

SATURDAY

THE

SEPTEMBER 28

CAVALIER

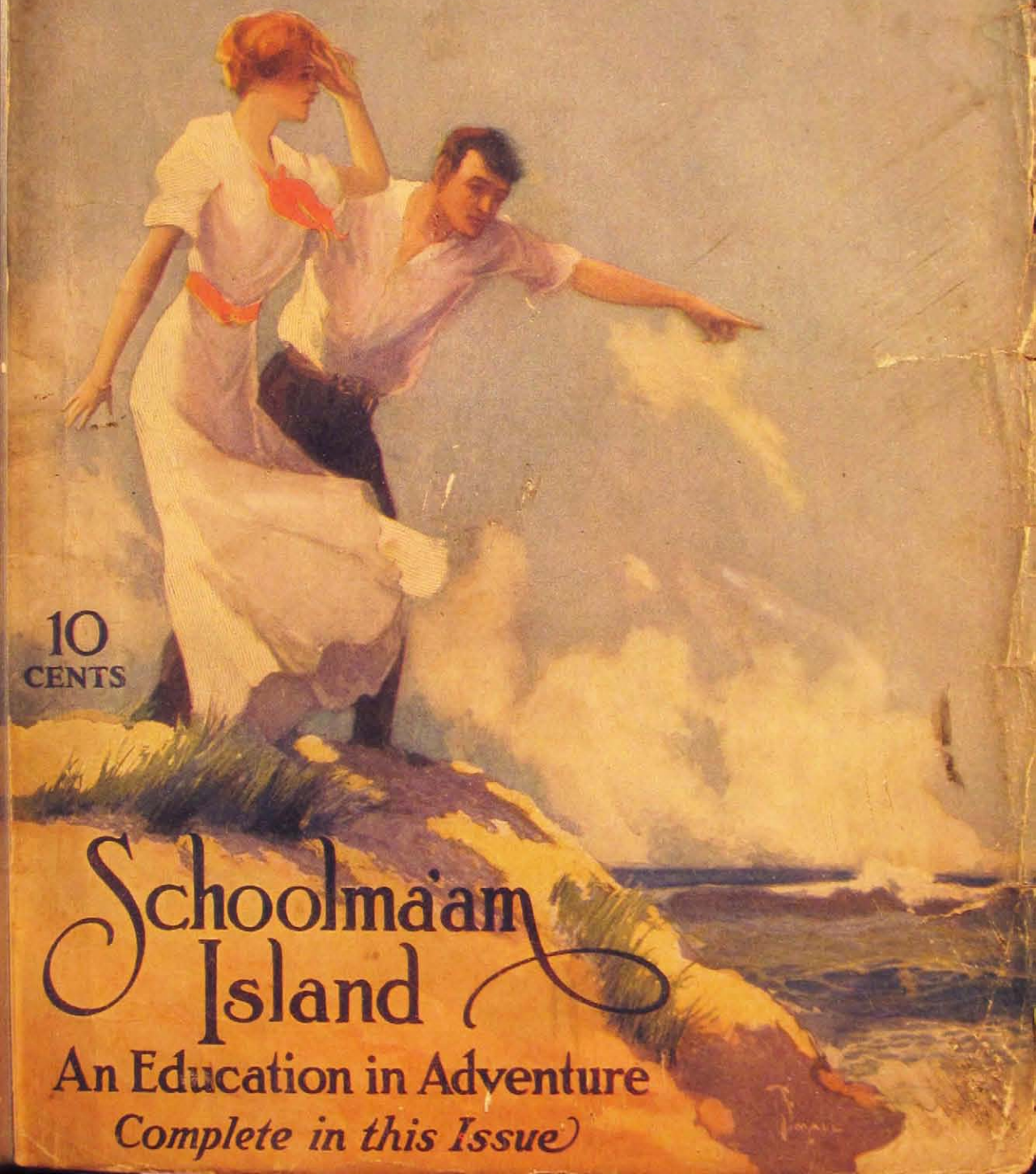
ISSUED WEEKLY

10
CENTS

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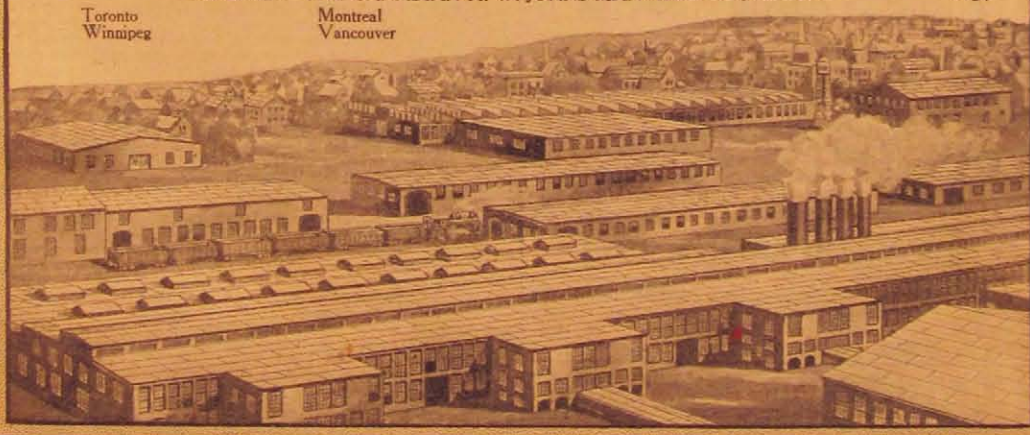
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THE CAVALIER

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Made by

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THE CAVALIER

SEPTEMBER 28, 1912

Vol. XX

No. 3

SCHOOLMA'AM ISLAND

A NOVEL—COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE

BY BAILEY MILLARD

CHAPTER I.

A Kiss and a Crash.



AND you say that no man ever kissed you?"

In the tropic moonlight, aboard the slow-going steamer, I sat and gazed at the softly rounded face and full ripe lips of Angela Alvarado, the charming California schoolma'am with a dash of Spanish blood in her, whom I had known just six days, that being the period that had elapsed since the Loyalty had picked me up from the South Sea trading station at Florakiva.

"Yes," she replied, with one of her little music-box laughs—only no music-box ever was made that could emit such golden notes. "No man has ever kissed—that is, except a near relation."

I wondered if the laugh were a challenge. She sat temptingly near me in a corner of the upper deck-house. I glanced about and saw nobody near us on the deck.

"Honest Injun?" I asked, feeling a strange tremor run all over me as I gazed at her sweetly curved mouth.

"Honest Injun," she repeated.

"Well," said I, bending quickly and pressing my lips to hers for a rapturous second, "you can't say it now."

"Oh!" she cried in quick, indignant expostulation, her white teeth snapping upon the monosyllable. Then she rose, all in a flutter, and as she passed the deck-light I could see that her eyes were wet, her cheeks flaming, and her bosom heaving wildly.

As she walked rapidly and determinedly away I sprang after her, full of instant self-reproach and eager to appease her, but she flew on to her cabin and shut the door with a wrathful slam, saying as she did so: "I shall never speak to you again!"

I hardly thought she meant it, and had no idea she could keep it up. But at breakfast next morning, though I was a model of contrition and sought in every way possible to make reparation, she wouldn't look at me where I sat next to her at table, but devoted herself to her friend, Ruth Deming, a pretty wax doll of a girl, who was also a schoolmistress.

In fact, all the passengers except

myself were school-teachers, and of these voyaging pedagogues there were just twenty women and one man. Of the man I will tell you later. I was chiefly concerned with the schoolmistresses.

They were nearly all from New England, and were bound for Manila to teach the young Filipino idea how to shoot. They had taken passage in the *Loyalty*, a poky, little old tramp steamer from San Francisco, because they had missed the *Oceanic*, of the regular line. The captain didn't want to take them, declaring that his was not a passenger ship; but a committee of the prettiest schoolma'ams had won him over, and now they were more than half-way down on the voyage, and all as blithe and merry as a "Pinafore" chorus.

But since her act of insurgency because of my kiss, Angela had not seemed quite so joyous as the others. She appeared to be particularly set upon effacing me from her world. The girl who had never been kissed by any man save a near relation, and now actually had been kissed by an unrelated outsider, seemed bent upon making that outsider feel his complete outsideness.

Now, although I gloried in the memory of that kiss, I am sure I was as humble and apologetic when I tried to get near her as any man might be, but it did no good whatever. My goddess was not to be propitiated. She beckoned to the steward, while we sat at table, and induced him to change the places of herself and her friend, Ruth Deming, so that I soon found myself sitting beside a large, athletic blonde, named Dorothy Shaw, while Angela's frigid shoulder appeared about ten chairs away down the long board.

I felt lonely and extraneous, but talked with Dorothy Shaw, who had a large fund of information on tap about basket-ball and tennis; but athletic girls never seemed quite so uninteresting to me as at that particular moment.

Dorothy shrewdly observed my long face and smiled as she remarked know-

ingly: "Seems to be getting cooler as we approach the equator. Strange, isn't it?"

"Yes," I replied shortly, trying to smile in turn. "It's that way sometimes."

"They say there's perpetual ice and snow on some of those equatorial mountains in South America," she rippled on. "I hope in your case the ice won't remain forever."

"Then you know how I came to be placed in cold storage?" I remarked, though I hated myself for seeming to make light of a matter so serious to me.

"Oh, it's all over the ship," she said roguishly. "All the girls are talking about it. Such things always are talked about, you know, when they're confided in strict confidence to one's most intimate friend."

"Indeed," said I, and I tried to change the subject.

But the animated Dorothy kept babbling about it all during breakfast, trying to make me feel the enormity of my offense, as she said, though her talk was all chaff and tending toward the sarcastic.

After breakfast she challenged me to a game of ring quoits on the after-deck. She played remarkably well, but I was glad when, with flushed face and little pearly beads upon her brow, Miss Shaw went to join the other schoolma'ams under the awning, leaving me to mope about on deck, waiting for a chance to square things with Angela.

The steamer had been nosing about among the islands, picking up shell and copra, and that was why my trip to Butaritari was taking so long. But we were nearing the Gilberts now, and there would be only a few more days of it. Then Angela would be sailing on to the Philippines, and I would be left amid the ruins of my fallen world.

I was miserably self-reproaching. How thoughtless I had been so to offend the dearest girl in all the world! I tried to get near her to ask her to forgive me, but always she turned away.

She spent much of her time in her state-room, about which I hung like a dog waiting for his mistress to come out and give him a bone. But it was no use. This dog was to have no bone, and it served him jolly well right, for being such an impatient upstart, and so free and forehanded at the kissing game.

But she hadn't seemed to mind my forehandedness in other ways at the beginning of the acquaintance. On that first evening when I came aboard the *Loyalty* at Florakiva I had been assigned to a seat near the end of the captain's table, right alongside of her, and she had inspired me at once. Falling in love with Angela was a mighty easy thing to do. There was gipsy warmth of color in her face, her lip had a high-born curve, and her nostrils bespoke a dainty pride. Eyes—well, you rarely find such eyes outside of Spanish-speaking countries.

Now, I had seen plenty of girls with dark hair and dark eyes in the South Seas, and some really pretty ones, but, as a rule, the faces of the island girls don't express anything greater than a desire for a piece of roast pig or some tinsel thing to hang about their necks, while Angela's face was all animation.

We were seated near the end of the table, that first delicious evening, a long way from the chaperon, and there was nobody to introduce us; but I cracked the ice by handing her the stuffed olives, judging that one of her style would find them to her liking; and they were.

Within ten minutes I was telling her all about the islands, and my life among them—that is, all except some things that would look a little better in the background, though they were not so immoral—only trading tricks that were invented and practised long before I ever saw the South Seas. She attended closely, especially to the tales of pearl-divers and sharks, and more than once those delicate nostrils quivered and dilated, while the dark eyes gleamed with sympathetic interest.

From that moment I had devoted myself to her, despite the presence aboard of an offensive third person, who was trying to do the same thing. This offensive third person, who, by the way, didn't seem to be in the least offensive to Angela, was Mr. Wallace Little. He had been the principal of a grammar-school in Ohio, and had all the Middle Western ways, plus pedagogy, for which, in the male gender, I had an instinctive distrust, not to say dislike.

Now Little was an obvious misnomer, for he stood six feet two and was a trifle slim, but husky-looking enough, and with a rather prominent Adam's apple. How Angela could overlook his shortcomings, or I should say longcomings, was beyond me. But I will own that the fellow had a good eye, a deep, manly voice, and could talk fairly well to women—too well, indeed, to suit me.

But the great, big bulging fact that I couldn't get over was that Wallace Little was going on with Angela, and the other schoolma'ams to the Philippines, while I was to be left behind at Butaritari. I had half a mind to chuck my job—South Sea trading-agencies are poor-paying propositions, anyway—and go to Manila in the *Loyalty*!

You can see how I still clung to the idea of winning her, even when she began to ignore me after that fatal kiss, when I say that, with Butaritari only a few hundred miles away, my half mind was rapidly becoming a whole one, and I saw myself telling the manager at Butaritari what I thought of South Sea agencies, demanding the remainder of my month's pay, and taking passage in the *Loyalty* for Manila.

But Wallace Little—oh, Wallace Little! He and his long legs were now escorting her all over the ship, and he was reading to her every afternoon while she sat in her steamer-chair. The one consoling thought I had was that he had never kissed her, while I was still in the transport of that heavenly pressure of my lips to hers.

We swung out of the direct course in order to take in Alamaka, an island a little to the south, which we neared one hazy afternoon, and soon we were running in and dropping anchor off the station. Little had been reading to Angela for two solid hours by the watch, and I was brooding on the forward deck, feeling mighty glum, when I saw the king of Alamaka coming out in a big fancy canoe.

I knew the chap. His name was Taumatoa, a round-faced, slim-built fellow of forty, pretty badly given to dissipation but active enough. He had on an old black frock coat, a dirty Panama hat, and a pair of blue-gray trousers. I had been at Alamaka two years before, and the king, who was a traveler in a small way, had visited our station at Panipa a couple of times, and had played poker to his sorrow with our traders. He was going to Butaritari this time, probably to get away from his wives and the home missionaries for a while, and have an uninterrupted spree.

It was quite affecting, that sad and sorrowful leave-taking of the chief from his wives, who went back in the big canoe, crying like children. But what smashed a big hole in the pathos was the broad grin with which Taumatoa climbed aboard and gazed at our girls, strung out along the rail like so many bluebirds on a telegraph wire. He ogled them openly, and would have spoken to some of them, had not Miss Mary Peck, the chaperon, intervened between his sensual grin and their curiously innocent smiles.

The king was ugly enough at all times, with his flat nose and his pock-marked face, but I never saw him look so like a monkey-visaged mutt as he did while he stood and took in those schoolma'ams. Angela leaned against the rail, her red lips parted in a curious smile.

"Hello, Misser Sibley!" the king greeted me in his mellow voice, and stuck out his slim, brown hand.

"Varee glad see you again!"

He grinned at me as at an old friend, and out of the tail of my eye I saw an interested look steal over Angela's face.

"Hello, Tom!" was my returning salute. "How are all the folks?"

"Oh, pretty good! Misser Clarke he get sick, go 'way—'nother mis'nary come preach my people. Varee good man—heap too good!"

"Makes things too quiet for you, eh?" I suggested.

"Too damn quiet," he said softly, looking shoreward at the dwindling huts of his village, peeping out from among the palms.

"I'm afraid that Miss Peck heard his expletive, for she glanced toward him with distinct disapproval, and huddled her brood aft, out of hearing.

I helped the chaperon to get rid of Taumatoa by marching him down to the smoking-room. I was lonely, and his soft-syllabled talk, full of nothing in particular, was better than mooning about on deck. We burned a good many mild Manila cigars, and he babbled confidentially about the missionaries and the hard time he had keeping down a revolt among his people.

A little later in the evening we both went to a musicale in the saloon. The king was vastly interested in the concert, and grunted his appreciation of the performers.

That was the time to have seen Angela, violin in hand, standing at the piano and smiling upon her audience of schoolma'ams, ship's officers, quartermasters and pantry-boys. The first thing she gave us was that fetching little "Humoresque" of Dvorak's. Why it's called that I don't know, for there are more tears in it than smiles; and the way Angela toyed with the piece was something to bring out the tears, let me tell you. She had us all going in no time.

As for the effect upon me, well, I reckon, the man for such a girl to play such a thing to is a susceptible chap who has been exiled for four years in the South Seas. It makes him realize

what has been missing all that time, and it fills his soul with old longings. As she slowed down on the last sweet note she stood there with her pretty chin tilted up in the air and a smile on her face was good to see. And then the applause.

Angela got up again, bowed charmingly, and went forward with an airy little rush, smiling like a pleased child. A perfectly artless smile it was, a smile that went home to you and put the clamps on whatever liking you had formed for her, and with it, went a little side duck of her head that was all her own, and simply fetching.

She put her violin up over that plump left shoulder of hers, hugged it tight with her dimpled chin, and swept the bow with a strong swing over the strings, sending forth that wonderfully appealing old "Coronation" waltz, which I hadn't heard for years, and never so well played.

The Loyalty's men couldn't keep their feet still, but began to beat time, while they looked yearningly around at the schoolma'ams, as if they'd like to grab hold of them and swing them about the room. I felt sorry for them because they couldn't. The first officer did offer his arm to one girl and take a few circling steps with her, but they didn't get much of a dance out of it on account of the chairs and tables.

"Him make heap good music!" chuckled the delighted king, staring at Angela and pulling out a big cigar, which he would have lighted if I had not restrained him. "Like see him do hula-hula."

The teachers turned, with scandalized looks upon their faces, and Miss Peck pronged us with flashing eyes.

"Shut up, Tom!" I commanded. "Guess you'd better go to bed." I saw him safely off to his bunk in the steerage, and then went back to the concert; but as Angela didn't play again, and only sat and chatted with Wallace Little between numbers, I wasn't particularly interested.

When the musicale broke up I went

to my room. Sleep didn't come to me for a long time, for I kept thinking of Angela and planning how I could square things with her.

It was about seven in the morning, I should say, right in the middle of a dream in which I was on my knees before Angela, begging her to forgive me and be my wife, when somebody was ruthlessly pitched out of his bunk and banged against the door by an awful lurch of the ship. I awoke to find that somebody was myself. Before I could gain an upright position, I heard men yell out on deck, while wild shrieks and moans went up from the women.

Getting into as many of my clothes as I could lay hands on, I pried open the door, which had got stuck somehow, and ran toward Angela's cabin with my shoe-laces flying. On the way I demanded of a wild-eyed deck-hand what had happened. He swore fiercely, and told me the ship had struck a hidden reef and was sinking very fast. I could see that she was well down by the head, and it didn't look to me as though she could float an hour longer.

CHAPTER II.

The Waterspout.

[T was broad daylight, though rather misty, and I had no trouble in finding No. 14, which I knew was Angela's room. But when I got there she was gone. I looked about for her amid the wild confusion on deck, but I couldn't find her. The fog was settling thickly down over the steamer, and that didn't particularly aid my search. I ran about everywhere, calling for her, but got no reply.

The men acted very white, and it thrilled me to see them handing the women into the boats and lowering away. I won't say what my part of it was, and really it didn't amount to much, for I was still looking for Angela. There was hardly any sea running, and there were plenty of boats; everybody could be taken off. Some

of them already had rowed away in the fog.

Just as it seemed that the last of the women was over the side, and my heart was in my boots because Angela was not with them, here she came flying down the deck with her precious violin-case in her hand. I didn't know what had detained her and I didn't ask. I piled her into the long-boat, one of the last to leave the ship, and turned toward the deck of the sinking steamer, but she clung to my hand.

"Don't go back!" she cried pleadingly. "Get into our boat. There's plenty of room."

Well, as I glanced about and saw men getting into other boats, it didn't seem an ungallant thing to follow suit; so I obeyed orders, and I tell you they sounded sweet to me after being denied a word from that dear girl for three long, dreary days.

Two deck-hands had been detailed to our boat, but just before we cast off, the first officer ordered them out again and told us to stand by and wait for them. The Loyalty was getting dangerously low by this time and settling fast. Now, there are safer things to tie to than a sinking steamer, so I soon decided to cast off, and was just going to do so, when a long, dark body, clothed only in a pair of blue-gray trousers, dropped heavily into the middle of the boat among my panicky passengers. There were shrieks and the fluttering of skirts as the women shrank away from the half-naked object.

