty lay. A stout iron bar had been securely padlocked across the central upright of the gates a full two feet above the catch-lock.

This must be one of Banks's extra precautions. From my position in the water when I came in under the gate half an hour before the bulge of the lock, with its protecting metal plate, had hidden it from me.

Frantically I struck at the padlock with the steel end of the boat-hook, the blows clanking loud. It would not give. Then I thrust the point of the boat-hook through the loop of the padlock and, using one of the cross-pieces of the lattice as a point of leverage, tried to pry the padlock off.

But the lock was stout. There was a splintering of wood, and the boat-hook broke off short in my hands. I saved myself from flying into the water only by clutching at the lattice.

Our only salvation was to ram the gate open. I got back into the boat, which I had held close to the lattice with one foot, and, starting the motor, backed to the landing.

"Lie down in the bottom," I commanded the others.

They disposed themselves quickly, Mrs. Buckingham pulling Micah down beside her. Then I threw on the power. We struck the gate squarely. It bent with the impact, but the padlock held, for it was too high above our prow to take the full force of the shock. The give in the lower part of the gate absorbed most of the blow. Moreover, the little harbor was not long enough to let me get up much speed.

I backed the boat to the landing, ready to batter at the gate a second time.

"Everybody to the stern," I ordered. If we could raise the prow even a very little nearer the padlock the blow would be more effective.

Just as I was about to make the boat leap forward more swiftly, even at the risk of breaking the motor, a loud humming from the grounds behind us made me turn. The car came plunging under the porte-cochère and down the lawn. It stopped about fifty feet from the house, and Banks's voice called out: "Hold on there, Mr. Bruce; we'll go with you."

He jumped down from his seat and started toward us. I could see the gleam of his revolver in his hand.

Drawing my own weapon, I fired at him pointblank. The shot missed. Evidently it struck a window in the house behind him, for I heard the distant tinkle of falling glass.

Banks laughed aloud.

"So you found the cartridges. Well, Mr. Bruce, we're quits—a shot apiece." From which it would seem he had forgotten his effort to pot me when I vaulted the gate. "But I don't believe you wish to shoot me any more than I wish to shoot you." He paused, and I noted that he took no step nearer to us.

"You might have hurt some one in the house," he went on. "Or are they all with you?" He raised himself on tiptoe as if the better to look down into our boat. "Ah," he said, "I believe you have quite a party. But you can't get out unless I help you, Mr. Bruce, can you now?"

Still I did not answer. He was as reluctant as ever to use bullets. The thought came to me that, if he and Smith could enter our boat and go out on the sound with us, his first plan for disposing of Marcia and me would be close to fulfilment. But I was armed now. Should I let him come?

No; he was also armed—and there was the woman to be reckoned with. I believed her story, but I could not fully trust her. If my mastery were threatened, she might turn against us. At last I spoke.

"Throw away your revolver, Banks."

The moonlight was so bright that I could see his grin as he replied: "Then what should I do if you tried to turn me over to the police after we cross the sound? No, Mr. Bruce, I must have *some* protection."

I looked beyond him. Smith had remained in the car, in the tonneau. The front seats protected him. Evidently he did not care to face bullets.

"Come, now, Mr. Bruce," Banks continued. "I want to do the best I can for you—*and* for myself. You must see that I have no wish to keep you here. I

don't care where you go, as long as I am let alone."

The words sounded false.

"Let us go, then," I said.

He considered.

"If you will give me your promise," he began—"if you will promise not to prosecute me, I'll give you the key to that padlock—provided you also let me have that ransom."

The bargain was one I did not like. But if I could get the key to the padlock, I was ready to promise almost anything; that is, if I could get it without running too great a risk of treachery, for I was very doubtful of our ability to force the gate.

I glanced down at Marcia.

"Shall we?" I asked.

"Yes, yes," she whispered eagerly.

"All right," I called to Banks. "I promise."

He started forward.

"Stand back," I cried, threatening him with my revolver. "We want the key—not you."

"I've got to give it to you some way," he explained cheerfully. "Let me see; who is with you? Miss Graham, of course. Any one else? The old man?"