"Goodness me!" cried a voice, unmistakably Miss Peck's, "has this brown cannibal got to go with us?"

I hadn't observed the chaperon before as one of our boat-load. As a matter of fact, I should have preferred the brown cannibal, but there's no picking one's passengers in a case like this.

"Get out of there, Tom!" I yelled. "Come forward here with me."

Meantime other boats had been filled with men, nearly all from the other side of the steamer, and, though I called to them repeatedly as we stood

off, for I wanted a man or two to help row, they paid no attention to me whatever, but were off in the fog before I could realize that one white man and one Kanaka had been left to man a boat-load of nine schoolma'ams, among them the sweetest girl in the world.

I glanced about in the boat and saw that a cask of water and some cases of provisions had been stowed aft under a piece of canvas.

It looked to me as if we had better be getting away from the steamer before we were drawn down with her. So I shoved off, picked up a pair of oars, and, with Angela at the tiller, we were soon out upon the open sea in a thick fog, rowing south by my pocket-compass, for I knew that was where the islands were nearest and thickest.

Angela showed up bravely in that hour of grave uncertainty when we faced the fog-fuddled sea, faring forth upon our desperate adventure. But something beside her own situation was evidently perturbing her, and that something was made manifest when I saw her lean forward and heard her say in anxious tones to Dorothy Shaw, the athletic girl:

"I wonder what became of Wallace Little? Did you see him leave the steamer?"

I did not hear Dorothy's reply, nor did I know whether the schoolmaster was safe or not, for I had not seen him on deck nor in any of the boats. It occurred to me that, if he really had been as devoted to Angela as he had pretended to be all along, he would have been on hand to see her safely off the ship.

But with all these women on my hands, I was a man with a mind full of anxious thoughts, and I had no time to worry about Mr. Little, who, though it would have been a calamity to have lost him, was fully capable of taking care of his own six feet of able-bodied manhood.

We pulled away slowly, all eyes upon the steamer, which had settled down almost to the main deck. No, I don't

think any of us really saw her sink below the waves, for the mist soon blurred out the black funnels.

There was no other boat in sight. I called aloud, thinking it was best to keep in company with the other small craft; but no reply came back out of the fog that enshrouded the morning sea. So there we were in a lone long-boat, afloat on the great Pacific, which so often belies its name, riding the waves in a cockleshell that would last about ten minutes in a gale and about as many seconds in a typhoon! It was not the happiest situation in the world, but it had to be borne.

In looking over our passengers, I saw Ruth Deming, who was inseparable from Angela, and Dorothy Shaw. I was glad that Dorothy had come along. In a strenuous adventure like this, one needs girls of muscle. It was not long before Dorothy got in her oar and was pulling like a fisherwoman. Her example was followed by Ruth and another girl who sat on the same seat with Angela's chum. This helped a lot, for the sweat was trickling into my eyes.

I must say that the girls behaved beautifully. They spelled each other from time to time at the oars, and I took a little rest now and again, while I called off to Angela the course she was to steer. We were rocking merrily along under four-girl power when the sun burst through the fog. I looked about at the clearing horizon, but could see nothing of the steamer nor of the small boats. It was a scene to remember all one's life—that wave-tossed long-boat, its thwarts covered by light skirts, and above them the graceful shirt-waists and middy blouses, and the fluffy hats or navy caps, with the glowing, hopeful girlish faces under them; the gray canvas aft, with the big brown shoulders and the black head resting upon it and the beautiful girl in the stern, looking bravely to me for steering orders.

Least of all, there was I, never feeling smaller nor more heartsick in my life, a lone tradér on the bow-seat,

looking out over a wide and merciless expanse of indigo sea, praying that land might pop up somewhere or that a sail or a smudge of smoke might appear above the great, dismal hoop of the horizon.

A fairish swell had grown out of the northwest and came rolling and swooning in rows of wind-wrinkled humps. The wind kept stiffening, and as I leaned over the bow I could feel the spit of the brine in my face.

"Do you think we shall reach land before nightfall, Mr. Sibley?" Miss Peck's voice conveyed a tone of keen expectancy, and her look was that of one who held me responsible.

"I hope so," was all that I could offer. "We are making fair speed in this wind, and ought to pick up land of some description before long."

That miserable Kanaka, asleep in the bow, wasn't helping in the least. I leaned over the drowsy Taumatoa and shook his brown shoulders.

"Get hold of an oar, you rascal!" I cried, for I wanted him to know who was master aboard that boat.

"All ri'!" he said wearily. "Me drink first. Me thirsty."

I handed him half a cup of the precious water. He wanted more, but I covered up the cask with the canvas; and thrusting an oar into his hands, I sat beside Angela in the stern until I was rested. It was good being there with her on any terms, though I could have chosen happier ones. Her talk was brave and hopeful, but there was an occasional lapse of anxiety when a little quiver played about her mouth and her dark eyes became very serious.

Once she asked me: "What has become of Wallace Little? Do you think he is safe?"

"Certainly," I replied, though I was far from assured, as I had not seen him on deck after the steamer struck. "He must have gone in one of the boats."

"Oh, I do hope so," she said. "But none of our girls saw him. Still there were plenty of boats, and he must be in one of them."

We all had a scrappy little lunch at noon, and then the oars dipped and flashed in the rolling sea. A little later, when the wind freshened from the northwest, I hoisted the canvas on a couple of oars. This helped our pace across the lonely waste of water, and it rested all hands, some of which were pretty badly blistered.

And then I did a foolish thing. I laid the compass down on the bow for a moment while I shifted the sail, and when I looked for it again it was gone. I might have known that the tilting of the boat would have slid it overboard, but a man in charge of nine women and an irresponsible Kanaka has a good deal on his mind. Well, we should have to get along without it.

"What is that funny thing over there?" asked Dorothy Shaw. "Looks like a big, half-opened umbrella, with the top hanging down."

She was pointing toward the southwest over the boat's bow.

"Isn't it a waterspout?" asked Ruth Deming. "It's like the pictures of them."

"Very like," said Miss Peck. "I hope it won't come this way."

High-hung in the cloud-flecked sky ahead of us was a black, funnel-shaped rag, that swirled above the sea like a cyclone, and under it the water was boiling and lifting. In an incredibly short space of time, as this awesome manifestation of nature in her wildest mood swung nearer, the funnel swooped down and the sea-dome flew up until a wonderful black spout was formed.

"Why, it has grown out of the sea and the sky all in a minute, right before our eyes!" cried Angela, her face overspread with wonder.

"And it's coming nearer!" said Ruth with a shudder.

"Him water-spou', all ri'," declared the chief.

"Unless we get out of its track we shall all be drowned!" cried Miss Peck, with wild afright. "Do you see, Mr. Sibley—do you see?"

I had seen, and had already pointed our bow at right angle with the course in which the liquid demon was coming on. Also, I had called to Dorothy and the best of the other oarswomen to get in their oars and pull as hard as they could.

You should have seen Dorothy bend to her oar! Even the stout Taumatoa, though I must say he pulled as though his life depended upon it, made no better showing than she. Her full, bare muscles bulged under the short sleeves of her middy blouse, her strong body heaved under the strain, and upon her face was a look of tense determination.

I gave the tiller to Angela, telling her to keep the boat steady as she was, and got in my oar beside the chief. The terrible spout whirled nearer and nearer.

"We all goin' down!" cried the king, his brown face growing gray with fear.

"Shut up!" I yelled, striking him on the bare back with the flat of my hand. "Keep at it! Keep rowing, or that's exactly what will happen."

For if the black wings of Death ever hovered near any of that oddly assorted little party, they were hovering then.

CHAPTER III.

The Castaways.

THE seething funnel of water was only a hundred feet from the boat. It came so close that we could feel the coolness of the whirling column, and soon vagrant drips of spray from the black cloud above fell in a shower upon us.

As long as I live I shall never forget the abject misery and crouching horror of Mary Peck as she sat in the middle of the boat, white-faced, speechless, faint with the fear of it. The bow of the boat rose suddenly into the air, while the girls screamed and some of them dropped their oars. But not Dorothy. She lay to with the will and power of a young giantess.

As the bow ducked down again,

and the stern rose high upon the heaving sea, I looked aft at the mountain of water behind us and saw the waterspout twist itself across our little wake, not fifty feet away, and whirl on toward the north. The great waves fell away from us, as if under the wand of some marine magician, the wind slacked down, and the clouds fled from the face of the sun.

"Hooray!" shouted Dorothy, pulling in her oar. "That's the time we scored!"

"But we couldn't have done it if it hadn't been for you!"

My praise brought the color again to her face, whitened by the danger through which we had run. I meant what I said. But for her added power and quick action in that moment of peril, the spout would have struck us, and we should have been swamped.

"It was a blessed deliverance," said Miss Peck, "and I thank God for it."

It was a full hour before the girls calmed down again. Among the most hysterical ones was a Miss Fanny Binney, whom we had a great time in quieting. Miss Binney had found every feature of our boat adventure a terrible hardship, and the waterspout had convulsed her with fear. It seemed to me, after we had so safely come out of it, and everything was serene, that her demonstrations were uncalled for. She was a healthy-looking girl, whose nerves were probably as strong as those of any of the rest, and somehow I felt that she was faking when she continued to act up. Every little while she would throw herself into Miss Peck's arms and wail like a baby, and then laugh and squeal.

"Pinch her!" suggested Dorothy, after she had stood as much of this show as she cared for. And she followed up the suggestion by squeezing the girl's arm between her strong thumb and forefinger.

"Ouch!" she screamed. "That hurts!" But it made her subside, and I felt sure we all wanted to thank the resourceful Dorothy.

We had been sailing south by the sun, but after its red ball sank into the sea, and the evening mist obscured the stars, I lost all reckoning, and more than ever bewailed the loss of the compass. After doddering about for a while, not knowing which way we were going, I called Taumatoa aft and told him of my plight.

"Tha's all ri'!" he reassured me, seizing the tiller. "King's head all same as compass."

It's a pretty tough statement to credit, but long before the stars shone forth, as they finally did, that knowing islander kept her on her true course southward with all the confidence of a man with a dozen compasses.

I was glad when the stars did come out, for we were headed two points to the east of the Cross, and that would bring us in among the western Carolines in the course of time.

It was about ten o'clock that night when a tufted black something stuck up in the south, a quarter-mile away; and soon I saw it was a feather-duster palm, which looked as though it were growing right up out of the sea, though I knew that couldn't be; so I was all aquiver with the promise it gave of land. Taumatoa looked at me silently and grinned.

"King's head all same compass—tha's so?" he chuckled delightedly. "Tha's land, all ri'!"

I yelled the good news to the girls, and they set up gleeful shouts as a nut grove swung into view over the wavecrests beyond the lone palm.

"Is it an island?" cried Miss Peck in her sharpest tones.

By this time I could see a low-lying strip of white coral beach at the foot of the palms, with the breakers pounding upon it.

"Well, it's hardly the China coast," I replied, as I stood up in the bow and surveyed the little croquet ground that gleamed white in the moonlight. "But it will do for a night's lodging, and perhaps a breakfast of breadfruit in the morning."

"Why don't we go ashore?" asked one of the girls impatiently, for I had headed down the little coast.

"We must find the lagoon," I answered, "and enter by that. It will be safer." For I must own that the sight of those breakers awed me.

"How do you know there is a lagoon?" asked Miss Peck sharply.

"I don't know it," I replied quietly. "But if you leave it to me, I'll try to find it, if there is one."

She gave a little sniff of displeasure at these words, but held herself together while we skirted the beach. We must have gone around that fool island at least twice before I gave up the idea of a lagoon entrance. Taumatoa said it must be there, but we simply couldn't find it. Perhaps we kept offshore a little too far, but I didn't like the sound of that surf.

When at last, amid the restless urgings of the girls and the importunities of Miss Peck, I consented to land anyway, and headed her shoreward into the quietest cove I could find, the tide swung us in more sharply than I had reckoned upon, though the wind at that point was offshore, and our crude sail was not drawing. Taumatoa slacked her off by tugging stoutly with two oars, while I steered. Keeping as clear of white water as I could, I swung her in over the barrier reef, but did not escape two or three bad bumps on the coral, which brought the water in by the bucketful.

The girls shrank away from the wet, and there were little cries of terror. Miss Peck expostulated when a foamy wave drove down suddenly upon us, her tone indicating that it was all my fault; but nobody could have steered more carefully. Angela behaved very prettily, and though her face was white, she gazed at me with confidence that put heart into my rather shaky job.

We made the beach all right, though everybody got a good wetting, for the boat was half full of water and pretty badly stove up. The king and I carried the schoolma'ams ashore from the

stranded boat. It was hard work. I was nearly knocked off my pins several times by the rollers, but it was worth something to see, in the starlight, Miss Peck struggling in the naked arms of Taumatoa, her great mass of brown hair straggling over her face, and her wet skirt flopping. She acted as though it was the first time she had ever had a man's arms about her, and perhaps it was.

You may be sure that I didn't let the Kanaka carry Angela, but bore her ashore myself, and in no great hurry, for the precious feel of her sweet form in my tightly circling embrace was worth being shipwrecked for.

When all the schoolma'ams were shivering on the beach—for tropic nights are chilly, particularly to folks that have been sloshed about in the surf—the king and I hunted about in the darkness and gathered drift enough to make a big blazing fire on the coral, near the edge of the palm grove. It was lucky for us that the water hadn't penetrated my match-box.

While the girls were drying out, the chief and I looked to the boat. Sad to say, there was a big hole in the bow where she had hammered the reef, and as she was built of compressed steel, there would be no possible way for us to repair her. We pulled her up as far as we could and got the stores ashore. This was no boy's play, as the goods, being wet, were heavy. By the time we had landed the edibles and the water-cask, and I had brought the canvas and had spread it before the camp-fire to dry, I was nearly caved in. But after a few minutes' rest I pulled myself together and got out some tinned beef and wet crackers.

On these we made a fairish supper, after which Miss Peck, who was very devout, offered thanks to the Deity for our deliverance, in what I thought were rather familiar terms. I suppose she was the one to do the praying, as her voice would go farther than any of the rest, but she rather spoiled the prayer by turning immediately from the

"Amen" to scold Miss Binney for opening a tin of cakes, snatching them from her hand, and saying with New England frugality:

"We must reserve these until we know where the next are coming from."

After that the king and I went forth to survey the island. The stars shone clear, and the luminous coral helped our view of things. It was then that I saw the lagoon spread out before me, three hundred feet back of our camp, and about the same distance from the grove into the dark recesses of which the light of the camp-fire was streaming.

It was, as I had feared, a very small island, only a little horseshoe atoll, probably devoid of any human life save what we had brought to it. From a central dune that stood like an inverted teacup, we could look all about the band of low-lying coco-plumed land that enclosed the dark lagoon and out upon the naked, sullen expanse of the Pacific.

"Li'l bit o' island," remarked the king sadly. "Me don't know him at all."

"But him solid ground," said I cheerfully, "and that's something."

"Sure," said the king. "Better'n ole iron canoe like that one. Suppose he no broke, we get away to-molla."

"Let it go at that," said I, starting back to camp, for I suddenly remembered that the girls might be afraid.

I found them all lying on the sand under the still steaming canvas, and, knowing that their damp bedcovering would get cold unless the fire were kept going, I directed Taumatoa to go and fetch more wood. The king of Alama was not used to being ordered about like a servant, and I could see that he did my bidding unwillingly. The way he threw down the wood when he brought it up from the beach showed that I was going to find him an unruly servant, though servant he must be. He still had his thirst with him, and it was hard to keep him away from

the water-cask, but this I did with angry words and fierce looks.

After a while he stretched his big, brown bulk by the fireside, and was soon snoring rhythmically, in which sluggish pastime he was joined by Miss Peck, who heroically lay on the outside of the canvas-covered bed, farthest from the fire. To this strange duet, accompanied by the moaning of the surf, I tuned my thoughts as I kept guard by the cheery blaze, throwing on a dry stick now and then, and feeling mighty thankful that we were all alive and in as good shape as we were.

Another thing I was thankful for was the feel of the automatic pistol in my pocket. Among the islands I always carried this useful weapon, and it had served me well in intimidating a native or two who had coveted our copra or tried to walk off with trade-trifles. As a matter of fact, there seemed little likelihood of the island being inhabited, but just the same that gun was a comfort to me.

Then, too, there were other solacing thoughts. To be sure, we were castaways upon this island and might not be able to get off for some time; but, really, I was not as sorry for that as I might have been had Angela been on her way to Manila and I left there alone, with no hope of ever seeing her sweet face again. Moreover, the adventure had been the means of breaking her silence and of her showing a new and sympathetic regard for me. There had been little opportunity in the boat for any interchange of sentiment, but doubtless there would be plenty of it on the island.

The only word she had with me, after getting ashore, was about Wallace Little. What did I think about his probable escape from the sinking steamer?

Again I had to reassure her as to the undoubted safety of the schoolmaster, though I was not so sure of it myself. Meantime I had moments when I was pleased to think that it was myself and not Little who was there with her on that lone atoll. And so

selfish is human nature that there were times during that long night of watching when I was glad, as long as the shipwreck had to come off, that the voyage had not proceeded and that I was with her on the island.

But when I looked at the row of women's heads that, in the firelight, showed indistinctly from under the canvas, I felt such an awed and fearful sense of responsibility as I had never had before. Nine women on my hands and a brown islander who would be sure to be making trouble! Was ever a man more weighted down with the heavy duties of wardship?

No wonder that I took so little account of what might have happened to the other passengers and the ship's company, afloat in open boats upon the merciless sea. When I did think of them it was to take it for granted that all had made land somewhere, or would do so before they suffered any great hardship.

Once I wondered if the captain of the *Loyalty* had stuck to his ship and gone down with her; but that sort of thing had always seemed such a gratuitous act of heroism that I wasted little speculation upon him. I took some wet cigars from my coat-pocket and dried them before the fire. When I lighted one of them it tasted a little salt and burned badly; but it was better than no tobacco at all to a smoker like myself.

As the ghostly plumes of the coconut-trees began to glimmer in the early dawn, I awakened the king and bade him search about for water. This he did with alacrity, and I went again to the top of the little sand-dune summit, which proved to be not more than ten or twelve feet above the ocean level. From here I gazed upon an empty sea and at the insignificant ribbon of coral upon which I stood.

The island seemed to be about two miles long by a mile and a half wide, including the inner water. The strip of land enclosed the lagoon, save at the far end, where a winding creek ran out to sea, and this strip must have been

only about twelve hundred feet wide at high tide, though it was now much wider, for the tide was low and the lagoon shallow alongshore. A bitter smile came to my lips when I caught sight of that far-off inlet; for I knew that if I had found it the night before our long-boat would now have been in good trim and ready for use in case we should decide to leave the island.

The sun rose a little higher out of the eastern sea, and the palms and pandanus, with their long green leaves, beamed upon me like old friends. I was used to the sight of them, and they gave me hope, though I could have wished that they had waved above a more pretentious stretch of land—one that afforded, for one thing, a little better chance for water.

As my eye again roved over the inhospitable atoll it caught sight of something down near the mouth of the lagoon—the indistinct outline of the hull of a small wrecked vessel of some sort, well-heeled over and nearly covered by the sand. There could have been barely anything more than the ribs of this old craft left there, and the sight was a dismal one, but somehow I took cheer of it, for it was a sign that there once had been human beings upon the island.

If sailormen had once come there they might come again. But this hope was as uncertain as the crazy flight of the sea-birds that circled about the bare bones of the ship and lent to them such an air of being forever deserted of men, that my mind soon took on a gloomier strain. And yet methought it might be worth while to pay a visit to that ancient wreck a little later.

Girlish voices came to my ears, and, turning, I saw the schoolma'ams trooping down to the lagoon. They looked a little bedraggled after their hard day's work and their night in the open, but they had their spirits with them, for now and then a laugh rang out and a cry of delight over some new discovery. They were making for a brush-screened cove where, a little later, I could hear them splashing in the still

water. By and by they all filed back to camp, as lively as ever.

I caught a glimpse of Taumatoa away down the lagoon shore, poking about among the palms in what I easily could have guessed was his vain search for water. Still, if any one could have found it, it would have been a Kanaka.

CHAPTER IV.

We Make Discoveries.

"GOOD morning, Mr. Sibley!" I turned and Miss Peck's eyeglasses glimmered before me. She was looking as severely prim as ever, but the wave had gone out of her heavy, brown hair.

I saluted her politely.

"What a very small island!" she explained, looking at me in an accusing way, as if I should have landed her upon a larger one.

"It is small," I admitted ignobly.

"Do you think it would support us in the event of an extended residence upon it?"

"Oh, yes!" I declared offhandedly. I was bound to be optimistic, as the girls were now coming up the dune, Angela among them. They looked remarkably fresh and clean after their morning's ablutions, and they certainly made a fine showing, considering the fact that none of them had been able to bring from the lost steamer anything more than a small satchel or bundle, so loaded down the boat had been with its human freight and provisions.

I never saw Angela's eyes look brighter than when she gave me her "good morning," but I had no chance to devote myself to her, as the girls all crowded about with their questions. They took it for granted that I knew everything about tropic islands, and their volley of inquiries was rather confusing.

What island was it? To what group did it belong? How far was it to a central station? What were our chances of getting there, and how long might it be before we could leave?

"Ladies," I said, removing my cap and feeling very much like a lecturer addressing a teachers' institute, "in reply to your first question I would say that this little atoll upon which we are standing is Schoolma'am Island."

The girls looked at each other, some with pleased and others with piqued expressions.

"For many years," I resumed, "it evidently has remained an anonymous, negligible dot of land. But at present it boasts a population of eleven. If I mistake not, it lies in Southern Micronesia, a little below the equator. These atolls are very interesting, and many of the larger ones are inhabited. They consist, like this one, of strips of coral reef, from a few rods to thirty miles in length, encircling lagoons and covered by bright-green vegetation.

"But perhaps I am only repeating what you have already learned in your normal-school studies," I added apologetically. "And breakfast is more important, anyway."

"Pray proceed, Mr. Sibley," said Miss Peck. "The information about atolls given by geographical text-books is, as I recall it, very meager and inadequate; and being familiar with the South Seas, you are doubtless able to tell us much that we should know about it."

I saw that at last I had struck upon something that was in her line, and that made her view me with a more tolerant eye. So I went on to tell what I knew of such places, dropping the lecturer's strain, however, as it was a little too much for my limited speechmaking powers. I told them that the atolls were the "tiny deserts of the Pacific," with little elevation above the sea, and that the rainfall was very light upon them.

"Then springs must be scarce here," remarked Miss Peck. "Do you think that we shall lack for water?"

"It is hard to say," I replied. "Perhaps we shall have to rely upon coconut milk."

"Coconut milk is very nice," said

Ruth Deming. "I think we could get along very well on it."

"Maybe I could get used to it," said Miss Binney, the hysterical girl of the day before. Miss Binney had what may be called the shoulder habit, as she would thrust one or both of her shoulders forward whenever she said anything she wished to accentuate.

"I have been looking at the nuts," observed Miss Peck, "and I must say that they are insignificant in size. They aren't half as large as those one sees in the Boston markets." Again she looked at me with her accusing air, as if to make me feel my sense of responsibility for the smallness of the coconuts on Schoolma'am Island.

"I wish the Boston markets were a little handier," said I, with a tinge of irony, "but as they happen to be about eight thousand miles away, we'll have to refrain from patronizing them."

Some of the girls laughed; but Miss Binney lifted her shoulders again and Miss Peck frowned. Clearly they did not appreciate my way of disposing of their objections. So I assumed a more serious air and tried to reply to some of the questions that had been fired at me from the teachers' institute.

It soon became clear to them that I had almost as vague an idea as to the location of the island, its proximity to a civilized center, or our likelihood of leaving it at an early date, as any of them. But I was optimism itself as to our prospects.

"There should be plenty of fish in that lagoon," I said, "as well as crabs and turtles, and the grove will do the rest after the provisions give out, though the coconuts are not such as are found in Boston."

The girls laughed again. Nearly all of them were inclined to make the best of the situation, and were looking about the beach and off to sea, thinking they saw islands and sails when they didn't. I had to answer a lot more questions, straining the truth at times, but the glamour and stage business that I threw around the island, together

with the fresh morning air and the fun of preparing breakfast, kept them in fine spirits. To be sure, Taumatoa's report that there was no fresh water to be found was a little disconcerting; but I had forestalled that. Besides, I had a secret hope that it might rain, in which event we might catch some water in the canvas.

After a breakfast of tinned meat and sea-biscuit, we all went over and explored the grove, in which, I was careful to explain, there couldn't be any sign of animal life—they were desperately afraid of snakes and gorillas—and then I saw that Miss Peck had been right in her observations about the size of the coconuts; and the pandanus, or screw-pines, upon which the islanders often rely for food, were scraggly, a whole tree yielding but a few kernels.

As to subsistence, the outlook was not very encouraging. While Taumatoa lay in the shade and gave no heed to my calls for his assistance, I rigged up the canvas to serve the double purpose of shade and rain-catcher, if any showers should come along.

"It's too bad we can't use a piece of that canvas for a flag," I remarked, "but it's rather heavy for that purpose and it will serve us better as a reservoir."

"A flag?" echoed Angela.

"Yes—a signal for passing ships."

"Oh!"

She stood with thoughtful brow for a moment, and then went over and whispered to the girls who were grouped about the boat. In a few minutes they all disappeared into the grove. While I was standing on the mound, gazing far away upon the insolent blue of the sea, they all came out from among the underwood, Angela at their head, bearing something white in her hand. She brought the object over and handed it to me, her face slightly flushed and her eyes averted a little.

"Here's your flag," she said quietly. "We didn't have very strong thread to sew it with, but I think it will hold together for a while."

"Thank you," I replied. "Just the thing. I'll hoist it over this mound." I hunted about and found a long drift-pole to which I attached the white flag, and soon it was flying over the mound in the light breeze.

Out of the tail of my eye I caught proud looks from the schoolma'ams as the banner was spread out in the wind, but, when I faced about at them, they were all looking steadily over at the lagoon.

The day was fair and the sea lay about the island like a slab of indigo. The tide had receded, leaving the boat lying on her side on the wet sand. I went down to her and looked her over carefully. There were two large holes near her bow, where the reef had broken through her thin, steel shell, and she was badly dished-in along the middle. These dishings might be straightened out, but, as to repairing the holes, that job was certainly beyond me, with my primitive facilities.

But though I despaired of being able to set to sea in the boat, I determined to keep her, unseaworthy as she was, and so summoned all hands to drag her up the beach to a safe position. The king did not come at my call, as he was still asleep under his palm-tree, but the schoolma'ams heaved away on the painter and at the sides, while Dorothy Shaw and I shoved at the stern. The way Dorothy laid her shoulder against that boat, and braced to her task, was good to see. She certainly must have done more than any two of the other girls. Soon we had the little craft safe from the clutches of the sea. I cleaned her out and propped her up with lumps of coral, leaving her rent bow high, that, in the event of rain, she might serve as a cistern under the canvas.

The rest of that first morning was spent along the lagoon, which proved an enchanting place to the girls. As the tide was at low ebb, the sandy beach of the lagoon, about two hundred feet broad, curved along the inner shore, gently slanting to the deeps, with only a few inches depth of water.

I saw Angela wading with bare feet and picking up shells. She seemed to delight in this game, and I heard her and her friend, Ruth Deming, felicitating each other upon their island adventure.

"Here we school-teachers," remarked Ruth, "have been telling the boys and girls about coral islands and tropical scenes, without really knowing anything about them, and now we shall be able to go back and give the results of our first-hand knowledge. Isn't it lovely?"

"It would be if our relations wouldn't fret about us," said Angela. "I worried a little last night. I was afraid of that old king."

"Tomato? Oh, he's harmless enough," replied Ruth. "He isn't a cannibal. He's thoroughly missionaryized. What's that you've found?"

Angela held up a reddish-looking shell and then stooped and picked up another.

"Aren't they beautiful!" exclaimed Ruth. "Let's ask Mr. Sibley what they are."

Angela turned to me. All her former restraint seemed to have flown when she held up the shells for me to examine.

"A lucky find, Miss Alvarado!" I cried. "These are true orange cowries, worth fifty dollars a pair."

"Are they?" she asked exultingly. "Let's look for more."

I took off my shoes and stockings and was soon wading about with the two girls, the others remaining at some distance, most of them standing upon the shore, chatting among themselves. After a while Dorothy came out to see what we were doing; and, presently, she and Ruth went back to join the others, but Angela remained with me.

I suppose that we should have gone back with them, but to me it was so delicious being there alone with her that I lost for the time my point of view as guardian of the bunch. I told Angela where to look for the shells, in the little hollows of the sandy bottom,

and, within a half-hour or so, she and I had gathered a dozen large cowries between us. We took our treasures up to the beach to hide them in the highest reach of the wet sand, and then it was that she observed that we had wandered away from the others and had traversed half of the curve of the lagoon.

We splashed campward through the shallows. Red and gold fish darted away from us, and polyp anemones, that had drifted in from the deeps of the aqueous garden of the lagoon, showed their opalescent hues to the morning sun.

"What a lovely place!" she cried, looking across the water to the curling smoke of the camp-fire. "And what an adventure! I never thought I should be cast away on a tropic island."

"Nor I, either."

I looked down at her bare, pink feet as they daintily trod the sand. Then I looked into her dark eyes and said, with a sigh: "It is lovely, as you say; but wouldn't it be lovelier if, instead of having eight school-teachers and old Tomato—as you girls call him—along with us, there were just you and I?"

"You're always saying and doing such things!" she cried, while a little flush overspread her face.

"Then the others are not *de trop*?"

"Certainly not."

And I think she would have read me a lecture or lapsed into one of her fits of asterisks, but just then her eye caught something in the bushes near the beach.

"Is that just a mound of sand," she asked, "or is it something else?"

I looked to where she pointed, and then walked toward the place with closely scanning eyes.

"It's a mound, all right," said I, "and it's something more. It's a coral cabin."

"What a discovery!" cried Angela, coming over to where I stood looking fixedly at the little structure. "Do you suppose people have lived here?"

"Doubtless," I replied.

"But where are they now, and what were they—black, brown, or white?"

"*Quien sabe?* Looks as if white men had built it. Here's the doorway, but it's nearly blocked up with sand."

I knelt upon the high-heaped sand before the oblong rift in the white coral wall and looked in. The interior, which was about fourteen feet square, was empty, the only occupant being a land-crab which scuttled into a crevice.

"When do you suppose the place was occupied?" she asked, kneeling beside me and looking into the dark interior.

"It must have been years ago, for the wind has drifted the sand high about it."

The misleading word "wind" rose to my lips without hesitation; but, as a matter of fact, there had come to me in a flash the ugly conviction that the inhabitants of this cabin, whether white or black, had been drowned out by a high sea that had swept over the low-lying island—as it might sweep again at any time—and washed the sand into this rude dwelling.

As I now crawled in on all fours and examined the dark interior, my thoughts were all this flood, and what a similar one, which might come at an hour's notice, would mean to us!

While groping about in the half-darkness of the windowless cabin, my hand struck something hard lying upon the coral floor in a place where there was little or no sand. I saw that it was the rusty head of an ax.* This I seized and tossed out to Angela.

"There's a treasure!" I exclaimed jubilantly.

"Oh!" she cried, disappointed. "I thought you had found a bag of gold."

"There's no gold or anything else in here, I'm afraid," said I. "Yes, here's a little, old, iron kettle, but it's so cracked and rusted it will be of no use to us."

I rolled the kettle out of the cabin, and then scratched about in the sand with a sharp shell.

"Looks as if there wasn't much of

anything left in here to discover," I said, and then stopped short and breathed hard, for as I spoke I scooped up a few shellsful of sand, and in the hollow I had made I saw a gray, water-worn skull. This I dug out with hurried hands, and keeping it between me and the doorway, so that Angela might not see it, I studied it carefully.

It was not the skull of a native—I could have told one of those anywhere by its bulging base and its cheekbones—but that of a white man, some poor devil who probably, years before, had been caught by the sea in his imprisoning hut and drowned. For I doubted not that the rest of his bones lay there under the sand. Perhaps they had been sloshed about by the trespassing waves time and time again.

"What is it?" cried Angela. "Why are you so quiet in there? Have you found something?"

"Nothing worth while," I replied truthfully. "Ah, here is something!"

In the little hollow where the skull had lain was an odd-looking metal-rimmed object which I picked up and carried outside, after covering the skull with sand.

"What a strange-looking thing!" she cried as I handed it to her. "It isn't a shell—what is it? It looks like a piece of heavy glass that had been ground by sand and water. This rim is all corroded and green."

"Brass," I said, not knowing exactly how much I should reveal to her. "This is the plate-glass eye of a diver's helmet, and that green rim is its socket. The rubber helmet has rotted away."

"Then divers have occupied the cabin!" she exclaimed. "How interesting! Do you suppose they came in that old wrecked vessel that lies down there?"

"Perhaps," I replied.

"But what were they diving for?"

"Pearls."

"Pearls? In the lagoon?"

"Yes. There may have been a good many 'gems of purest ray serene' in there, and perhaps those sailormen of

the wreck got them up. In which case—" I paused, for I didn't know just how far I ought to go with my conjectures.

"In which case?" she repeated, looking at me with eyes that would have drawn confidences out of the lagoon itself.

"Why, if they got up the pearls, they must be somewhere on the island; but it could hardly be that they would keep them in the cabin, and so far as the divers' story is concerned, I can't make any use of the cabin at all. But they may not have built it, or if they did build it, they may have left a watchman here while they made voyages to the home port and back again."

"How very interesting!" she cried with flushed face, gazing down at the wreck and then back at the white cabin.

"Yes," I agreed; "too interesting."

"What do you mean, Mr. Sibley?" she asked in pretty bewilderment.

"I mean that for the present it won't do to let the others know what we have found. If we told them it might get around to the chief."

"Come, Mr. Sibley," said Angela with a sudden show of anxiety, "let's get back to camp. We have been too long away from the others. Miss Peck will read me one of her lectures."

We put on our shoes, which we had carried with us, I picked up the ax, and we walked briskly away. It was a hot hike over the dry white coral upon which the sun blazed down pitilessly. Angela looked warm and a bit drooped. I felt a little guilty for having left the other women so long, for there was no counting upon Taumatoa.

But on the way back another thought kept oppressing me. That washed-out cabin and the grisly remains of its inhabitant! At what period of the history of the island had the sea poured its relentless flood into and over it? Scanning the lagoon shore sharply, I noticed more particularly a natural feature of the landscape that had claimed only a casual glance before. This was a long, dry depression in the

bare surface of the land, a shallow swale running northward from the lagoon toward the sea, not far from the mound from which my first observations had been made.

We went back to camp by way of this swale, and on searching the ground carefully I became convinced that it had once been a channel through which the flood had poured across the band of coral into the lagoon. But that the trespassing sea had not confined itself to this channel was evident from the fact that the flooded cabin was at least three hundred feet out of its path and on the higher ground.

Had the whole island been inundated?

I became convinced that it had, and the thought, you may be sure, weighed upon me. And it was to weigh still more heavily as the days went by.

CHAPTER V.

The White Man's Burden.

WHEN we reached the camp at the edge of the grove we saw the schoolma'ams sitting in line on a drift-log under the shading palms. The chief was squatted on the ground before them like an Arabian story-teller. Indeed, he was regaling his fair hearers with yarns about the island. Judging by their faces, I should say his stories were probably safe enough; but I determined that this sort of thing shouldn't happen again, for I knew that the old fellow was not to be trusted with women. Evidently he had made a hit with the school-teachers, particularly with Miss Peck, in whose eyes there was a rapt, fervent look as she gazed at his dark face with its show of gleaming white teeth.

"Just to think!" she remarked to Angela with a romantic sigh. "The king's father was a real live cannibal, and once actually helped to eat three white sailors. Isn't that interesting?"

"So interesting!" came the girlish chorus.

"Not only interesting," declared Angela with a little shiver, "but horrible! Supposing Tomato should get tired of fish and coconuts and—"

"Oh, but that was a long time ago," interrupted Miss Peck. "He says they never eat human flesh nowadays. And, besides, he is a Christianized South Sea gentleman and a real monarch."

Miss Peck's confidence in Taumatoa had its humorous side, but I did not smile. There was a lot to do in camp, and while I busied myself overhauling the things and hinting now and then that the Kanaka come and help me, which he failed to do, I made up my mind that if he was to be kept in his proper place the romantic notions entertained about him by most of the fair pedagogues must be nipped in the bud. So I took up the white man's burden and remarked lightly as I threw the ax down before the chief:

"Here, Tom, take that ax, sharpen it up, put a handle in it, and go cut some wood. You have helped mighty little this morning."

The chief looked at me very surlily and resentfully, for even a Kanaka hates to be obliged to drop his rôle of hero. There was a sullen look in his eye as he asked:

"Where you get ax?"

"Never mind where I get ax," I replied severely. "You go chop wood."

Protesting looks from the schoolma'ams and little flutters of sympathetic indignation, which, I feared, had their effect upon the black. At any rate, they lent him an air.

"Mr. Sibley," began Miss Peck, in the tone of a woman whose sensibilities had received a shock, "don't you think that a king deserves—"

"I think that this king deserves what's coming to a lazy Kanaka," I broke in ungallantly, "who has put in a whole morning impressing a number of susceptible ladies with idle talk about the noble deeds of himself and his ancestors. He was asleep while we pulled up the boat and did all that other work. I intend that hereafter he shall

do his share of whatever labor there is to perform.

"To be sure, he's a real monarch when he's at home amid his hundred and eighty-odd subjects on his little turtle-back island, but if I had him back in California I'd set him to white-washing the garden fence. Here, Tomato," I said, "take this ax and chop wood. There's plenty of logs down on the beach. Get busy."

Taumatoa straightened himself up like a perfectly good imitation of a monarch and folded his arms. Evidently he didn't cotton to the idea of coming down from his high horse before all those sympathetic women. He saw their protesting looks at me, and he made the most of them. He gathered that ladies didn't like workmen, and that he of all persons should not be made to labor.

"Me king," he declared cockily. "Me no work."

"Let him have his luncheon," suggested Ruth Denning. "We're just going to prepare it."

"And it's so hot now," suggested another girl. "Let him chop the wood this evening when it gets cooler."

"But he's used to hot weather," I declared rather abruptly; "and as for his lunch, let him earn it." For I was bent upon my point, which was the immediate subjection of the Kanaka.

"King no work," he repeated haughtily. Then he stretched himself luxuriously in the shade.

"*Noblesse oblige*," I quoted ironically. "The king will work when he has to, and that's right now."

"Too much hot!" he yawned, taking his cue from his fair champions and pillowing his head upon his arm.

"Look here, Mr. King!" I cried. "You'll have to come in for your share of the chores. You must do as I say. I don't want you loafing about camp so much. You've got to get in and hustle—understand? Go down on the beach, you rascal," I commanded, "and get busy with that ax."

There was another glance of rebel-

lion in Taumatoa's big brown orbs, but in the game of eyes the white man can play the lion-tamer with a South Sea savage when it's only one to one.

"All ri!" he breathed forth at length submissively. "Me chop wood."

There were little shrugs of disapproval among the school-teachers as they turned to the task of getting luncheon. But I saw by a certain look about Angela's mouth that she rather enjoyed my mastery of the Kanaka.

Dorothy, too, seemed to understand the point I had been trying to make. Of this mastery, however, I was none too sure. The chief was not much used to labor, and I knew he would find the tasks I should be setting for him very irksome. His revolt would be only a matter of time. What I needed was the moral support of my feminine charges—for they were my charges, and they filled me with a constant and at times an irritating sense of responsibility. Nine guileless white women to guard and protect upon a lonely desert islet! Ah, if but one of them were a man! Or if they were all like Dorothy Shaw!