"Yes, Mr. Graham is here—and Mrs. Buckingham."

He whistled incredulously, but the woman rose and stood in view. She had been crouching at the stern and, therefore, was the best concealed of all of us.

"Why, Mag," he exclaimed. "Have *you* turned against me?"

The woman did not answer him, but whispered to me: "I'll get the key."

"Stay where you are," I ordered; but she was already on the landing.

Well, I thought, it did not matter. If she remained with Banks, we should be no worse off.

She advanced toward him, her hand extended. He seemed to be watching her lips. Was I mistaken, or did his attitude indicate that she was telling him something? She did not hesitate, however, but took the key which he drew from his pocket with his left hand. Then, unmolested, she turned and walked back to the boat and resumed her former place.

Banks stood motionless while I pushed the boat away from the landing. "Go to the bow," I commanded Mrs. Buckingham, "and open the gate."

She made her way forward and clutched the lattice. A moment later she was swinging the right half of the gate open.

I turned on the power. We shot through the opening. Looking back for the last time, I saw Banks still in the same position. Smith had descended from the car and was coming forward.

"Good-by," I called.

"Good-by all." His words floated out to us. "A pleasant trip."

I threw over the wheel just in time to avoid the outer breakwater, and we were free—on the open water of the sound. The waves were choppy, but the boat seemed stanch; and as I increased our speed, we plowed along rapidly.

The boat was a thirty-footer—about ten feet longer than her mate—and was decked fore and aft.

I steered off to avoid an ugly reef over which the waves were curling a little distance ahead. And all the time I was wondering about Banks. That he was not done with us, I felt sure. Sixty thousand dollars must be a tremendous comedown from his expectations. He would not be satisfied with so disappointing a sum. I wished that I had qualified the promise not to prosecute him. Not that it made much difference, for he would undoubtedly go as far as he dared to force more out of Marcia.

Marcia, wrapped in her blanket, was sitting at the bottom of the boat, her back against the forward bulkhead, by the wheel. From my standing position close to her, I could look down into her face, and from the start of the voyage she had as much of my attention as the care of the wheel would permit.

She was exhausted, but brave and calm as ever—and her eyes were confident and trusting. We were free—and together. I bent my head.

"Keep your eye on Mrs. Buckingham," I whispered.

She nodded understandingly, for the woman was sitting behind me, by the side of the old man. He was so quiet that I fancied he had fallen asleep.

And then Marcia gave a cry.

"John," she exclaimed, "they're coming out with the other boat!"

I looked back. The second boat was swinging around the end of the outer breakwater, half a mile behind us.

CHAPTER X.

THE CHASE.

WE were making good speed—about ten miles an hour, I judged—and we had a good start. Morton's Point was becoming a mere blur in the distance. The white beach of Morton's Neck was clearly visible, in its long sweep, and we could look beyond, across the intervening bay, to the darkness of the distant hills of Soundport, with here and there a light twinkling. For the first time, too, Cape Weatherwise was in sight, and the perspective of the Long Island shore to the westward.

Out in the sound no boat was in sight. It was too late for pleasure craft, and the night steamers between New York and New England ports must long since have passed. A glance at my watch, which was still running despite its wetting, showed the hour-hand close to three.

It had not failed to occur to me that Banks might follow. But I doubted whether he could catch us. We had the larger boat and, as I supposed, the faster. He was armed—so was I. When it came to maneuvering on the water, I was not afraid of Banks or any one else. In any event, our position was stronger than at Morton's Point.

From time to time as we raced on I looked back. The other boat clung to our wake at about the same distance. And then, while I was straining my eyes toward the Connecticut hills, which were as yet indistinguishable in that soft light, Marcia exclaimed.

A sound—faint, but unmistakable—came over the water. It was like the distant firing of a machine-gun. Once more I turned. The other boat was creeping nearer in spite of our speed. Banks had given her more power. She must be a fast racer.

I remembered how the woman had herded us into the larger boat. Had she tricked me after all? Her story had sounded convincing, and I had believed in her desire to get away from Banks's control—from the necessity of dividing up with him. I looked at her, there in the stern. She had just thrown a backward glance at our pursuers, and her face showed mild anxiety.

"Mrs. Buckingham," I called, "did you know that boat was a racer?"

"I knew she was faster than this one, but I didn't think she would hold us all." With that answer I had to be content.

"What do you think Banks means to do now?" I asked her.

"He wants his ransom. He won't trust you to send it later."

This was in accord with what I knew of Banks, but I remembered what he had said about sinking Marcia's boat after he had got the money, and I did not feel reassured. The bottom of the sound would be safe hiding for his crime.

The other boat was now no more than a quarter of a mile behind, and coming on swiftly. We were well out toward the middle of the sound. The waves were higher, and our boat rose and fell quite noticeably.

We could not run away. The only thing I could think of was to try to disable the enemy. If, by luck, I could put a bullet into her gasoline-tank—

"Marcia, can you take the wheel?"

She got to her knees and seized the spokes.

"Keep at the bottom," I cautioned, "and don't show even your head, unless you have to. Hold her steady. It's a straight course."

Leaving her, I crawled to the stern and examined our motor. It was working well, but I gave it a quick oiling. Then I drew my revolver.

To shoot from a tossing, vibrating boat and hit the mark is an accomplishment I do not pretend to possess. I laid my arm along the aft decking, and waited to cover the white bow of our pursuer. Twice the target crossed my sights; the third time I fired.

There was no evidence that I had struck her, but there was a little dot of flame from her deck and a faint report, like the echo of my own shot, and a bullet sang over us. I realized that I had wasted a cartridge. Banks was quite willing to draw my fire.

He was now not more than a hundred yards behind us. Suddenly he showed his flank; he was veering to port. Had

I frightened him? I took the two empty shells from my revolver and put in fresh cartridges. Making my way forward, I took the wheel from Marcia, who, at my suggestion, resumed her former place.

Banks was sweeping in a wide curve. Now he was parallel with us, on even terms, two hundred yards away; and now he edged in toward us.

I saw his purpose—to drive his bow into our side. This possibility had not occurred to me before, for motor-boats are fragile, as a rule. He must be strongly built. When at last he swung toward us, as if to cross our bows, I waited until his course was established, then swung my own wheel over and headed straight for him. In a bow-on meeting our heavier boat would crush his.

There was scarcely fifty feet between the two boats when he steered to port. I followed him as best I could, but his speed took him safely across our bows by a narrow margin. I could not but admire the daring way in which he handled his narrow boat.

As we passed his stern we rose on the swell, and I saw him plainly at the wheel. He turned and shouted something which I could not understand. Away he raced in another circle. Meantime I kept on the straight course toward the Connecticut shore.

It was ticklish business, this sharp turning in such a sea. The beam of our own boat was broad enough for safety, but his was a narrow hull, with fine lines. As we passed him I had caught the black letters on the stern—"Swordfish." Then our boat might well be called the Whale. Our only protection was our bulk—that and my ability to keep him from striking our flank.

He was again parallel with us, on our starboard, and closer than before. Again he darted at us. Again I headed toward him. He repeated his former maneuver, crossing our bows.

This time, anticipating his move, I had drawn and cocked my revolver; and as we rose on the swell, I fired into his boat.

From the scream that pierced the air I knew that I had hit some one—Smith, I judged, for a glance showed that Banks was still at the wheel. The man could not have been hurt very badly, however, for his curses rang out freely until the boats were so far apart that the chugging of our motor covered the sound.

I bent down to Marcia. Her face was white and drawn, but she smiled bravely. The spoondrift had taken the curl from her hair, and one lock straggled down her cheek. Few women could have endured what she had endured that night—few women brought up as she had been.

"Take it as easy as you can, dear," I said. "We'll win out."

She laid her hand lovingly on my arm for a moment.

Banks was changing his tactics. Still parallel with our course, and at a short length, he seemed to be losing distance. Evidently he had shut off some of his power.