Although Tom, as I generally called him after that, was a long time putting a handle into his ax, and then swung it but listlessly, the occasional hack or thud upon the dry drift-logs let me know where he was and that he was out of mischief for the time, which was some comfort.

I improved this opportunity to go over the food and water supply, and see what we had on hand. I found two cases of corned beef, each containing two dozen cans, and three and a half cases of sea-biscuits, or about one hundred pounds; a large wedge of cheese; a bag of walnuts, say ten pounds; three dozen tins of ready-cooked pork and beans and a dozen tins of baking-powder. For nine healthy women and two strong, hearty men there was not food enough for three weeks, if we depended wholly upon it, which, of course, was out of the question.

"What can we do with baking-powder?" asked Miss Peck, holding up a can. "There's no flour to mix it with. I wonder what it was put into the boat for?" She shot one of her glances at me.

"Probably to raise our spirits," laughed Dorothy Shaw, who generally saw the bright side of a situation.

"The baking-powder was put in by mistake," I said to Miss Peck. "They don't make a carefully prepared schedule of boat supplies on sinking steamers."

I gaged the cask and found that it contained about twelve gallons of water. The girls helped me to remove it to the shade of some young palms at the edge of the grove. Here again Miss Shaw proved the value of her athletic training. I verily believe she was almost equal to me in physical power. We buried the cask in the sand that it might be kept cool. I cautioned them against wasting it, and fixed the daily share at a half-pint apiece.

"That is a very limited allowance," declared Miss Peck.

"Why, we shall all choke to death if we don't have any more than that," complained Miss Binney, underscoring her words with a movement of her shoulders and looking at me reprovingly. "This salt air makes me thirsty all the time."

"You won't choke as long as those coconut-trees are here, Miss Binney," said I. "And we may have a shower before long."

"I trust we may," sniffed the young lady. "What is that—canned beef? I'm not fond of canned beef."

"If you don't like it," suggested Angela with a meaning smile, "just run down to the corner and order a prime rib roast."

Miss Binney turned away disgustedly. Angela's dig pleased me, and I was glad to see she could make light of our sorry situation. As the one upon whose shoulders rested the care of all these innocent women, I was secretly taking that situation very much to heart.

And I took it still more to heart when, after making my inventory of the boat's stores, I went alone into the grove to estimate carefully the probable food supply it would yield for us.

It had been disappointing at first sight, and as I now went from tree to tree, scanning the high-hanging nuts in their brown husks, I saw that little reliance could be placed upon the crop. A good-sized coconut-tree in a rainy country will feed a man. But the trouble was that Schoolma'am Island was, as you might say, newly built by the patient millepora, and, though there were plenty of trees, the nuts were neither many nor large. As for the sap, it is true, as wise naturalists have held, that life can be supported by it; but I have heard of native tribes, living upon small atolls that have resorted to it when the nut crop was short, and some of them have starved.

This may have been on account of too great a population. It was impossible for me to estimate how long nine women and two men might survive upon the visible food supply in that grove. The pandanus-trees were disappointing, too. On close observation most of them proved to be fruitless. One thing was quite evident—we must go fishing.

I got some safety-pins from the girls, and of these I fashioned hooks. Out of some strands unraveled from the canvas we twisted a few strong lines. I baited the hooks with minnows caught in the shallows, and with the grudging help of Tom I managed to hook about a dozen fish out of the lagoon. They were all strange to the teachers, but the king pronounced them edible. We tried to land a big turtle that was swimming about among the seaweed, but he got away, though at one time Tom might easily have captured him had it not been for his laggard indifference to the task.

But there was still other work to do before sundown. It did not seem right that the girls should sleep out in the open when housemaking was so easy

on the island. So I pressed Tom into the service of pole-cutting, and in the mean time I hacked off a lot of branches with my hunting-knife. With these we fashioned a snug shack, thatched over with coconut-plumes and carpeted with matting made of the leaves and fiber, which Tom showed the schoolma'ams how to weave.

"What a delightful shelter!" cried Angela when it was finished. "It's like an Indian teepee, only more roomy."

"Let's get all our things together in here," suggested Dorothy.

"There's not much to get," said Angela cheerfully. "But I'm glad of a place to store my violin. The night dew doesn't do the strings any good."

The treasured violin was the first of their possessions to go into the shack, and after our supper of roast fish and sea-biscuit I heard the violinist tuning up.

"Play that 'Humoresque,'" requested Dorothy. "It's the sweetest thing in the world."

So, while some of us sat by the fire-side near the shack, Angela, to keep the dew off the violin, remained inside and sent the sketchy little phrases of the "Humoresque" vibrating among the palms. Her playing put heart into the castaway women, some of whom had been pulling rather long faces as the twilight gathered over the island. I saw that the violin was going to be a great comfort to all of us, and you may be sure that no one listened more raptly than the ardent trader who was dead in love with the player.

But through it all I kept reverting to my discovery of the flooding of the island, wondering how recent it was, and hoping that some sort of craft might come along and take us away before the next great storm should break upon the shore. Even after the music ceased, and the schoolma'ams had gone to sleep for the night in the shack, after much chatter over the novelty of their bedchamber, I sat by the fire smoking one of my precious cigars

—they were becoming very few now—and thinking with what devastating force a tidal sea, backed by a hurricane, might sweep over that little dot of land.

CHAPTER VI.

Searching for the Pearls.

AMID these dismal reflections would come, now and then, a thought of the wrecked pearl-hunters and of the treasure they probably had left somewhere upon the island, but the more tragic possibility of the inundation of the island was the one that claimed most of my thoughts. Tom slept soundly beside the fire which I kept going during my almost sleepless vigil through the long, clear night of stars and chilly moving airs.

After breakfast next morning, as I saw that serious inroads were being made upon the water, I directed the Kanaka to procure some palm sap. He set about this task with better grace than he had been showing for his other work; for, despite his covert attacks upon the water—I knew he had been dipping into it whenever our backs were turned—his thirst was still with him.

He took one of the large coconut shells and cut it in half. With the point of a knife that he constantly wore in his belt he drilled two holes in the upper edge of one of these halves and tied into them a bit of twine. The girls watched his movements interestedly, and when he walked over to one of the smaller trees they followed him without a word. With the shell dangling from the string which he held in his teeth, he climbed the tree until he reached a clump of flower-stalks. These he cut off with his knife, and as they fell to the ground the girls picked them up, smelled of them, and then looked curiously up at the Kanaka while he fastened the shell below the pruned flower-stems. Instantly the sap began to drip from the stems into the shell in

pearl-like drops. Tom descended, and said to the watching women, who could see the liquid drip into the little vessel:

"Catch um sap all ri'!"

"How interesting!" cried Angela, turning to me. "This sap, caught in shells tied up that way, will supply us with drink."

"That is, if we can drink it," observed Miss Binney.

"Why," said the dearest of girls sweetly, "we'll simply have to. Besides, it may prove to be nectar."

That is one thing, among hundreds of others, that I liked about Angela—she was never the least querulous or exacting in dealing with the hardships of our situation.

"Palm sap hasn't a bad taste," I remarked, "when you get used to it; and when it is fresh it is healthful and nutritive. Now, if you girls will gather a lot of the largest shells you can find, and what tin cans you can spare, Tom and I will rig up a lot of sap-containers."

"All right," responded Dorothy. "Come on, girls!" And they trooped off to the grove to get the shells.

I knew that there would be no end of work involved in this sap business, as we should have to be shinning up those trees pretty often to empty the shells if we were to keep up any sort of a supply. But I intended to make Tom do most of that work. Like all his people, he was an agile climber, and I felt that he must be kept busy. The sap soon begins to ferment in the tropic heat, which was another reason why the shells would have to be emptied quickly. And there was still another. If the contents of the vessels were allowed to stand and proceed to the toddy stage, I should have a besotted native on my hands—and with all those women! Yes, he must be kept busy.

As soon as the shell-rigging was over, I made him help me assort the stores and fix up a camp kitchen among the palms between the shack and the place to which we had dragged the boat. We took a large packing-case which

had contained most of the stuff, and in this we tacked some partitions made out of pieces of another box, using nails which we drew from the lids. We nailed the box to a tree, and it made a handy cupboard, which the delighted girls at once named "*Très Fragile*," from the warning sign stenciled upon it by some far-away Frenchman who little dreamed that it would ever serve as a cupboard upon a South Sea island.

The girls helped me put together a rough table, the top of which was made of a couple of sea-worn drift-planks from the beach. Alongside this table, and at the two ends, I made stationary pole-seat benches, the legs of which were stakes driven into the ground. We all sat down about the table, Miss Peck at one end and I at the other. The girls made merry by drawing bamboo sticks to see which four should sit regularly at one side and which at the other.

"Remember, this arrangement doesn't hold for more than a week at a time," said Dorothy, when the sides were chosen.

"Why, who expects to stay on this island more than a week?" asked Angela, with an optimistic smile.

We all looked out upon the empty sea when she said this, as we were doing half the time, in anticipation of sighting a sail.

"Oh, we may be sitting at this very table a year from now," observed Miss Binney dismally. "What frumps we'll look! Why, our shirt-waists—"

"Fanny," came Ruth's reproof, "why in the world can't you show the proper spirit? Things might be worse than they are, and you know it. I'll admit that a little cold-cream wouldn't go badly; but as for our sitting here in these same shirt-waists a year from now, why, it's not in the least likely; is it, Mr. Sibley?"

"Not in the least," replied the oracle, with as convincing a tone as he could summon, though himself far from convinced.

"Why, of course, there'll be a steam-

er or a schooner or a brig or some sort of a vessel coming here before long to take us off," said Miss Peck, nibbling a bit of coconut and looking as though she were sorry she couldn't remember some other kind of craft that would happen along.

Every little while I went up to Flagstaff Mound and made an eager sweep of the sea, and always my eye would take in the distance-dimmed outlines of the wrecked vessel, lying near the mouth of the lagoon. I determined to go down there and visit her that morning before the day should get too hot. So, after the schoolma'ams, with many a light joke and lighter laugh, had stowed the goods away in the cupboard, and I had rigged up for it a swing door with canvas hinges, I called Tom aside and told him of my proposed jaunt.

"All ri'!" he assented cheerfully. "You go down see ole rotten ship. Me stop here." And he glanced toward the girls.

"No," I declared stoutly. "You're to come along with me. I may need your help if there are any pickings to bring home."

He saw that I meant what I said, and so, after a lingering glance at his resting-place in the shade, he came dragging along at my heels. With the ax on my shoulder, I turned to steal a glance at Angela, who was standing near the shack with the other girls, with an air that plainly bespoke a desire to accompany me, but she knew as well as I that I couldn't be singling her out on all occasions, even though the others must have come to understand by this time the meaning of my devoted attentions to her.

Tom and I skirted the lagoon shore, and were soon frightening the long-winged birds from their perches on the rotting ribs of the old vessel. She was not a large craft; and judging by her outlines, half obscured by the sand-drifts, she must have been a schooner or a brig. There was little of her hull in sight as we approached her, as she

was listed over toward us; but on going around her stern, I saw the green-weathered copper sheathing of her bottom half-way to her dismantled keel. The sheathing was partly covered by a crust of dried barnacles and bird-lime, and was stove in here and there.

"Big sea hit him many time," observed Tom, as he twisted off a piece of the sheet copper.

It was a fact, and a very depressing one to me; for, though at low tide the wreck lay well ashore, it was evident that the little vessel had been washed over many a time by the outside waters. It took but little imagination to see big combers raking her fore and aft—such waves I knew must have swept clean over the island from east to west. It was a wonder to me that the ancient craft had not been wholly disintegrated long before we lay eyes upon her.

In vain I looked for something that would give a clue to her identity; but of any sign of name, either on bow or stern, there was nothing visible. Indeed, there was hardly a whole plank left in her. In a little water-worn channel that ran along her starboard bow I found a piece of anchor-chain, red and flaked with rust, and, farther aft, I discovered a capstan-bar partly embedded in the sand. Here and there were corroded copper spikes and bits of glass, that might have come from her broken ports, ground dull by the sea.

For the sake of keeping him busy while I made a little closer examination of the wreck, I set Tom to work with the ax, cutting off the copper sheets from that part of her bottom exposed to view. Then, with a piece of oak board which I had fashioned into the shape of a spade, I went around on the other side and began to dig about here and there in what was left of her hull. An hour of this work brought nothing more important to sight than the rusty barrel of an old musket and a few bits of broken crockery.

The morning was a hot one, and as I was on the sunny side of the tilted

bottom, I had to pause more than once to wipe the sweat out of my eyes. Most of my delving was done in the place where I judged the after-hold must have been. I plied my spade in the sand, crying out a sharp command now and then to the lazy Tom whenever the sound of his ax ceased for a while its deliberate pecking at the copper sheets.

In a little trench I dug along the inside of the hull my spade scraped upon something that cracked under it, and the next moment I had exposed to view a lot of bone-white objects, which I scratched out in excited haste, breathing hard—let me tell you—and with my pulses all atingle. I had found their shell!

This discovery was important; but what I wanted to know was the extent of it, for, in a way, that would determine the amount of pearls they had taken. So I kept lengthening and widening my trench, throwing the sand behind me, and hiding the shell I had already uncovered. In the course of another hour I had pretty well settled the fact that they had gotten aboard about as big a tonnage of good, clean shell as I had ever seen in a vessel of that size.

Tom's voice, coming from around the stern, set me to scattering sand; and as I had kept the shell pretty well covered as I worked along, he saw none of it when his eyes lighted upon me where I sat, hot and tired, upon a decayed timber, looking off unconcernedly over the lagoon.

"Too much hot work," he complained. "What you find in here? Wee! You make big hole!"

"How about that copper?" I flung out testily. "Your job all done?"

"Got big pile copper," he replied evasively. "Hundred-dollar pile."

If men and tools had been available, there would have been little delay in attacking that wreck, and reducing it to kindling-wood if necessary, or in digging out its old shell of a hulk and finding the treasure. But the removal of the sand-heaps from the after part

of the hold probably would be the most effective work of recovery. There were tons and tons of this sand, and to remove it was going to be a long and hard task for one man with a wooden spade.

After all, would it not be wise to enlist the services of Tom? As we trudged wearily back to camp under the fierce sun-blaze, I considered this idea carefully, but could arrive at no conclusion. He was known far and wide among the traders as a treacherous beast, and whoever trusted him was likely to rue it.

CHAPTER VII.

The Brass Chest.

THE next day was Sunday, according to a little calendar in Ruth's pocket-diary, and we all lay about in the shade after a unique morning service conducted by Miss Peck. The day of rest was good for me. After stationing Tom as lookout on Flagstaff Mound, I stretched out in the shade and caught up a few of those lost hours of sleep.

During my waking moments, and whenever I looked abroad upon the island, my mind kept running upon the probability of the recurrence of the terrible marine trespass by which, it now seemed to me, every point of land was marked.

Again and again I wrestled with the problem: What should we do in the event of the flooding of the atoll?

I promised myself that I would devote all of the next day to devising some means of escape from a high rising tide, but when the morning came the sea lay so calm about the isle and the lost treasure so fascinated me that I could not resist the impulse to be on my way to the wreck. The girls, to whom I had not imparted my discovery of the shell, went half-way to the creek with me. I left them on the lagoon beach, hunting for cowries and other interesting things in the shal-

lows. I set Tom to fishing in the creek, and resumed my hunt for the treasure.

In digging under the spot where the ship's galley must have been, I unearthed a dozen or more pieces of broken crockery. Plying my rude spade still farther, I dug out a dented copper saucepan and a rusty iron pot. These utensils, which would be invaluable in our kitchen, were laid aside to be carried back to camp. I knew how the girls would appreciate them, and could hardly keep from hailing them and crying out my discoveries, but deferred the bestowal of that pleasure in the selfishness of my search for the pearls.

Thus far my digging had been like that of a mining prospector. The holes had been dug at random here and there. I now concluded that if I were to find anything I must confine myself to that part of the wreck where the after-cabin had been. So it was there that I now set steadily to work.

It was a strange business, this treasure-hunt in the ancient wreck, with the curious sea-birds flitting about, sometimes swooping so near that their wings fanned my hot cheek. The lonely wash of the surf came to my ears, mingled now and then with the far-away calls of the schoolmistresses to each other from the shore of the lagoon.

With the rude tool my work was slow and difficult, and spade-ful after spade-ful of sand brought up nothing more interesting than a broken bottle, an old door-lock, a twisted hasp, or a bent bolt. At last, in the muck of rotted wood and wet, blackened sand, I struck something hard, and, stooping, dug out with my fingers a strange, dark object about a foot long. It looked like the sole of a shoe, but it was too heavy for that. With my knife I scraped off the outer surface of the thing, and then slivered off a thin slice of metal that shone dully in the sunlight.

At once I knew that it was a sole

after all—the lead bottom of a diving-boot. But though it was a further indication of the particular kind of work these ill-fated seafarers had done in the lagoon, it was not of the least value to me, yet it made my interest in the search more feverish than ever. Just then the lusty voice of Dorothy Shaw called up from the creek:

"Mr. Sibley! Mr. Sibley! Come down and see!"

I wiped the sweat from my face, and went down to where the girls were bending over some objects on the shore of the creek.

"What are these shells?" asked Dorothy, holding up a couple of large mollusks which I instantly knew to be pearl-oysters.

"Where did you get them?" I asked curiously, not heeding her question in my eagerness to know where they had come from.

"The king brought them up from the bottom of the lagoon, right over there." She pointed to where the little lake joined the sluggish creek moving slowly out through its narrow channel to the sea. "We saw him bring them up. He took out all these; but he didn't want us to see them at first. What are they?"

"Pearl-oysters," I said, for I did not have it in me to return any other answer to that frank, honest-eyed young woman. Then I glanced over to where Taumatoa, standing up to his shoulders in the clear water, was searching the bottom intently.

"Come here, Tom!" I call to him sharply.

He gave me one of his rebellious, stubborn looks, then tossed his head indifferently and waded ashore with a laggard swing of his wet legs. In his hands he held a dozen or more pearl-oysters, which he dropped upon the sand with the others.

"You were told to catch fish," I cried angrily, "and have been fooling away your time picking up these worthless things."

"No ketch um fish to-day," he replied sullenly. "All gone 'way. Ketch um to-molla."

"Very well, if you can't catch fish to-day, you can chop wood. Go back to camp and get to work on that drift pile."

"Maybe bimeby fish bite," he suggested lazily, not relishing the wood-cutting job.

"Go this minute," I cried angrily.

"It seems to me, Mr. Sibley," interjected Miss Peck, "that the king—"

"Pardon me," was my abrupt interruption, "but the king takes every opportunity to shirk his little tasks. The fish are there—you can see them swimming about—and he could catch them if he cared to. Failing in that, he must busy himself at the wood-pile, and I shall be obliged to you, Miss Peck, if you don't encourage him in his indolent ways."

Miss Peck's reply was a scornful little sniff. There were also resentful looks on the faces of some of the other schoolma'ams. Clearly the king had become a favorite with them—probably because he was an interesting novelty. I was sorry that they had not had some of my experience with the particular breed to which he belonged. Then, too, his story-telling had impressed them, and was to impress them still further, as I was soon to discover.

The Kanaka walked slowly away toward camp, Miss Peck and the others following. The principal was still in her huff, and I was not anxious to accompany her; yet I agreed to myself that I would return to camp soon, so as to keep an eye on Tom, whose behavior toward the women hardly could be relied upon. But that old wreck and the treasure that probably lay hidden within it held me longer than I should have stayed. An hour or more passed, during which the digging progressed slowly, as I was tired and heat-harassed.

I was now down to the bottom planks of the side of the ship that lay upon the beach, and was scraping along aft

and chucking out an interesting lot of ancient junk—rusty iron clews, marlinespikes, battered gimbal lamps, pieces of an old-fashioned air-pump, musket-barrels, metal snatch-blocks, and among these, telling their own tragic story, human bones. I regret to say that my respect for these grisly relics was not what it should have been, for in my greed for the treasure I flung them out as carelessly as I did the rest.

Once I had a twinge of conscience as I thought of Angela and the other innocent girls off in camp there with that irresponsible Kanaka. Indeed, I was about to climb out of the hole and hasten to them when I gave one more lunge with my spade, and it grated upon something that looked like the top of some sort of a box.

In another moment, after a wild thrust with the spade, I determined that that was precisely what it was. I flung myself down upon my knees, pulsing all over with a fervent excitement, clearing away the remaining sand and debris with my fingers. Soon an oblong piece of heavy brass, green with years, about one foot wide and two in length, lay under my trembling hands, and I made no doubt that it was the lid of a chest—the treasure-box of the ship!

I seized my spade again and jabbed it down into the sand alongside of the chest, seeking for the hasp or handle by which it might be opened. The crude tool struck something hard, and a moment later I was lifting out a human skull, the only sign of those who had lost their lives for the contents of this little brass box. There were no other bones near at hand. The skull probably had been washed away from the rest of the skeleton in the general dissolution and jumbling up of everything aboard; but there it was, grinning up at me, and somehow, as I laid it aside upon my pile of debris, I couldn't help taking it for a lucky sign.

What I took to be proof of this was

the fact that at the side of the little rounded hollow where the skull had lain was the padlock that had secured the lid. This lock was of iron, and was so deeply corroded that it tumbled before the attack of my spade. My shaking hands tried to pull up the lid, but it was welded to the chest by the green seal of time. I kicked it several times, and then with my hands gave a vigorous tug that brought the whole chest, which with its contents must have weighed about forty pounds, out of its resting-place.

Panting from my fierce exertions, I laid the box upon the pile of debris, gave it a few bangs with my shovel and then pried away with frantic fingers. The lid yielded, with a strange creak, upon its ancient hinges. The movement tilted the chest forward upon the pile, and instantly a little rill of aged coins came pouring and jingling out upon the sand. These coins I thrust into my pocket after glancing at one and noting that it was a British sovereign, dated 1847.

Righting the chest and placing it securely upon a flat-lying timber, I drew the lid back and looked in. At first there was visible only a sodden, musty mess of rotten canvas—little bags tied with moldy leather strings, their puckered tops intact, but the rest of their fabric fallen apart with age. Clawing away the ancient litter from a corner of the chest, I saw where the coins had come from. There were several handfuls of gold and silver, the gold red with years and moisture and the silver blackened. So far as I could see by cursory glances at the coins none bore a later date than 1849, and they were all British, showing that the ship doubtless had been manned by Englishmen.

Though glad of the gold, you may be sure my fevered imagination played more fondly with a treasure of greater value. I pawed away the encumbering mass of canvas, and there they were, smiling up at me with their gray, iridescent eyes—the pearls! Such a no-

ble though ill-assorted collection I had never seen. The chest was half full of them.

As my fingers went diving like a miser's into that pearly hoard there was a world of gloating in my greedy heart. I scooped up hundreds and hundreds of gleaming gems, and they rattled back into the box. Some of them were yellowed with canvas-rot or greened by contact with the brass; but what mattered it? In the hands of the polisher they would soon lose their external discoloring, and my sweat-blurred eyes were seeking for size and shape and not for color.

And the size and shape were there. I picked out pearls as large as hazelnuts, and saw that it would take but little work of matching to sort out a necklace of these fit to adorn the neck of a queen. For those old sailors had gathered for me bag after bag of the big pearls of the days when the virgin lagoons yielded jewels over which pirates fought and died—such jewels as had gleamed from the throats of Spanish princesses of olden times.

Here, under my hand, in this great casket, was the ransom of a king! For if I knew anything at all about the value of pearls—and I hadn't been knocking about the islands four years without learning something—these were worth at least half a million of money. A good many pearls had passed through my hands in the way of trade, but none had ever been like these.

Angela! What would be her delight when she saw this wonderful treasure? What would be the delight of any woman alive, with the remnant of that barbaric instinct for rich decoration which all women have in their hearts? Ah, the golden wealth of it all! I felt as if I had rifled Golconda. The thought of it made me gasp.

Yesterday a poor trader, or at the most a man of small means, who, in the event of his ever getting off that remote little island, would still be at the beck and call of the master spirits

of a commercial company in which he had no interest save a salaried one. Here I was suddenly rich—rich beyond my wildest dreams. Was it any wonder that I was nearly crazed by my discovery, that I whooped with delight in the face of the sounding surf, that I danced like a dervish and sang in riotous glee?

Deep down my fingers dived, clear to the bottom, and save in that corner where the broken bags of gold and silver had lain, it was pearls, pearls, pearls all the way to the green, hard bottom of the chest. No, my first estimate had not been a wild one. Making due allowance for all the seeds and blisters, here was a safe half-million in that hoard, and perhaps a great deal more.

Five hundred thousand good, hard American dollars! Even though I wasn't an expert, I felt confident in placing the figure as high as that, judging by the other collections I had seen in the hands of the spoilers of the lagoons.

But even in my most miserlike moments, while I ran my crazy hands through that treasure pile, I did not gloat over it as my exclusive property. No, each schoolma'am should have a share—just how much I did not decide; but even the sharp-elbowed Miss Peck; even the shoulder-shrugging Miss Binney should have her portion of the loot. They were all fellow voyagers and fellow castaways; they all had participated in the hardships and the toil of the island camp, and they were entitled to a part of whatever reward might come to us as a party of human beings who had labored and suffered together.

As for Angela's share in the bulk of the treasure, that of course would be greatly increased in the event of her acceptance of the finder who now had enough to make his wife feel herself a rich woman, and—well, it was too soon to begin sketching out that part of the future.

What was more to the purpose just then was to find a good hiding-place for the treasure. I ran over in my

mind several places while I dumped the coins out of my pockets into the chest and replaced the lid, but for the present I could think of none better than the old wreck itself.

I made my cache up forward in the very peak of the bow, covering it with sand, and throwing a few large lumps of coral over it.

Going back to the place where I had been digging, I again ransacked the whole space that had been occupied by the chest. But there was nothing there of any value whatever save a few shilling pieces, which I put in my pocket.

To conceal the traces of my treasure-hunt would have been an easy matter, for I could have dumped the sand back again and filled up the hole without much trouble. This I wanted to do before Tom should come down that way again, but the thought of my neglect of the schoolma'ams kept smiting me. So, flushed with my exertions under the hot sun, and reeking with sweat, I picked up the old copper saucepan and the iron pot and strode quickly back to camp, full of the triumph of my treasure-finding, and eager to tell Angela of my tremendous stroke of fortune.

Perhaps it was because of the self-accusing thoughts of my ungallant treatment of the schoolma'ams in leaving them so long in the company of that brown rascal, that I kept adding to their share in the discovery as I hastened toward camp. But whatever it was, as I neared the place, with every step I took, their shares kept increasing until I had settled upon each a goodly fortune.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Taboo.

BUT somehow I was not so pleasantly disposed toward my precious wards and prospective beneficiaries when, on reaching camp I found the greater number of them sitting in a silent row on a drift-log near the ocean

beach, while the indolent Tom, squatting before them, was stretching his island imagination in further flights of romance. Angela was not among the listeners. She was with Ruth and Dorothy near the cupboard preparing luncheon. There was no opportunity to tell her of my discovery.

Being very tired, I flung myself down upon the side of Flagstaff Mound while I awaited a chance to take her aside and impart the great secret. The sea-wind blew cool about me, and I was glad of the rest. Looking down upon the silent row of women sitting there enchanted by the chief's talk, I could think of nothing but the cheap spell that a Swami weaves about his lady listeners. Not a word could I hear, for Tom's voice was low, and somehow the lazy drone of it got upon my nerves.

Why couldn't the man obey orders and do the work I had set for him? Angrily I sprang up and took a few steps in a *détour* that should lead me casually up to the party from the beach. I had gone but a little way when a slight turn of my head showed me the six schoolma'ams walking hastily toward camp through the heavy sand. I caught a glimpse of Miss Peck's face. It was as red as a tropic sunset. The other schoolma'ams glanced at me with uneasy self-consciousness and hastened back to join the three who had stayed in camp.

My *détour* at once became a bee-line. I charged down upon Taumatoa, and I grasped him roughly by the shoulder.

"What did you say to those ladies just now?" I demanded, giving him a sharp shake.

"Me talk um islands—my people," he replied, drawing away from me with an innocent, injured air.

"No," I declared. "You say something bad—something very bad. They no like."

"No." He shrugged his shoulders deprecatingly. "I tell um good—tell um 'bout islands, 'bout mis'nary."

"You miserable liar!" I cried with rising heat. "I don't suppose I shall get it out of you, but I'll tell you what I think of you in your own tongue."

With that I fell to cursing him in choice Rarotongan, which I knew would bite deeper than English. I told him he must keep away from the women except when I was with him. Of course he had been encouraged by them in this last Swami talk of his, but I doubted from the look I had seen on the girls' faces if they would be hunting him out again as a story-teller.

The chief's fur rose while I was landing into him, but he smoothed down after a bit and said:

"You no like me talk white women. But if white women my wives it all ri', eh?"

"What do you mean?" I glared at him hotly.

"We got here on this li'l' bit island," he said more calmly, "nine women. Maybe we stay here long time. Maybe no boat come one—two year. We got here nine women. You like li'l' girl what make music. You take him fo' wife. You white man, you take one. Me b'long islands, me take eight. Missee Peck, him got Bibie. You be mis'nary and make wedding. Everything all ri' then. Not so?"

His sensual face lighted up and his flat nostrils dilated a little.

"Oh, that's the kind of talk you've been handing out to the ladies!" I cried. "Well, you'll have to be exiled from our bunch. Come with me, you old Turk! Come on!"

I grasped him ungently by the arm and led him up over the low ridge and down to the lagoon and along to the little coral hut among the bushes.

"Ha!" he exclaimed, staring at the hut curiously. "Li'l' house! Somebody live here sometime."

"Yes, and you're going to live here now. You clean out that cabin and make yourself some matting to sleep on. There's the lagoon full of fish—you won't starve. This is your home, understand?"

"What's matter?" he cried protestingly. "I am taboo?"

"That's what you are," I replied sharply; "that is, so far as the women are concerned. You keep away from them except when I'm around. I'll call you when I want you to help me. There's going to be a lot of work to do, and this is where you sleep and eat, and you're not to come into camp till I tell you to. Have you got that?"

"But me want wife—give me one wife," he pleaded, "for my li'l' house."

"Well, then, swim over to the nearest island and get her," I said determinedly. "As for those ladies up there in camp, if you lay a finger on them you're a dead man."

With that I pulled my automatic from my hip pocket. The flash of its bright barrel in the sunlight gave the chief a start.

"There's just ten bullets in this gun," said I, "and you'd better do as I say."

"Oh, you no shoot me—me ol' fr'en'. Me know you on Panipa an' Alamaka—long time me know you."

"Well, old friend, keep your distance," said I, "and come when you're called for. Here's where you stay, in this little house."

As the white walls of the cabin stared forth at me, and I glanced along the sun-drenched beach of the lagoon back toward that sea-worn swale, my mind again turned upon the dismal prospect, always impending, though it had been lost sight of in the treasure-hunt and other diverting occurrences, the likelihood of this low-lying island again being swept by the waves. As I left Tom to his reflections and walked campward, the fear of this overflow again oppressed me, effacing for the time the glory of my morning's discovery; and as I neared camp, where the girls were sitting quietly on the benches talking low among themselves, I stopped for a moment, studied the grove above me and an idea suddenly came into my head.

It was a plan for a high-and-dry

refuge of some sort. It hardly seemed possible that when the waves should sweep over the island they would rise higher than ten feet above the highest ground. Well, as nearly as I could figure it out, the ground at the foot of the coconut-trees rose to the proud altitude of six feet above sea-level, and as the tallest was about fifty feet, a person who climbed up into one of them would be safe enough at high-water if the tree was not washed away.

Now there were evidences that trees had been uprooted by the waves, for there were many that lay prostrate, and had been so lodged among the standing trunks that the sea could not carry them away. Others, whose roots had been washed by the overflow, leaned against the upright ones, and, though half-dead or sickly, were making brave efforts to get a new hold upon the soil.

My idea was to take the dead and leaning trees, cut off the roots and branches, and fasten two or more of them, high up and horizontally, to four sturdy upright trunks that I now selected, and, by laying other poles across this rude sill, make a sort of platform to which we might all retreat in case the island should be inundated again. The four trees, which were tall, straight, and firmly rooted, were at such a distance apart as to make convenient posts to support a floor about twelve by fifteen feet in size.

The idea of this safe refuge from an insweeping flood or tidal-wave struck me as such a feasible one that I wanted to get to work upon it that very day. But I was nearly worn out by my arduous labors at the wreck, and as hungry as a bear. Beside there was no sign of any storm. It would be best to wait until morning and go at the work with fresh vigor. So I strode into camp and sat down at the table upon which the schoolmistresses had laid luncheon, though none of them were eating.

It seemed strange that they had not called me, but what seemed stranger was the hush that stole over them as I

sat down at the table. I could not account for it. They served me silently, barely glancing in my direction. Somehow it occurred to me not to question this odd and sudden aloofness on their part. Glancing over at Angela, who sat near the other end of the table, I saw that she was gloomy and preoccupied.

I had been scheming to get her apart from the rest to tell her of our wonderful good fortune, thinking to give her the pleasure of being the first to receive the great news. But evidently the reason, whatever it was, for this strange treatment of me, had affected her most of all. While the others talked but little, and only among themselves, addressing no word to me, she said nothing. At times she bit her lip, which quivered now and again. She looked as if she wanted to cry.

"Is the king coming to lunch?" I heard Miss Binney ask.

"I don't know," replied Miss Peck. "Where is he?"

"He is ostracized for the present," I remarked stiffly, for I was resentful of their treatment of me.

"Ostracized?" Miss Peck's tone was a curious one.

"Yes, ostracized — tabooed. He's down at the coral cabin. I will call him if you are ready to feed him, but I wish to stipulate that he is never to be in this camp or with you ladies anywhere save when I am present."

"Oh!" was all the principal said. Then she colored deeply.

Two and two were put together pretty quickly just then, let me tell you, and the sum of my calculations was that it was what Tom had been telling them that had resulted in their silent and contemptuous treatment of me. I was too proud and too angry to ask what his evil communication had been. Surely they might have taken it for granted, as between a white man and a Kanaka, that my word was better than his; but they had not even afforded me a chance to set myself straight by denying his charge.

I thought that Angela, at least, might have given me the benefit of any doubt as to the truth of his story, but it looked as if she had accepted it without question. Even when I brought the pot and pan from the mound where I had left them, she took no interest in the discovery. But Dorothy's eyes brightened and she at once set to work to scour them.

"Now we'll have something to cook in," she said with a satisfied smile. "There's nothing like having a few kitchen things in camp."

For a time the schoolma'ams made no comment on the taboo I had placed upon the king. His wholesale marriage proposal had shocked them, I made no doubt, though they probably had attributed it to his innocent island way. At that moment their shares in the treasure were pretty well below par. I felt like a crusty old moneybags who was revising his will, and thought that it would have paid them handsomely to scout the chief's story, whatever it was, and to believe well of me. Perhaps some of the pride of wealth was added to the pride of name, for when I thought the matter over I was inclined to be as cool and as distant as they had suddenly become.

I lighted my last cigar, leaned back calmly, saying nothing while I blew the white smoke up into the palm branches. When the cigar was smoked down to an inch-long butt which I hated to throw away, but at last did manage to toss aside into the sand, I watched it as its glow died out, then rose, gathered up some food from the table, and walked slowly down to feed Tom. The schoolma'ams were talking low among themselves as I left, but Angela was sitting apart in the shade, looking off silently over the lagoon.

"Misser Sibley," cried the chief, as I approached the cabin and saw him standing a few rods away from it among the green brush, "me no stop in that house. Me no can sleep such place." His face wore a haunted look as he spoke.

"Why not?" I asked. And even before his reply came I thought of the skull I had found there.

"Dead mans, he b'long cabin—leave bones."

"Oh, that's all right." I laughed lightly, though I was sorry I had not removed the human relics before I had assigned the cabin to him.

"Me no like dead mans," he insisted very gravely. "Mebbe he come in night, want bones."

"Well, give 'em to him," said I. "Don't worry about a little thing like that. Eat your lunch and then take 'em out and bury them somewhere."

He shook his head, but took the food and bolted it. When he had finished the last morsel and had washed it down with a drink of sap, I made him go over to the cabin, which he approached gingerly, but it took all my mandatory powers, coupled with the careless drawing of my pistol, to persuade him to touch those bones. But when he saw the little gun he went at the work like one anxious to be rid of a distasteful job, and at my order buried the grisly relics about a hundred yards away in the sand. But even after this was done and the rubbish was removed so that the inside of the cabin looked clean and inviting, it was plain to be seen that it had no attraction for the superstitious chief.

Being in no hurry to go back to camp and again be subjected to the chilly treatment of those icy maidens, I had lain about in the shade of the cabin while Tom performed his task. I think he felt that the labor I was making him perform was part of his punishment for the evil word he had passed about me with the women.

Feeling rested after an hour or two and in a little better humor, I began to make light of the attitude of the schoolma'ams which, it seemed to me, judging by our situation upon that little island in midocean, could last but a short time. Again I turned my thoughts to the erection of the platform among the palms.

I have been all among the island and atolls of Micronesia and I have never seen, even on the lowest lying ones, most exposed to storms and tidal waves, any attempt at the erection of such a safe retreat as our little band of castaways was to be provided with against the coming of a great overflow. But it was practical and might save all our lives.

Tom was told of the plan and was asked to come with me, which he did the more readily since the flashing of my automatic had illumined his dark intelligence. The idea of the platform did not strike him very hard, as it involved labor. In his slothful way he would rather have run the risk of being washed out to sea than to go to all this trouble.

Voices came from the shack as we passed it, but none of the schoolma'ams came out to greet us. I had hoped that Angela would come to me and demand if Tom's story, whatever it was, were true. But I saw nothing of her, though a little later, while we were beginning our work, I heard her violin flinging out a merry air that I did not recognize. This piece of bravado made me smile, for I knew that she was not so happy as she was trying to appear.

I gave Tom a twelve-foot stick of bamboo as a measure for the poles and told him how thick they were to be. He was soon chopping away in quite a meek and docile mood. He gave an industrious grunt whenever his ax descended and stopped frequently to make an impressive show of wiping the sweat from his face. The four trees I had selected as posts for the platform were of the largest and best rooted palms in the little grove, about fifty yards from the shack and in plain view of it.

About the roots of these I piled all the loose lumps of coral I could find near at hand, to prevent the washing of the roots by the waves, stacking the crusty chunks to a height of three or four feet around the poles. This gave them a stanch look. Then I took my

turn at pole cutting, while Tom wove fibrous portions of the palms into rough, strong cordage. With this we secured two of the strongest poles to the trunks of our tree-posts at a height of twenty feet from the ground, and then proceeded to lay the other poles across them at right angles, close together and fastened firmly with twisted fiber.

While we worked the schoolma'ams came out of the shack and gazed curiously in our direction now and then, but they did not come near us. It displeased me to think that Angela should take no nearer interest in my work than to stand off there with the rest and gaze at it indifferently. As I handed the poles up to Tom I glanced over toward my wards from time to time. They were sitting upon the sand under the canvas, talking in low but earnest tones, Miss Peck, as usual, dominating the assembly.

It was something like a gossip gathering at a New England tea, and it came to me that I was probably the chief subject of the conversation, though whether I was being grilled or not I couldn't tell. Indeed, I gave the matter little thought, so intent was I upon the important business in hand. Just to be sociable, however, I called across the sands:

"Don't you wish you had brought along your rocking-chairs?"

"Oh, we're getting on very well, thank you!" screeched back Miss Peck, with an intonation which showed me that I was still under the ban of her disapproval.

Again I fell to wondering what it was that Tom had been telling them about me, for clearly it was he who was responsible for their changed attitudes toward their protector; and again I demanded of the rascal what he had told them. But he strenuously denied having maligned me in any way during the drift-log interview or even having spoken of me in anything but the most friendly terms.

I was handing a heavy pole up to

Tom, almost staggering under the weight of it, when I heard a voice at my elbow:

"You must be thirsty—won't you have a drink?"—and there was Dorothy Shaw with two shells of water in her hand. She looked very neat and clean and wore her straw-colored hair in two big braids down her back.