I thought at first that he had been obliged to slow up to look after Smith, but I might have known that he was not the man to bother about his comrade in such an emergency. Slowly he fell back, and then seemed to stop entirely.

Perhaps my shot had struck his motor, or pierced the gasoline-tank. In that event would it not be well to turn and run him down? Lucky it was that I did not, for, as I reasoned it out afterward, it was part of his plan to tempt me to just such a move.

He was now a couple of hundred feet astern, and we were plowing ahead toward our haven. Then, without warning, he darted forward. This time he did not veer.

His intention was plain. The speed of the Swordfish was so much greater than ours that he could jam into our stern. The overhang might protect the rudder and the propeller, if he could not go fast enough to cleave through to them, but—and I knew how desperately we were placed—once at our stern, he could shoot us down from behind the protection of his forward decking. We might all crowd aft, it is true, but that would leave the wheel without control. There was not time to lash it to our course.

Well, he would have to expose his head, at least. By some fluke I might hit him before he hit me. But my chances were slim. Banks was within a hundred feet of us.

"Marcia," I called, "go aft as far as you can."

"What is it?" she asked.

"Never mind. He's coming at our stern. I must be alone here. Go."

She did not comprehend the danger of her present position, but she prepared to obey. And then we were startled by a shock, and our motor stopped short with a grinding jar.

I faced about. Mrs. Buckingham was crouching over the machinery, but even as I turned she stood erect. She had managed to discard her shoes and loosen her skirts, which now fell away, leaving her standing in her short petticoat—a brawny Amazon. From her right hand she dropped a heavy iron wrench, which clattered to the bottom of the hull.

For a moment she stood there, silent; then stooping quickly, she seized the sleeping Micah by his arms and pulled him to his feet.

The old man opened his eyes and screeched wildly. His blanket had fallen away. A gust of wind tossed his white hair.

She gathered him, struggling, under her arm.

"No!" he screamed. "No! No! No! Micah won't!"

But she had climbed to the aft decking and, with one last strange look at me—a look in which strength and weakness, pride and shame were blended—she plunged with her burden into the water and struck out toward the Swordfish.

Our impetus carried us forward. The woman's head bobbed in our wake. Banks stopped his motor and reversed, almost stopping before she came alongside. I saw her reach up and grasp the gunwale. Banks leaned over the side and pulled Micah into the boat, and then aided the woman.

Always on the winning side, Mrs. Buckingham! I have no doubt that, had I beaten Banks, she would have stayed with us and kept to her bargain. She had waited until the issue seemed to turn definitely against us. Now she was with the victor. And her game was safe.

She had helped us. By that very act of assistance which put us under obligation she had also helped Banks; for now we were virtually where he planned to put us when he tried to convince us of his sincerity earlier in the night. While we lay helpless, he could send us to the bottom, then return to Morton's Point with old Micah, and loot the combined Graham fortunes at his leisure.

More from the necessity of doing something than from any hope of success, I turned my attention to repairing the motor. The woman had struck the spark-plug so hard that it was shattered beyond repair. I worked at it ineffectually for a time. Nothing could be done. If only I had made Mrs. Buckingham stay ashore!

I crawled back to Marcia, who had taken the wheel.

"Well, dear," I said, "there's no more to be done."

She threw her arms around my neck.

"Can you say that, after all we have escaped?"

I held her close.

"You can see, dear. But I am glad we are to go together."

"Yes," she said. "I am glad—if it has to be."

And so we waited.

The Swordfish, again under headway, had circled around to our starboard. Banks was preparing to take us amidships. If we tried to save ourselves by climbing over his bow, he could easily shoot us down.

We drifted idly. I clung to the wheel, with some notion of attempting to throw our head toward him when he came on. There was hardly enough motion to give me any steerage at all; much better to trust to my weapon and see what a lucky bullet might do.

And now we saw the white water part under the Swordfish's bow as she rushed toward us. Resting my arm on the gunwale, I began firing at the dark spot which I knew to be the head of the steersman. One — two — three—four—five—and now the last—six.