I took the drink, thanked her, and passed one of the shells up to Tom, who came down part of the way to get it.

"I am very curious to know what you are doing," she remarked, glancing up at the cross poles.

In return I came near telling her I was very curious to know why I was under taboo, but pride got the better of me. Rather stiffly I informed her of the nature of the structure and gave information as to the reason for it.

"And do you really think there's danger of the island being overflowed by the sea?"

Her blue eyes grew large, and she gazed about over the little atoll as if she expected to see the ocean beginning to rise above it.

"Well," I replied, "I don't wish to alarm anybody unnecessarily, but there is a possibility of such an occurrence. The island has been washed over before—there are plenty of evidences of that—and there's no telling when the same thing might occur again."

"Oh," said she, with a little shrug of dismay, "let me help you—those poles are heavy! Let's get it done quick."

She seized upon the pole I was just picking up, and I made no protest. Indeed, I was glad of her help.

Tom grinned down as he saw her pushing at the pole, one end of which he leaned over to grasp. I could feel the pulsing strength of this young Brunhild, with her bobbing braids of hair, lightening the load for me. She gave a new zest to my weary spirit. When she bent her splendid limbs to pick up piece after piece of the long,

heavy, green wood and heaved her magnificent shoulders in the upward push, there was an inspiration in her glowing face and in her fine, athletic strength that made me wish for a time that all girls were of that robust order. And yet Angela was *petite* and delicate of nature. No, it wouldn't do to have them all Brunhilds.

While we worked I kept thinking of the treasure. It lightened my burdens, it expanded my breath, and at times it made my heart beat with riotous joy. When I looked at Dorothy's flushed face and carelessly bobbing braids, the thought kept rising that, when it came to the division of the precious loot, she would get her full share. I wanted to tell her about the discovery, but something in me held it back. As the shadows gathered in the grove, I saw a tired look in Dorothy's face.

"There," said I, "you had better go back and get your lecture. Thank you very much."

"Lecture? Oh, I won't let her lecture me!" she replied disdainfully. "I don't have to go in lock-step at her command. She tries to dominate our crowd too much anyway."

Of course, we both referred to Miss Peck. Again I wanted to ask her what Tom had been telling that had set the schoolma'ams against me. But I now reflected that it might embarrass her. I felt, too, that if she could have done it, she would have enlightened me without waiting to be asked.

With about three-fourths of the cross poles in place and firmly secured, Tom and I quit work for the day.

The platform was now in shape to receive refugees; and I intended to finish it on the morrow. Tired as he was, I made the chief climb the shell-hung trees and help to fetch down the sap, which we poured into some of the provision cans we had left there for the purpose. Then, bidding him to retire to his hut, which he did very reluctantly, I carried the brimming cans into camp and set them down before Miss Peck.

"Have a drink," I said, offering her some of the sap in a coconut shell.

She barely looked at me as she took the rude cup from my hand, thanking me stiffly.

"It isn't bad," she remarked, when she had tasted it. "Yes, it will do very well."

I offered a cup to Angela, who seemed more coolly disposed. She tilted her chin in a haughty little way, and in her eyes, as she glanced at me, there was an unmistakable look of disdain.

"No, thanks," she said curtly, with a queenly little wave of her hand and a decided lift of the shoulders, "I'm not thirsty."

"But it's not only drink," I said in a persuasive, placating tone, for I was bound to see this unpleasant situation over as soon as might be, "it's meat as well; and I want you all to get used to it and like it."

But she turned to lay a stick upon the fire and hardly deigned to look at me again. Indeed, during the whole evening meal, while we sat in a rather constrained circle, in which little of the conversation was addressed to me, she kept three girls between us all the time.

I wanted to ask for an explanation, but somehow I held my tongue. It seemed clear to me that it was probably something of a delicate nature and not to be discussed with maiden school-teachers, old or young. Perhaps the best way to deal with the matter was to ignore it as far as possible. As nearly as I could do so, I retained the lightness of tone that I had adopted since the beginning of our adventure, and showed no vexation. But after supper, when I had taken a goodly allowance of food down to the sullen Tom and was slowly returning from his hut to the camp, a wave of self-pity swept over me.

Here I had been toiling like a galley-slave all the hot long day for those ungrateful women who, with one exception, had sat apart, taking no interest in my labors, and were even yet treat-

ing me with cold hauteur. That morning I had discovered treasure of great value, a goodly portion of which I had decided to divide among them; and during the whole afternoon I had labored to build a safe retreat for them in the not unlikely event of the flooding of the island. And there they were setting me outside the social pale because of the fool story of a fool Kana-ka. It was too much for my American blood. I shut my teeth tight and determined to break up that icy barrier if possible, and if not, to keep away from them and let them run affairs to suit themselves.

But no such course was necessary. When I got back to camp I found that the ice had been broken, and was not long in discovering the reason. Dorothy Shaw had been telling them why the pole platform had been built. Indeed, she was still talking as I came up unobserved and saw them all sitting there, backgrounded by the dark palms, whose branches were tinged by the pale pink rays of the western afterglow.

CHAPTER IX.

A Talk with the Girls.

"WHY, Mr. Sibley!" came the strident yet cordial tones of Miss Peck, "do you really believe the island is likely at any moment to be inundated?"

At any other time I might have tried to allay their fears by minimizing the menace of the sea and putting it among the bare possibilities, but just then I felt somewhat ruthless as to the matter of exciting feminine fears.

"Not at any moment," I said a little coldly, "unless a tidal wave should rise. But it is a part of the history of these low-lying islands—and I am sure it has been the history of this one, lying, as it does, only a few feet above sea-level—that hurricanes sometimes sweep the water over them."

"And such a storm is likely to occur

at any time?" Miss Peck gave a little shudder.

"Yes, particularly in this equinoctial season."

"And that is the reason why you have been so thoughtful as to provide us with that high place of refuge over there?" Her tone was really friendly. Yes, the ice had thawed.

"Do you think," asked Ruth Deming, "that we are in any immediate danger?"

"No," I replied. "There will doubtless be warning enough. But if you take my advice, you will never venture very far away from camp, for gales sweep up suddenly in these parts, which you as students and educators must know."

"But those poles in the trees—they are so high!" objected Miss Binney. "How shall we ever get up there?"

"Don't worry about that," chided Miss Peck. Then she turned to me. "It's very kind of you, Mr. Sibley, to plan and build that safe retreat for us, and I want to thank you on behalf of all the ladies. I'm sure we're all very grateful."

"Indeed we are," declared Ruth Deming.

There were little purrs of approval from the others, but though Angela's face softened a bit, my alert ear caught no kindly word from her. When I looked at her questioningly, where she sat upon the sand, she averted her eyes and clasped her hands about her knee with a set air of alienation.

Though the coolness of the others had become, as you see, rather dissipated by what they felt to be a common danger, in her case there had been no change. But I was crafty enough to follow up my advantage in the case of the others.

"And now, if I have been sufficiently disciplined—" I said, and paused.

"Oh, that's all past!" cried Miss Peck, with a show of warmth for which I could have hugged the ancient maiden, unhuggable though she was. "Let's forget about it. It's nothing

of our affair, anyway—your adoption of the native marital customs of these islands."

"What marital customs?" I cried in amazement.

"I refer to your Panipa wives," she said, and looked away while the color rose to her sallow face.

"Native wives!" I screamed in joyous outburst, laughing until the palms rang with my mirth. "That's what you ladies have been worrying about?" I glanced to Angela, whose face had reddened as she heard me, but she did not deign to look back.

"Yes," said Miss Peck, as if choosing her words, "in view of all the stressful circumstances of our situation, and particularly the danger of which you speak and which I do not doubt—for the appearance of the island, now that I come to look about upon it, certainly bears out your assertions—we will waive the matter of your three native wives and work with you and be guided in all material ways by your superior—"

"But the wives are not going to be waived!" I cried righteously. "And for the very good reason that they do not and never have existed. I am not going to rest under that calumny. I presume that the worthy Taumatoa uttered it for reasons of his own—as an introduction to a subject he has already broached to me, but which I needn't discuss here."

"Yes," acknowledged Miss Shaw in her frank, outspoken way, "he proposed to all of us in a bunch—that is, all except Miss Alvarado, whom he probably reserved for you."

"Dorothy!" cried Angela, with a flash of white teeth and an angry upthrust of her pretty hand, while her little foot kicked in the sand.

"Don't be so personal, please," objected Miss Peck, who had been looking at me as if she had expected my denial and was taking it as a matter of course.

"But what I've said is quite true," declared Dorothy. "He did offer to

marry eight of us in a bunch; and it's more than likely that it's the first time some of us"—she looked squarely at Miss Peck with a getting-even expression—"have ever been proposed to."

"Speak for yourself, Dorothy!" exclaimed Miss Binney.

Miss Peck's eyes flashed. She sat up very straight, looked a few of those oft-quoted daggers at the calm-faced, robust young woman who had made this gross insinuation, and then, as if to cover her confusion and make a swift transition in the talk, she said to me:

"In case of a storm to-night, would the platform you are building be ready to accommodate us?"

"I think so," I replied, "and by tomorrow noon it will probably be completed."

There were no gathering clouds anywhere in sight, so I calmed any present fears that the schoolma'ams might be entertaining, by saying that there was every promise of good weather and that they might sleep soundly. If there should be sounds of a storm during the night I would arouse them.

"But you shouldn't do all the watching," said Ruth Deming, coming over to me in her quiet little way. "It isn't fair. You'll be worn out. We ought to take turns."

"I was thinking of that," said Miss Peck, "and if Mr. Sibley will permit me, I will keep watch until one o'clock."

"And I'll sit up with you," offered Ruth. "That's a bargain."

She turned to me in such a determined way that, being dog-tired and barely able to keep my eyes open, I consented, reminding them that they must awaken me if the slightest occasion should arise, not only that of the weather, but—I finished by glancing toward the coral hut down by the lagoon. They understood. It is almost needless to say, after their morning's experience with the matrimonially inclined monarch, that they knew he would bear watching as well as the

weather. In fact, they were now all desperately afraid of him. But how they came to be so agreeable to a man of my reputed immorality as to offer to let me rest while they stood watch, I could not understand.

One thing I determined as I threw myself down upon my rude fiber bed, and that was that on the morrow I would make Taumatoa take back the absurd tale he had told the schoolmistresses about my Panipa wives. This I would do, even if third-degree tactics had to be resorted to. I could not bear to think of Angela's averted gaze and her air of studied indifference. I was sorry I had not immediately fetched the chief before the women and made him retract his lying statement.

The stars were paling in the east when Ruth Deming came over and awoke me by a cheery "Good morning." I sprang up guiltily, for it was long past the hour when my watch should have begun. Ruth and Miss Peck responded pleasantly to the scolding I gave them for not waking me before.

"We thought you needed a good rest," said the principal, "after all your hard work."

They went to the shack quietly to lie down with the other women, and in a few minutes the elder schoolma'am's rhythmic snore was heard beyond the camp-fire, mingled with tired sighs from Ruth.

Just before sunrise I went down to the coral hut to call Taumatoa, that he might help me to finish the platform. He was not there. Because of his superstitious fear of the place where the dead man's bones had been lain this hardly surprised me. Still I thought he could not be far away, and so kept calling him as I beat about in the bushes, thinking to find his retreat.

Down in a little brush-covered gulley, half-way from the camp to the wreck, I was startled nearly out of my wits by the sudden uprush of a great mass of white and brown sea-birds.

These were evidently of the same flock that had fluttered about the old ship, and here was their home. The nests lay all about in the thicket, some of them half full of eggs. It was a great find—a food supply that set at rest all fear of starvation in case the coconuts ran short or the fish wouldn't bite.

After gathering a capful of what seemed to be the freshest of the eggs, I returned to camp, disappointed in my search for Tom and thoroughly disgusted by this latest errant act of his, and yet pleased to be able to bring in evidences of a food store that probably was inexhaustible.

Dorothy was the only one in camp, the others were all shell-hunting. She was highly pleased when I set my capful of eggs on the table.

"Have you been marketing?" she asked. "Are there more where these came from?"

"Hundreds," I replied.

"Let's go and get them." She sprang up, her golden braids bobbing. "Let's go right away."

So we went back to the gulley, taking the pot and pan with us. The birds had returned to their retreat, and they made raucous protests while we rifled their nests. Dorothy was a little fearful of their attacks at first, but I assured her they were as harmless as geese.

"Oh, I'm not afraid of geese!" she said; "only these fowls have such ugly beaks, and they look as if they wouldn't mind pecking a person. And I don't like their horrible squawking."

But despite the wild threats of the birds, we filled the pot and pan with eggs and took them back to camp.

Then I went over to the platform and set to work cutting and laying more poles on the cross-beams. Dorothy helped me as before. Her strenuous days upon the island were making her a little thinner of face and figure, and she was getting pretty well tanned.

"I feel as if I were training down for a basket-ball tournament," she remarked to me, as unaided she raised

one of the heavy poles up to the edge of the flooring.

"But you mustn't strain yourself," I advised from the top of the platform. "It's pretty hard work for a girl."

"Oh, it will do me no harm, and I enjoy it so much!" she replied. "I want to see this thing finished before the high tide washes over the coast of Lincolnshire."

"'Cusha, cusha, cusha' calling!" sang out Ruth Deming as she approached us. "What can I do to help the good work?"

"You can weave fiber for binding ropes," I said. "I'll need it to finish tying on the poles."

Some of the other girls came over and helped in the weaving. Once in a while one of them cast an interested eye at Dorothy as she plied the ax or lifted a pole. When we told them about the eggs, they rushed over to the cupboard to have a look at them. Miss Binney doubted if they would be as good as hens' eggs, but the others were delighted with our new store of provisions.

In an hour or two the roost, as the girls had dubbed it, was finished.

"A very picturesque dwelling!" pronounced Ruth Deming, when we surveyed the result of our work.

"It isn't the picturesqueness of it that appeals to me," remarked Miss Peck, "so much as the fact that it is safe and high enough to afford us a refuge in the event of an inundation."

We were now, as it seemed, safeguarded against any sudden rise of the sea, and it was time that I should be taking better care of my treasure, so far from camp and so insecurely hidden in the bow of the old wreck.

CHAPTER X.

My Troublesome Treasure.

ALL the while that I had been working upon the platform, the thought of my sudden affluence and the good fortune of the schoolma'ams had kept

flashing up within me, and filling me with the most exalted views of myself and the potential part I should play in the world when our release from this island exile should come, as it must come in the course of time. I kept wondering whether I should impart the news of my discovery to the schoolmistresses. Somehow, I hesitated to do this.

But how was I to get the pearls into camp and safely hidden without the knowledge of the schoolma'ams? It was the old fox-goose-and-corn story all over again. If I went down to the wreck alone there would be the danger of that lurking islander poking into camp and renewing his wooing of the women, there was no telling in what offensive way. If I took the teachers along they would try to find out what was in the brass chest, and if I caught Tom and forced him to go with me his curiosity would also be excited. If I could find the fox, and tie him up so that he would not get at the goose, I might go that evening in the dusk and get the corn. But how was one to fasten a fox if one couldn't catch him?

This problem bothered me for hours. During a part of that time I kept scanning the grove and peeping about in the brush for the king, but no trace of him did I see. The girls, who had begun to be somewhat fearsome of him, stood upon the mound from time to time and kept a lookout for him. If the female of the species were in the least consistent, the schoolma'ams would by this time have treated what he had told them of me as so much raving. But it was plain that the story had stuck. Save in the case of the honest Dorothy, their attitude toward me, though not unfriendly, was changed. The change was a subtle one, but it was there.

As the shadows of the palms lengthened upon the beach I went over to where Dorothy was standing alone near the cupboard and quietly handed her my pistol, telling her I was going out in search of Tom, who might elude me

and creep into camp while I was absent. At first she scouted the idea of danger, but I insisted upon that point.

"I'll tell the girls to keep watching for him," she promised, in reply to my cautions as to vigilance. "But please don't be gone long, Mr. Sibley, if you really think he's on the war-path. I think some of the girls are rather afraid of him since—since his wholesale proposal." She smiled and put the pistol in the pocket of her blouse.

"Are they?" said I, a little coolly. "Then why are they so ready to believe what he has told them about me?"

"But one of them doesn't believe it," she declared earnestly, gazing at me in a friendly way out of her quiet blue eyes. "I'm sure you have better taste than to select a Kanaka for your wife; and as for three of them—why, it's ridiculous!"

I seized her hand and gave it a little squeeze. I couldn't help it. Perhaps some of the girls saw the action, but I didn't care.

"Thank you, Dorothy!" I cried, for the name came naturally to my lips. "But if you think it's ridiculous, why doesn't Angela think the same?"

"Why, it's different with Angela. She is—well, pardon the expression—but her Spanish blood—Oh, I shouldn't say such things! She's a dear girl and—well, she's Angela. She'll want proof that there's no truth in the story before she'll come around again."

"I could make Tom take it back if I could find him," said I. "I'll hurry away now before it gets any darker."

With my knife ready at hand, I strode down to the lagoon and along its smooth beach, with the purpose of bringing either Taumatoa or the treasure into camp. As a matter of fact, I was more intent upon securing the treasure, for I doubted not that the fox would return when he got hungry enough, for he had a particular fondness for tinned beef.

I passed down the long stretch of jungle, and presently the lonely out-

lines of the old wreck rose before me out of the twilight. All was still down there, save the drone of the surf and the humming of the evening wind through the bleak, bare ribs of the water-worn craft. I entered the old hulk amidships. As I did so I was startled and dismayed to see a dark figure dodge away from the bow, steal silently aft, and out between the standing timbers.

"Tom!" I yelled at the top of my voice. "Here! I want you!"

But he flung on over the sand along the lagoon, taking no heed of my call.

Had he found the treasure, and had he hidden it away from me? Pulsing all over with the thought, and in a mighty unpleasant frame of mind, I rushed up to the bow. There I saw the coral covering of my cache strewn about in the peak of the hull, and the brass chest stood fully exposed to view. The lid of the treasure-casket had been pulled back and stood open.

I gave an eager, searching look into the chest; and though the light was dim, I saw at once that the contents had been disturbed. A part of the pearl treasure was gone—how much I could not tell, but at least a double handful. I had reached the wreck just in time. I wouldn't have given a two-bit piece for my share in that treasure had my coming been delayed ten minutes.

True, the island was small; but there were plenty of good hiding-places upon it; and as for hunting down the robber, it might have been hard work for one man.

Shutting the lid tightly, I took the chest under my arm and hurried campward. It was quite dark before I got there, and I sang out so that the girls would know who was coming. All was quiet; the rascally Tom had not visited the place. In the dusk I was able, without attracting any attention to what I carried under my arm, to reach the brush shack, where I intended to sleep, as the girls had removed their belongings to the platform and were now up there, with the ladder withdrawn.

After hiding the treasure-box in the sand in a corner of the shack, I went over and called up to Dorothy, who was sitting on the platform outside the tent, pistol in hand. She let the ladder down to the ground, descended, and came over to where I stood.

"I never realized how much comfort it is to have a man around the house," she said, with a nervous little laugh, "until you went away and left us lone school-teachers to roost up there."

"You could have given a good account of yourself," I said, laughing in turn. It was easy to laugh now that the treasure was rescued from the covetous hands of that rascally chief—all but the pocketful he had purloined.

"Well, I'll see you safe up," said I, "and then I'll hie me to my little shack."

"Speaking of safety, do you think, Mr. Sibley, that you're quite safe sleeping there on the ground?" Her tone was solicitous, and I liked it. "I should have helped you to build another retreat like ours. Those storms—they come up suddenly, don't they?"

"Sometimes," I replied; and then went on to reassure her that if a storm should rise, there doubtless would be plenty of time for me to climb up to the platform.

"But that poor man who lived in the cabin down there," she said, "he was surprised by a storm, wasn't he?"

"Then you saw Tom removing the—the—"

"Bones," she finished. "Yes, I went for a walk down that way alone, and saw him taking them out and burying them in the sand."

"And you said nothing to the rest?"

"Not a syllable."

"You are a wonderful young woman," I said in a frank outburst of admiration. "You saw him taking out and burying those skeletons, and yet you said nothing to any one about it. Not even to Angela?"

"Not even to Angela." And I knew by the look upon her sweet, serious face that she spoke truly.

"Why not?" I inquired, gazing at her in appreciative wonder.

"Because I saw that you wanted your discovery to remain secret."

"You're a good girl," I burst forth in admiring spontaneity. "One of a thousand. If you can keep a secret without being asked to do so, you can keep one on promise, I am sure."

"Oh, yes, I can do that!" said she in such sincere tones that I readily believed her. "What is it?"

"It's—it's—I don't know that I ought to tell you; but if anything should happen to me, it would be well for some one to know it, and it's evident you can be trusted."

"Oh, I'm dying to know!" she said eagerly.

"Then come a little farther away from the platform where we can't be overheard."

She followed me into the grove, and there, as we stood together in the darkness of the palms, I told her the story of the finding of the treasure.

"Pearls!" she breathed forth in an excited whisper. "Isn't that dandy? Why, you are rich, Mr. Sibley! Let me congratulate you." She seized my hand impulsively with the grip of a strong man. "You are rich!"

"And so are you, Miss Shaw."

"Oh, I don't come in for any of it! You are the discoverer—the treasure is all yours."

"No; as fellow castaways, each of the school-teachers will get her share, and you among them. I don't know just how much it will amount to in cash, but you get your share with the rest."

"Well, all I can say is that you're the most magnanimous— And after the way you've been treated, too! Oh, this is too good to be true! Are they really so valuable? You say you know how pearls are valued?"

"I know something about it," I replied with affected modesty.

"It's too good! It's too good!" she cried, dancing up and down in the sand like a delighted child.

"Not so loud, please," I cautioned. "Remember, it's a secret."

"Oh, but can't I tell them—can't I tell them? They'll know it in time—why not now? They've been so grumpy to-day. They've all looked so long on the sea for a sail or something, and Angela—"

"What about Angela?"

"She was crying when I left them. It will brighten her up. And," she added, with a touch of illumination, "it will change her tone toward you—she'll make up with you, and—"

"Please don't," I broke in. "I don't want her on those terms, or on any terms except— Well, you know. You'd better go back to them now. Give me the pistol. I'll keep watch over the platform from the shack and guard the treasure. It's in there."

"Is it? Oh, I'd so like to see it—to see all those beautiful pearls."

"Not to-night. I'll go back to the roost with you and help you raise the ladder."

Half an hour later I sat on Flagstaff Mound and stared out over the starlit sea. The lonely night wind was sweeping over the sands; the lagoon was all achurn, while from the barrier reef the outcrash of the breakers sent up a deep and tragic music. What a lot of trouble that Kanaka had made for me! And he was likely to give me further annoyance. His itching fingers had been dipped into the pearls. He would want more, for riches mean as much to an island chief as they do to any man alive.

The wind was upon my nerves as I stretched my tired body upon my palm-leaf couch at the entrance of the little brush hut which commanded a view of the ladder and part of the platform. There I lay looking out upon the blowing palms. Now and then they lifted their long arms, and their fingers beckoned to me so unmistakably that twice I rose abstractedly and took a few steps toward the grove. Then I shook myself out of my morbid state, went back, and lay down again upon my rough

bed, with my eyes still staring toward the palms. At times, when a great gust shook them, their branches clattered wildly. It was as if a group of ghosts clapped their hands. What a dismal night! There was an irritable feeling down my back as if a spider or some other insect were moving about on my skin. My tired muscles twitched, and once or twice, when I dozed off, I felt as if I were falling from a great height, and suddenly leaped up from the couch and was wide awake in an instant. Truly a torturesome night!

At last, while I lay with my eyes upon the ladder, counting its twenty-one rounds up and down and up and down again in the starlight, the beckoning and clattering of the palms lost their hold upon me, and I fell into an uneasy slumber, out of which I was suddenly startled by the uncanny feel of a hot breath upon my face.

As I opened my eyes, I suddenly became conscious of a dark figure bending over me, and an upraised hand that held a steel blade, glimmering palely in the starlight. Quickly my own hand shot out and grasped a greasy forearm, upon which it vainly tried to get a hold. I realized at once that my sudden movement had averted the murderous descent of the Kanaka's knife, but it did not avert his intention to slay me. As my fingers slipped from his oily arm, he made another lunge at me, but I dodged away into the inside darkness, leaving him in the entrance, exposed to the starlight.

Had my pistol been in hand I could have made short work of him, but it lay under the head of my couch near the entrance, for the moment out of reach. I determined to get hold of it at all hazards, and quickly decided upon a bold move, the only one that occurred to me in my hard-pressed state. I pounced upon his back from my corner and tried to get a hold upon his neck. But again I could get no grip. My fingers slid as though they were closing upon a flounder. While I still bore heavily down upon

him, I could feel myself slowly sliding from his slippery, naked back as he wriggled under me, his head well down upon the ground and his arms sprawled out upon it. Then it came to me that he had prepared himself for this encounter, as island thieves sometimes do, by smearing some kind of lubricant, perhaps fish-oil, all over his naked body.

CHAPTER XI.

Catching a Greased Pig.

"YOU'RE a pretty smooth fellow," I thought, as the well-anointed body of the Kanaka chief wriggled and twisted in my nervous tackling fingers, "but I'll get hold of you yet."

For even as the islander slid under my fingers like a greased pig and squirmed away from under me, a happy expedient occurred to me. I reached down and seized a handful of sand, which I quickly threw upon his neck.

I could have yelled for joy when I felt my fingers getting a firm, gritty hold upon his thick throat. Soon my other hand, gritted with sand, closed securely about the wrist of his knife hand. So tightly did I hold his face down into the sand that it almost smothered him.

Up to this moment neither of us had uttered a sound save the hard-breathing grunts of two struggling antagonists, but I now said to him as quietly as I could, so as not to alarm the schoolma'ams:

"Let go that knife, Tom! If you don't, I'll choke you to death where you lie."

"No, me no let um go," he panted from under me. "Me no your man—me no do wha' you say no mo'. Me kill you—tha's wha' me do." Again he writhed and thrashed under my grasp.

"If there's any killing to be done," I said with the cool consciousness of the man on top, "I guess you'll be the victim. Let go that knife!"

He gave a deep grunt of defiance and thrashed his legs and his left arm about wildly, striking the brush walls of the shack and making them rustle and creak so that I felt sure he would awake the women on the platform, but the noises mingled with the sounds of the wind in the trees and they did not rouse the sleeping ones.

The king was a large, sinewy man; but he was older than I, and there was still another point on my side—the dissipated life he had led.

It was not long before he lay panting under the clutch of my fingers upon his windpipe. He made horrible choking noises and relaxed his hold upon the knife, which I seized with my left hand and raised above his back.

"Now," I breathed hotly, as I pricked him between the shoulders with the point, "you just lie still or you'll be a dead king, which I don't believe is quite as good as a live rabbit."

"You no kill me!" he growled feebly. "Me be your man—me do wha' you tell; you no kill me!"

"I think you *will* be my man," I said triumphantly, as my left hand stole over to the head of my couch, and I grasped my automatic as though it were the hand of an old friend. "I've got a pistol and a knife here, and now's the time for you to get up very quietly so as not to waken the ladies and come with me. Move on, old chap!"—and I pressed the muzzle close to the back of his head.

He knew what that meant and crawled out of the hut, assuring me that he wouldn't disturb the ladies for anything in the world. I led him along to where I knew a piece of rope, the boat's painter, lay at the foot of a tree. He did not resist while I tied his hands behind him and made him march down to the coral hut, showing gray in the clear starlight near the edge of the lagoon. Inside the hut I sanded his ankles and tied them together, saw to it that his wrists were securely lashed, and then stood over him as he lay there upon the rough floor.

He tried a little cajolery to induce me to let him go free, assuring me that he would be my man and a very good man indeed.

"We'll see about that in the morning," said I, "and also we'll have you hand over those pearls you stole."

"You have um pearl," he assented readily. "You bring my clo'. Me cold."

"Where are they?"

He pointed to a near-by palm clump, and going over there I found his hiding-place and in his trousers a pocket nearly full of the pebbly gems. I took out the pearls, threw him his clothes, and left him to reflect upon the evil of his ways.

As I walked back to the shack, the knife and pistol in my hands, I felt dead tired and ready to fall all in a heap upon my couch. But the eastern sky began to pale, the wind died, and the palms ceased their clatter before I dozed off to sleep.

It was a depressing, fog-bedeveled morning when I arose, aching in every joint and muscle after the strenuous efforts of the previous day and night. As I looked about the island from the foot of the flagstaff, I thought I had never seen a more lonely sight.

At breakfast Miss Peck said she had heard strange noises in the night, and Miss Shaw remarked that she had heard them, too; but the other girls had slept soundly while I had been battling for my life in the shack not more than a hundred and fifty feet away.

When I hinted that the sounds were probably those of the wind among the palms, nothing more was said about the nocturnal disturbances. In fact, there was little going by way of conversation that morning, as the girls were all under the dispiriting influence of the gray mist and dark, lowering clouds.

There was one good omen in those dark clouds, and that was rain. I saw to it that the boat was in the best position to catch what rain-water might fall upon the slant of the tent and placed a jar and some tin cans under the other

side. Then I gathered up some food left over from the breakfast-table and went down to feed my prisoner. What should be done with him? Would it not be best to keep him tied up in the hut for a day or two until a full sense of his subjugation should sink into his thick-shelled coconut?

On first catching sight of me coming into the cabin there was a gleam of sullen defiance and rebellion in the big liquid eyes of my prisoner, but the idea of food appealed so strongly to him that these dark looks soon gave way to more pleasant ones. He was permitted the free use of his hands while he ate, but he objected strongly to their being tied again, declaring that he would be a "good man" and do whatever I directed. With a pitiful, vanquished look he said he was very sorry for his attempt upon my life, and that thereafter he would do everything all "ri" if only I would give him his liberty.

Offering no reply whatever to his appeal, I made his murderous hands fast at the wrists in a series of good strong hitches and then went back to camp. I still held to the quixotic notion that for the present it was best to keep from the schoolma'ams all knowledge of Tom's attack upon me. At the same time I felt that there was no harm in telling them I had captured him and made him a prisoner. But it was a mistake not to have told them at once of the Kanaka's attempt upon my life. It would have saved a lot of trouble, as events proved.

They all went down with me a little later in the forenoon to see the prisoner. Although Miss Peck showed by her talk that she thought I had cooped him up on account of his matrimonial advances, she seemed to have lost some of the feeling of repugnance for him that had been generated by his wholesale proposal of the day before. She and some of the other women looked at him curiously for a while, during which he sat eying them with interest and a most innocent expression.

"Don't you think he might be tied a little more—more mercifully?" asked the principal, looking at me. "That rope must cut his wrists."

"If it were any looser," I replied, with perhaps a shade of resentment, "he would be slipping out of it when we weren't looking."

Miss Binney lifted her shoulders. "I shouldn't care to be in such an uncomfortable position," she observed. "And right in the hot sun, too."

"Oh, the sun shines in at the doorway now," I replied, making light of her suggestion, "but it will soon swing around and leave him in the shade."

"I am sure he would behave with propriety if he were paroled," remarked Miss Peck. "He has spent a night of reflection in durance vile and has doubtless learned a lesson in the— the etiquette of marriage proposals."

"If you will pardon me," I said somewhat testily, "I am going to keep him as he is for the present, until I have decided what to do with him. I feel that I have good reasons—reasons besides those you have referred to—for pursuing this course. To be sure, they are just a mere man's reasons, but I trust you will consider them sufficient, though I cannot name them."

"What are they?" asked one of the girls.

"You shall all know later," I said.

"I think I know what they are now," said Miss Peck wisely.

I did not ask her what she thought they were. I went back to the grove to gather sap and do some other chores, and Dorothy and two or three other girls accompanied and assisted me; but Miss Peck, Miss Binney, Ruth, and Angela remained down by the lagoon for over an hour, and once I saw them hanging about the coral cabin and looking in at the open doorway. Afterward, when the four returned to camp where I sat sharpening the ax on a fine lump of coral, I heard them talking about Taumatoa. Miss Peck, who was certainly of a forgiving nature, again spoke as if she could not under-

stand why the king was kept a prisoner.

"It's because he's too dangerous to be allowed at large," said Dorothy. "Mr. Sibley, who knows these natives, sees that, and—"

"Oh, come, dear!" piped Miss Binney in strange championship of the king; "I'm sure he's not so bad as you think. One must make allowances for his early training."

"Quite right," clicked out Miss Peck, who was sitting near by, fashioning a fan from a large palm-leaf. "One must make allowances, particularly when it is considered that so many of our ideas are wholly alien to his temperament."

"Alien to his temperament!" I nearly growled aloud while I rubbed the stone savagely upon the ax. "Alien to his fiddlesticks."

"Did you say something?" asked Miss Binney, glancing at me out of her curious gray eyes.

"No," was my coolly studied reply, for it was the place to choose one's words. "But, if you ladies will permit me, I may remark that it's unnecessary to waste any time in the study of the temperament of that chocolate-colored rascal or in bestowing any sympathy upon him."

As I spoke these words I saw the other girls looking on, Angela among them.

"You have virtually said that before, Mr. Sibley," said Miss Peck.

"Well, let me say it again," said I. "Please don't waste your compassion upon him."

Miss Binney lifted her shoulders and drooped her eyelids in an injured way, and there was also a hurt look on Miss Peck's face. Dorothy said nothing, but I think she enjoyed my little outburst and that the turn of her head hid a smile of appreciation.

"I was only looking at the human side of the matter," remarked Miss Peck frigidly. "The human side," she repeated impressively, looking at the group of girls under the platform,

some of whom nodded assent. "You will admit, I hope, Mr. Sibley, that even a poor Polynesian savage has his claims upon the Caucasian race."

"I'm not disputing that point," I replied in the same studied tone, "but this particular Caucasian has good reason for looking at still another side of the creature under consideration."

"Oh, you refer to his report to us as to certain practises of white men among the islands," said Miss Peck frigidly and in a tone that was not lost upon the assembled schoolma'ams.

That was the time when I came near bursting right out in meeting and telling about Tom's murderous attack upon me. Indeed, it was hard to turn the other cheek, and I shouldn't have done so but for Angela, whom I did not care to alarm, though she deserved it. So my teeth pressed closely upon my tongue, while Dorothy came to my rescue.

"You promised Mr. Sibley that you would waive that matter," she cried, in the tones of a loyal champion, "and you asked us all to suspend judgment, though I never believed a word of the story; and now you are bringing it all up again. I think we'd better talk about something else."

"Anything you please," grated Miss Peck, "though it presents itself to me as a topic that should not be summarily dismissed."

The scandalized look of this virtuous spinster in my direction filled me with a sudden resolve to go down to the cabin, bring up Tom, and wring from him his delayed confession as to the spurious nature of his information about my matrimonial adventures among the islands.

CHAPTER XII.

Sympathy for Tom.

I STRUCK off at a hot pace, but the nearer I got to the coral cabin the slower became my stride, and by the time I had reached the place and gazed

down upon my prisoner it came to me that to hale him into that prejudiced court of women and make him deny his own story at the pistol's point, as it were, would be anything but convincing. It would require very little of the much-vaunted feminine insight for them to see that he was speaking under coercion. I could hear Miss Peck say: "Oh, yes; he has the man completely intimidated." It would be better to wait until he was more thoroughly tamed, and then to let him confess in a way that, at least, should seem voluntary.

While Taumatoa, in whining tones, was endeavoring to convince me that the best thing I could do would be to give him his freedom, a half dozen of the schoolma'ams came down through the blurring fog and stood in the shade of a nut-tree, looking in at us. Neither Angela nor Dorothy was among them. It was evident that the sympathies of these six women were with the king in his cruel captivity.

"Why are you still keeping him manacled?" asked Miss Peck in a resentful tone.

"Have you any further torture in store for him?" demanded Miss Binney.

As I looked at them, hardly knowing what to say in reply, thoughts of misguided women at home who had fetched flowers to condemned murderers came to me, and I could not help smiling.

Tom knew enough English to take his cue from the schoolma'ams and to assume a most virtuous look as he bowed meekly before the ladies, pitifully extending his hemp-bound hands.

Now I can see the funny side of a situation, and it may have been my appreciation of the fantastic turn of this one that kept me from getting angry and blurting out the tale of the man's attack upon me. Then, too, I had a shrewd feeling that nothing I might urge in justification of my act in making him my prisoner could weigh against the firm belief of these fair

judges that the poor fellow was being punished as an informer. But more than anything I believe it was Angela's violin, the rich, clear notes of which were now floating down from the platform in a lively scherzo, that helped me to see the comedy side of this apparent tragedy.

"Don't be alarmed, ladies," I said lightly. "I am merely keeping the king in durance that he may not enforce his royal order that you shall all accompany him to the altar."

"The idea!" sniffed Miss Peck.

"The idea!" chorused the others.

"To be sure, as your suitor, Miss Peck," I continued, looking calmly into the scandalized feline eyes of the principal, "and as the suitor of the other ladies present, he may have acquired privileges which I, with my callous mind, am not qualified to perceive. And it may be, Miss Peck, that you would like to have his majesty restored to liberty and given power to enforce his decree. If that is your wish and the wish of the other ladies, I will not stand in the way any longer." I made a feint of untying the rope that bound Tom's hands.

"Why," said Miss Binney, whose sense of the ridiculous was fully equal to that of a mouse in a bath-tub, "I am sure that we would not have him released for that purpose, would we, Miss Peck? It is quite true," she went on without waiting for a reply from that outraged spinster, "that he *did* propose to us."

"*En masse*," I interjected with a world of enjoyment of her serious acceptance of my speech. At the same time I ceased toying with Tom's rope.

"*En masse*, as you say," continued Miss Binney. "But, of course, we couldn't listen to such a proposal."

The rippling tones of the allegro from the platform inspired me to suggest:

"Separate overtures would have been more to your taste?"

Miss Binney's thin lips parted in a look of wrathful contempt, while Tom

rubbed his nose against his rope and looked as if he would like to know what was going on.

"I didn't say anything of the sort," she snapped forth.

"Pardon me," I replied politely, "but it seemed to my dense understanding that that was the implication. Now, if you don't wish to have him released for marital purposes—though, remember, I stand ready to do so, and doubtless could remember enough of the ceremony to officiate—"

"Mr. Sibley!" Never in all my life have I heard my name hissed forth with such a wonderfully sibilant effect, though I admit it lends itself to such utterance, than when Miss Peck threw it at me from between her teeth.

"Did you address me, madam?" I said, innocently turning to her.

"I did," she said with a downward jerk of her hand. "And I wish to say that your perverted ideas, gained doubtless by your prolonged residence in these loose-moraled latitudes, have led you to—" She paused and looked about on the sand for a word.

"Oh, yes; the latitudes are loose," I assisted. Angela's scherzo, flung down by the breeze, was leading me to a reckless mood.

"He admits that they are loose!" she cried triumphantly, turning to the other school-teachers.

"As loose as you like," said I. "Tom will bear me out in that."

The king perked up at the mention of his name, rubbed his nose again, and sat down.

"But you must understand that we don't like them loose," was Miss Binney's righteous fling. "To be sure, this island seems to have no government—"

"No government save that of a man who is ready to marry us off to such a creature as this," burst forth one of the chorus.

"Well," said I, with full enjoyment of the incident, which was better than a play, "I'll admit I'm a little weary of trying to manage the affairs of this territory, small though it is and with

so charming a population" — here I lifted my cap—"and I certainly don't relish that part of my duties which includes the taking and guarding of prisoners. I would be ready to abdicate to you ladies and let you govern affairs to suit yourselves, but—"

"I think that would be best," broke in Miss Peck very seriously, and the others nodded.

"But," I resumed, "it never would work that way. Brute man would assert himself and seize the reins of government. If I laid down those reins, Tom would take them up. So until further notice I intend to exercise my power and keep this undesirable citizen here in this little ready-made prison. Unless, of course, you petition for his release on the ground I have named—that he be permitted to carry out his royal marital decree." The music from the platform ceased, and, losing its inspirational accompaniment, I ceased, too.