The onward rush was continued. The Swordfish was not more than a hundred feet away. There was little time to reload with the few remaining cartridges, but I crowded one in and reserved it for a final chance. Banks must have had strong plates put on his boat. I learned afterward that she was an old torpedo-launch, which he bought from the gov-

ernment and fitted with a powerful motor.

I raised my arm for the last time. Banks's head would now have been a fair shot from a steady footing, but it was a thousand to one against me here. If I hit him, his boat would not be stopped, but she might sheer off and miss us before Smith or the woman could take the wheel; or we might manage to board her.

I was about to pull the trigger. Then Marcia's hand struck my arm up, and I saw the strange thing that happened on the Swordfish.

The figure of Micah Graham rose amidships, his arms upraised, his white hair streaming. He gave a cry which came to us clearly across the dividing space; and then with a swiftness incredible to one who had seen his feebleness, he leaped forward at Banks.

It may be that the shock of his plunge into cold water had brought back his reason—such things happen. He must have understood in that moment the terrible thing that was happening, or he would not have done what he did.

For he seized the wheel of the Swordfish and, before Banks could stop him, threw it over hard to port—so hard that the narrow boat, though going at terrific speed, swung off at a sharp angle.

Her port quarter was now toward us, but her impetus still brought her nearer, almost broadside on. And now she leaned—more—more. We could look into her and see Mrs. Buckingham and Smith huddled in the bottom. Old Micah had fallen an inert mass near the wheel.

Farther over she leaned. Banks threw himself on the starboard gunwale and tried to right her with his weight. But even as he made the effort, a wave struck her hard, and over she came, away over, appearing for one last instant like the rounded back of a fish, then plunging under.

A great bubble rose to the surface. The swirling waters churned into great scars that quickly vanished; and that was all. In our helpless boat we were alone on the waters of the sound.

But, no; a black dot bobbed on the surface, a strangling voice cried "Help!" It was Banks. "Help!" he cried again, and his arm and hand stretched up into the night. His position on the gunwale had saved him when the Swordfish sank.

Marcia had found a life-preserver.

"Quick!" she cried to me, and I threw it to the struggling man. He would swim to it, I reasoned, and float in safety, for we could not let him drown.

The life-preserver struck near him. He threw himself forward in the water, but did not reach it. Strange, I thought, that he should seem so helpless.

He made another futile effort, and suddenly we realized what the matter was. Banks could not swim!

"Save him!" cried Marcia.

An instant later I was overboard and making toward him. It was too late. When I was still some feet away, he sank; and though I swam around for a time, waiting, he did not reappear. That strong man had missed the one accomplishment he needed at the last.

After a time I swam back to the boat, which had drifted away. It was hard work to get in, for I was pretty well wearied. Once over the gunwale, I rested to recover my breath. Marcia threw her arms about me.

"Oh, my dear one!" she whispered.

"Sweetheart," I answered, "nothing shall ever harm us now."

"Oh, but Uncle Micah!" she sobbed. "Poor uncle!"

"He saved us, dear," I comforted her; and wrapping a blanket around her, I induced her to lie down on one of the seats. Then I went forward and settled myself to await the morning.

CHAPTER XI.

HAVEN.

WITH a start I opened my eyes. I had been asleep. The first red-and-gold bars of dawn were weaving their glorious pattern on the eastern sky. The waters were still, with an oily smoothness.

I looked over at Marcia. Worn out, she slept. Then I became conscious of a dull bumping, which was doubtless what had awakened me. Turning my cramped body, I discovered that we were nosing into the beach of a little wooded island, so tiny that I could look through

its growth to the water beyond, and to the shore of the mainland, about a mile distant.

Without disturbing Marcia, I got over the side and pulled the boat up as far as the shallow water would permit, and made fast. We were certain to be picked up before the morning was far advanced.

I waited until the sun was over the horizon. A ray struck across Marcia's face, and she moved. I went over to her. She looked up at me with troubled eyes.

"What an awful dream—" she began; then the full realization came to her, and her face saddened.

"It will be better, dear," I said, "if we always think of it as a dream. But come, if you are rested. We have struck on a little island, and we must keep an eye out for sails."

She smiled wanly, and raised herself to see.

"Why, John," she exclaimed, "it's Crab Island! We often sail over here for picnics. And look!" She pointed off to the mainland in the distance at our right. I saw a big, gray, gabled house, close to the shore, set in among the dark green of surrounding trees.

"Pine Shore!" I cried.

In our gladness we took each other's hands.

"It is only a mile away," she said.

While I had waited for Marcia to wake, the tide had been going out, and the beach around our bow was now dry. I helped her over the side, and slowly we walked up the moist, firm sand. I led her to a little grassy plot of ground, and spreading a blanket for her, made her sit down, with a friendly tree at her back.

We had chosen a position from which we could look across to the house at Pine Shore. Oh, to relieve the anxiety of the people there! But no signs of life could be distinguished. Turning toward the open sound, I saw the far hills of Long Island, and, on the surface of the water between, two distant steamers. Their passengers were snug in their staterooms, while we, like two Crusoes on our islet, awaited rescue.

"Are you hungry, Marcia?" I asked.

"No," she answered, "but I feel as if I could sleep for a week. My arms and head are so heavy."

"I know. But if there should be something to eat, it would be wise—wait," I commanded; and I hurried down to the beach and began to dig in the hope of finding a few clams. I had been at this occupation but a few minutes when she called to me, "John! John!"

She was on her feet when I reached her, and she led me back among the trees to a little heap of stones.

"A cache?" I asked.

"Yes. The last time we were here we left some things. Isn't it lucky?"

I pulled the stones away, uncovering a small mound of well-protected edibles—tins of chicken, ham, fruit, and a few bottles of Apollinaris. Very soon we were breakfasting. Marcia declared that she had no appetite, but I insisted upon her eating, and with little mock grimaces she accepted what I offered her. The sparkling water, cooled by the dews, was as refreshing as a potent stimulant.

"And now," I said at last, noting that the sun was mounting, "we may be able to make them see us at Pine Shore."

Back to the beach we went, and looked across to the mainland. The sunlight was striking the lawn that stretched down from the gray house to the harbor. Within the breakwater we could see the white upper works and the shining metal of Marcia's motor-yacht, the Day Dream. I knew, though Marcia did not, that the little vessel had been cruising the waters of the sound during the night just ended—cruising with three lights, and bearing eager, anxious watchers who looked vainly for another craft, and at last went back despairing to the harbor.

"There's a man!" exclaimed Marcia.

Sure enough, there was a figure on the lawn. I hollowed my hands around my mouth, and shouted. He did not seem to hear. Again I shouted, but he continued, unnoting, down toward the harbor.

Then I remembered the revolver. There was still one cartridge in the cylinder, and two or three more were in my pocket. I fired a shot. The report went out over the water, and we saw the man move as though he were looking to see whence the sound came. We waved

our arms frantically, but apparently he did not see us.

"We are not visible at that distance against this background," I remarked. "The sun is on him, while we are in the shade. If we only had something white to wave."

Marcia did not answer, and when I turned she had disappeared. I slipped the remaining cartridges into the cylinder.

Presently I saw Marcia coming from among the trees. There was something white in her hand.

"My underskirt," she explained.

Again I shot, and taking the white skirt, waved it high over my head. The distant figure put his hands to his eyes. Evidently he saw our signal, for he went to the house and returned a few moments later, holding an object which I knew must be a pair of marine-glasses. He raised the glasses—and then I saw him throw them to the ground, wave his arms high and, turning, race back to the house.

We watched but a little while before several persons, one of them a woman, came from the house. They hurried down to the harbor and aboard the little yacht. Five minutes later a gleaming white prow was cutting its way toward us as fast as its motor could urge it. No gladder sight have I ever seen.

The yacht could not come all the way to us, but I did not wait for them to put down a boat. Taking Marcia in my arms, I waded out. They were calling to us now from the bow, and we were shouting back. Waist-deep in the water I stood while the Day Dream came slowly about, and willing hands lifted my precious burden to the deck and the loving arms of Miss Trevis.

They pulled me aboard, and faithful old Jensen forgot his training and wrung my hand. I remember that I kissed Miss Trevis—who called me her "dear boy," and began, "Oh, what—what was it all?"

"Why," I said, "why—it was—it was—" and I recall no more until they awoke me in the harbor and told me that I had sunk down upon a cushion and gone fast asleep in the very act of speaking.

That was a happy day at Pine Shore.

Well, the story has been told. What followed concerns few besides Marcia and myself, but it included a wedding and a honeymoon that has never ended.

That night at Morton's Point is more and more like the memory of a dream. So far as we know, the bodies of Micah Graham and Banks and his confederates were never found. But I looked up the records in Brooklyn and learned that Mrs. Buckingham's story of her marriage to Micah was true. I also learned that Banks had actually telephoned his orders to Miss Trevis to bring the jewels out in the Day Dream, and that she and Jensen had cruised about till nearly dawn.

When I think how nearly Banks succeeded with his plot, there is a shadow over my heart. I look into Marcia's eyes, and I realize how near I came to losing her. And sometimes I recall the suddenness of her father's death, and I wonder whether the long arm of Banks had anything to do with it. But that is a suspicion which I never breathe to Marcia. She scarcely realizes the full villainy of Banks's intentions toward herself and her uncle, and I have even heard her wonder, in charitable surmise, whether, after all, the man was not insane.

Micah Graham's estate has long since passed into other hands. Marcia did not wish to keep a place so associated with terrible memories, and I doubt if its present owners have ever imagined one-tenth of the dangers it harbored on the night when I found Marcia.

(The End.)

THE HELPER.

NEVER a man was born into the sun,
The quick and strong, the feeble and the slow,
But God hath fashioned yet another one
To be his brother, and to help him grow!

Aloysius Coll.

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....Structural Engineering	....Textiles
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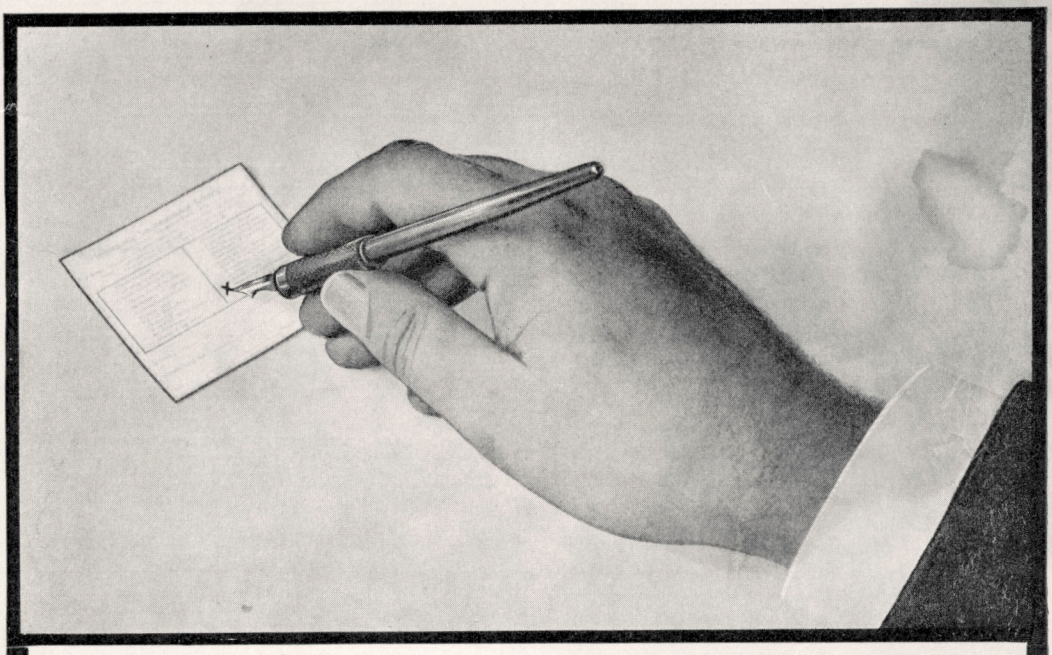

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