The schoolma'ams looked at each other in a fluttered, furious way. A few of the girls, who seemed to possess more insight than Miss Peck or Miss Binney, looked at me in a curious, inquisitorial way, as if they saw something dark behind all this—something unsuspected by the principal—and would like to know what it was.

Angela, Dorothy, and Ruth, coming down from the camp, now joined the party.

"Look," said Miss Binney, with a sad, slow wave of her hand as she gazed at the newcomers. "The poor king! He is still tied up here as punishment for his crime as an informer."

Dorothy glanced at Tom, and then at me, and I saw the same loyal look in her eyes that I had seen before.

"Mr. Sibley has other reasons for doing this, I am sure," she said quietly. "Reasons which he hasn't given you, and doubtless very good ones."

"We are not children—we can see his motive plainly enough," said Miss Binney.

"Yes," affirmed Miss Peck, as if

the fact had not struck her before; "we are not children, and we are not to be treated as such, and I resent the facetious turn Mr. Sibley has sought to give to the matter. Come, ladies, let us go back to camp."

As they turned away Tom made a sniveling plea to them. In the midst of his assurances that he was a good man, and that he had done nothing to merit this outrageous treatment, I shut him off by an impatient "Cut it out!" At which a few of the schoolma'ams glared back at me resentfully and then resumed their walk toward camp.

Half an hour later I saw the indignant ones sitting under the platform in solemn council, doubtless considering what to do about this matter of my inhuman treatment of his majesty. But I doubt if any actual conclusion was reached at the meeting, for I saw Miss Peck and Miss Binney sitting together after the others had adjourned, as though they were a committee appointed to suggest some means of action. Had I dreamed what the action would be I should not have been so self-contained and composed that afternoon; but who can predict what a party of schoolma'ams on a desert island is likely to take into its precious heads?

CHAPTER XIII.

Pleading with Angela.

MANY times during that day I had thought of the chief's attempt upon my life. His motives for putting me out of the way were manifest. In the first place, he wanted to rid himself of an odious master; secondly, he wanted to rule the island and the cast-away women; but more than anything he wanted that treasure. It would make a big man of him if ever he should be able to get back to Alamaka. With that treasure he could buy as much of the tinsel trade stuff as any island monarch possessed, and there would be no end of good things to eat and drink. As for the life of the white

man that stood in the way of these happy conditions, it was of no more consequence to him than that of a fly.

The fog had lifted and great white cloud-puffs were floating lazily over the smooth lagoon. A little later ripples began to dance upon its surface, and toward evening these were succeeded by white-caps, while from the outer strip of reef the doleful boom and roar of the surf went up again. It was the same old wind and the same old dismal beat of the sea that had made the previous night so unbearable to me.

After supper, during which but little of the talk was addressed to me, I went down and fed my prisoner, after which with my pistol in hand I let him exercise a bit by walking up and down the sand. Then, after securing him again, and going to my brush shack where the pearls lay hidden, I dug the chest up out of the sand, and while the daylight lasted I counted the old British coins. There was a little over four hundred pounds of gold and silver, something like two thousand dollars, a handy bit of money in case we ever should be able to leave the island.

I replaced the pearls Tom had stolen, and matched up a score or more of the larger ones in the chest. It was a pleasant occupation, and one which the teachers would no doubt have enjoyed, too; but I was less inclined than ever to tell them of my great discovery. Dorothy knew, to be sure, but I felt that the secret was safe with her.

They were all over at the flag-mound, sitting upon the sandy little slope and talking low among themselves—that is, all save Angela, who sat alone under the platform, slowly swinging her bow in a dolorous adagio. Her form and her movements reflected the rare grace and rarer beauty that I had seen in her at all times; but now she appeared to me as one who sat upon a distant height. That I could imagine this upon that low atoll shows what point I had reached in my wooing her.

Truly, there had been a lapse in that wooing, and a very uncomfortable if

not a hopeless one; for, though to me she was still the whole horizon, I was to her one to be kept at a distance. I wondered if she would have acted the same toward Wallace Little if he had been here in my place and I had been lost at sea, as Wallace probably had been. But an analogy could hardly have been drawn, as Wallace never had lived in the islands and never had been accused of having three Panipa wives.

With my hand in the jar among the big, gleaming pearls, I looked over to her and wondered what she would say if I took the treasure over and showed it to her. Perhaps it would soften her, perhaps she would be more favorably disposed toward me—a man of fortune and able to shower fortune upon others. But my heart rejected this sordid suggestion. I wanted her love for my own sake. I did not wish to bargain for it. And, besides, she was a proud little thing; and, instead of her being more interested in me, she might think the less of me after all.

Putting the treasure back in its hiding-place, I made bold to go up to the platform and stood leaning against a tree, not far from where she sat. It was a strange scene—that lone girl playing the music of a far-off land upon that little desert isle. Her melancholy air lent to her beauty such a depth as I had never seen in it before. Her dark hair, hanging in a flat, lustrous loop over either side of her fair brow, gave her an old-fashioned look that to me was very engaging. There was a mystic touch in the slow, insistent, appealing drone of her violin that held my heart.

I knew that she was conscious of my presence, and yet she made nothing of it. I might have been a stick or a stone, or the sand under her feet. She was not playing for me, and my coming had made no change in her mood, which matched the lonely roar of the surf. Even when the last low note had died away she still sat there, looking out upon the sea through the palms amid which shadows were deepening.

"May I ask what that was?" I said when she laid the violin in her lap.

"It's a little Hungarian song. I have forgotten the composer's name."

"It is divine," I burst forth rhapsodically, "and you played it divinely. I have never heard any one else play it, and I never shall want to."

"I am glad you like it," she said with little expression of interest, though her face had softened under my ardent appreciation.

"Don't put it away. Play something else. Play 'Ich Liebe Dich.' No, I don't suppose you would be willing to do that for me."

The cold, far-away look came into her dark eyes again, as again she looked out through the darkening palms to the sea.

"I'm not in a mood for that tonight. It's a trivial, worn-out thing anyway."

"It could never seem trivial or outworn to me," I said passionately and with a significant look at her that deepened the color upon her face. "And you know why, Angela."

"Mr. Sibley, if you talk to me at all"—her dark brows drew together as she spoke—"it must not be in these terms."

"Then the silly tale of a silly Kanaka—"

"I have made no reference to that," she interrupted.

"But you have it in mind, and it's absurd. I could bring him to you in a moment and make him take it all back."

"Doubtless you could," she said with a significant air of distrust. "But I am not interested in that chapter of your life. It means nothing to me."

"But you *are* interested in it," I insisted, moving a little nearer to her on the bench. "I cannot believe otherwise. You strongly suspect that there's something in the story that has set all the women here wagging their tongues against me—that is, all but one, Dorothy Shaw. Surely, if she regards it as an idle tale, you should be able to take the same view of it."

"Has she told you she disbelieved it?" she asked a little curiously, and with what seemed to me a touch of resentment.

"She has."

"Oh, Dorothy is a very charitable girl—she never pays the slightest heed to—to reports about anybody."

"An admirable trait." I spoke carelessly, without thought of the effect of my words.

"Glad you think so," she flung out crisply. "No doubt she has many other qualities that you admire." A flash of white teeth went with these words, and I knew that her proud Spanish blood was stirring.

It was not the manliest part in the world to play, but being human, and rejoicing to find that her indifference was only a mask, I could not help adding:

"Yes—frankness, ready friendship, and sociability. Then, too, she has none of the mob spirit. She thinks for herself. She doesn't accept ready-made opinions."

"I have the mob spirit, I suppose," she remarked a little scornfully.

"No, I don't say that, but you are influenced by what those women have said about me, and particularly by their complete acceptance of that fantastic tale of Taumatoa's. The teachers have treated it like a rich piece of village gossip, and you have listened to it."

"Oh, I have listened," she admitted, "but it has had no effect upon me."

"But it evidently has had some effect," I insisted. "Why couldn't you have let it pass as Dorothy did?"

"Oh, Dorothy," she said with another touch of irony, "is a very nice girl, a girl of a thousand. They say she has many friends and admirers at home—men friends as well as girls," she added as if to give me a draft of my own medicine. And then she must have bethought herself that there was something too concessional in what she had been saying, for she tactfully retreated behind her violin.

With a quick movement she thrust

the instrument under her chin and flirted out the little scherzo she had played that morning. The music daintily tripping through playful passages, wrought a change in the mood of each of us. I think it brought out more of her good nature, but I received little benefit of it. Still it was something to have talked with her on any terms.

When her violin had sportively trilled out the last notes of the piece, and I saw the schoolma'ams coming back, I thanked her, said good night, and went off to my shack.

Perhaps it betrays a mean spirit in me to say so, but as I lay there on my low couch, looking down upon the lagoon, I was glad that I had aroused that jealous humor in her, for of course it could have signified nothing else than that her air of indifference was studied and assumed. It was good to be assured of this. The night wind came more gently to my ear, and the surf had a more friendly sound. After all hers was a deep nature, and—well, I loved her and could no more help loving her than the wind-lashed waves could help rolling in upon the beach.

But despite the vaguely gratifying interview with Angela, I had a new and strange sense of anxiety that night as I lay there upon my brush couch, which crackled and creaked under me as I stirred and turned uneasily, trying to sleep. When I took out my watch and made it repeat the hour I was vexed to find it was only a quarter past nine. I was vexed because I knew it would be hours before I could sleep. There was nothing to smoke, nothing to read, and I longed for human companionship.

The girls were sitting by a little fire they had lighted near the platform. I wanted to get up and go over and talk with them, but I should have felt constrained with the echoes of our unpleasant debate over Tom still in the air. And so I lay there until, one by one, they mounted the ladder in a queer little procession, and pulling it up after them, went to roost in their odd retreat.

As I look back upon it all now, it was

not the days that I spent upon that island that seem so irksome to me. It was the nights. When they closed in there was always an eerie feeling abroad, and to-night more than ever. I could not get it out of my head that there was something sinister impending. You will say this was quite natural after my tussle with the murderous Tom only the night before, but I had seen the Kanaka safely secured and was not thinking much about him. Nor was it the thought of an oncoming storm, for of that I should have been warned by a violent increase of the wind, which was now blowing steadily, but not heavily, from the west. And yet, so impressed was I with a feeling of approaching danger that I lay awake with my eyes fixed upon the platform.

I have known persons to go to the country for their health and to come back with fully developed cases of insomnia referable to the strangeness of their surroundings, and I tried to trace my own symptoms to this cause and to discount all the danger, but it would not be discounted. For in spite of my self-assurance that he was safe from mischief, my thoughts kept reverting to Tom, and something told me that I should be looking after him again. I was like the farmer who must be getting up in the night and going out to see that his horses are safe, and it was with just as little relish for the nocturnal chore that I rose and went down to Tom's shack.

When I reached the place, struck a match, and looked in, I found that my horse was gone! There, on the floor, were the ropes with which he had been bound, and before my match went out I saw that those which had bound his hands were cut in three or four places, while the leg lashings had been untied. In an instant it came to me who had cut those knots. It was not Tom, for he had no knife or other sharp instrument at hand. It was some of the schoolma'ams, whose precious sympathy for outraged humanity had led them to take this misguided step.

Well, they had overreached me and shown their contempt for masculine judgment and masculine brutality. But they had left him to loosen his own feet, which showed that they had given themselves time to get away before he was at liberty.

Now I deplored my decision to keep in the background the real reason for Tom's imprisonment. I saw it had been a piece of absurd chivalry, this sparing them the constant fears they would have had on their own account if they had known that the Kanaka was capable of such a bloodthirsty attack as he had made upon me the night before.

Nor was there much comfort in the probability that, because of my fancied wish for retaliation upon him as an informer against me, they would not have credited my story and would still have clamored for his release.

But it made me more sore than ever to think that they could not have relied upon my judgment. In my male self-sufficiency it seemed clear to me that they should have done so in any case. Judge if I was not hot as I picked up the several strands and took them up to the waning light of the camp-fire and proved to myself that they were really cut.

I was so distraught with anger, particularly when I recalled the sneering looks and biting tones of Miss Peck and Miss Binney during our verbal tussle, that for a time I was for throwing over my guardianship of the superior-minded females and letting them shift for themselves. I believe that if it were not for Angela and Dorothy I could have done so.

Going back to the coral cabin, revolver in hand, I peered into the shadows of the near-by palms, hoping that I might espy the runaway Tom. I searched the thickets along the jungle edge down to the lagoon and back again, but I saw no trace of him.

But once, just before I gave up the hunt, a queer call from away down the beach was blown to me upon the wind.

It may have been the cry of some lone night-bird, but I fancied that it was the voice of the released chief, and I thought I detected a note of derision in it.

CHAPTER XIV.

The Fight on the Platform.

WELL, the rascally Tom was at large, and there was no use of hunting about for him any more that night. So I went back to my shack and lay, pistol in hand, where my eye could take in as much of the camp as possible. For the white man's burden now lay more heavily upon me than ever, and I had a new and more justifiable sense of danger than when I had first lain down for the night.

About two in the morning, while the Dipper was lying low in the northwest, a sleepy glance toward the roost revealed to me the sight of something detaching itself from the black border of the grove and stealing toward the girls' camp. It was a low, creeping thing, and, in my drowsy state, I at first took it to be a wild animal of some sort, but, nearing a palm trunk that formed a corner-post of the platform, the creature rose suddenly and began to climb the tree, with the obvious intention of mounting to the tent.

Of course it was that infernal Tom! Instantly I sprang up and made toward him, with my automatic in my hand. I thought to surprise him by dodging in among the trees and pouncing upon him before he could learn that I was on the alert; but I had not gone ten steps from the shack before my foot caught in a tangled mass of palm-roots, and I fell headlong, dropping my pistol.

I rose quickly and groped about for the weapon, found it at last, and flung on, impatient of the loss of time. Soon the dark square of the roost rose above me. I determined at once to climb one of the tree-supports, and, if possible, capture the intruder without awakening the schoolma'ams.

As things turned out, it would have been better for me to have called out and frightened him away, for he had now gained the platform; but I did not wish to alarm Angela and Dorothy, the only ones among the teachers who had not forfeited my esteem. Also I thought this the best way to effect the recapture of the released prisoner, who would have jumped down and escaped had he heard me approach.

So, silently, and without hesitation, I climbed one of the nearest tree-posts, and paused for a moment upon a corner of the platform to recover my breath and look for the intruder. There he was on all fours, his head and shoulders inside the tent. I moved quietly toward him, and, pressing the cold muzzle of the pistol against the back of his bare neck, I whispered:

"Come out of there, you beast, or I'll blow your head off! And don't make any noise about it."

Of course he knew who it was that had made this rear attack upon him. He obeyed my order on the instant, and so quietly as not to disturb the girls. It seemed easy sailing to me, and already I saw him back in the coral hut, safely secured for the night.

But there's no counting on a Kanaka, as I might have remembered. When I motioned him toward the ladder, which I directed him to let down, that we might descend quietly from the platform, he made, as if to obey meekly, but pretended that he did not know how to perform the simple act. Impatient of delay, I slipped the pistol into my pocket, seized the ladder, and was about to swing it into position, when, of a sudden, he flung himself forward, as if from a catapult, and clutched me by the wrists with violent hands.

The ladder banged down upon the ground, and, at the same instant, in trying to pull away from him, I brushed heavily against the tent, my foot tripped over one of the fiber stay-ropes, and down we both came upon the platform in a rolling struggle, shaking

the roost as if by an earthquake, while the screams of the terrified teachers rent the night air.

Among the wild voices I recognized that of Angela, and I could not help smiling grimly as I tried to break loose from my antagonist, when I heard her call my name in a terrified, little treble.

"I'm here!" I called back between gasps. "Don't be alarmed. Stay inside the tent, all of you!"

Vainly I tried to free my right hand and get it into my pistol-pocket. He saw what I was trying to do, and held on to that hand with clenching fingers, and, presently, with his teeth. With his sharp fangs buried in my right forearm, he still clung to both my wrists while we lay struggling upon the platform, often rolling perilously near the edge of it.

"This is what you get for letting him loose!" I heard Dorothy cry out to Miss Peck. And while I fought off the mad attacks of the frenzied Kanaka, I had the satisfaction of hearing the principal admit, amid frightened sobs:

"Yes, it was a mistake—all a mistake. He should have been kept tied up there. Oh, dear! Oh, dear! I hope he won't kill poor Mr. Sibley."

Yes, they understood the situation, for, as I afterward learned, one of the girls had seen Tom poking his head into the tent, and had lain in terrified silence until the outside uproar had brought from her the screaming information of what it was all about.

But I was paying little heed to my charges just then. I was trying desperately to free my right hand, but this was not so easy, clutched as it was at the wrist by Tom's sinewy fingers, and in the viselike grip of his jaws. So deeply did his sharp tusks enter my forearm that I could feel the warm blood trickling down my shirt sleeve.

It looked as though he had the better of me, but, of a sudden, I turned, and getting my knees under me, I raised myself a little and jerked my left hand free from his grasp. In another moment I should have borne him

down under me, freed my right hand, and got my pistol into play, but he twisted over to the very edge of the platform.

I caught a glimpse of Dorothy, who had sprung out with something white in her hand, which she lifted above the head of the struggling Kanaka. He gave a violent lurch, the platform swayed under us, and in a twinkling we both dropped heavily to the ground amid the shrieks of the girls.

I must have come down like a log, with Tom atop of me. My head smote the earth so that I saw more stars than ever were in heaven. But, though powerless to rise, I was still conscious enough to feel him groping for my pistol. In the murk of my muddled mind there was now but one idea, and that was to keep him from securing that invaluable weapon. As if in a nightmare, my hand instinctively sought the pocket which held it, and my fingers closed upon its hard handle as the fingers of the oft-quoted drowning man close upon a straw.

But his lean brown hand gripped mine of a sudden, and, though I clung to the weapon with what little of my spent force remained, he surely would have wrested it from me but for Dorothy and Angela. I heard them shout from the platform, and some missile—I knew not what—thudded down upon the Kanaka as he bent over me, intent upon the possession of the pistol. Again and again a hurtling object flew down upon him. At last he groaned spasmodically, his clutch upon me relaxed, and in the feeble light I saw him rise and dash away among the trees.

I tried to get up and go in pursuit of him, but the effort was a vain one. My head swam, my ears sang, the dusky palms swung before my eyes, and I lay back limply upon the ground. The cries of the women sounded as from afar, and soon they were lost in the gray mist of a mind inert.

When I awoke I was lying in the tent, and Angela was bending over me. It was broad daylight. I could hear the

low buzz of the schoolma'ams talking in quiet tones, and saw them sitting in a row upon the edge of the roost. They had drawn wide the flap of the tent to give me air; but as they had been afraid of a further attack from Tom, they were sticking to the platform.

Angela's fervent eyes looked the joy and relief she felt in my coming round.

"Are you much hurt?" she asked eagerly.

"Only my head," I replied, after I had bestirred myself to see if any bones had been broken. "It's still a little groggy. If he hadn't fallen on top of me! I don't fancy serving as a shock-absorber for one of his weight."

"Was he on top of you when you fell?" she cried, sympathetically. "Oh, the miserable villain!"

"That wasn't so much his fault," I said, trying to smile. "We came down together and—" I moved my right hand and saw that it was bandaged.

"That's a bad wound you have. Did he stab you?" she asked in a sympathetic little tone.

"No; I believe he gouged me with his teeth. Was it you that bandaged it?"

"Yes," she replied quietly.

"I'm glad," I said in a low whisper, and she smiled.

After all, it was worth while to have been bitten by the beast, and I began to say so, when she put a finger upon my mouth and nodded toward the others.

"How did they get me up here?" I asked.

"Carried you. Dorothy did most of it. We came near breaking the ladder, with so many of us on it."

"You beat him off, didn't you? You threw things at him?"

"Yes, the cowries."

"Did you break any of them?"

"A few."

"Too bad—they're very valuable, those shells."

"Oh, we'd have thrown them if they'd been gold nuggets. But don't talk too much if your head hurts. Do you want anything—a cup of water?"

"It would go pretty well," said I; "but I fancy there isn't much left."

"You shall have it, if it's the last drop," she declared fervently. "Will you go with me, Dorothy, to fetch some water from the cask?"

"Certainly," said Dorothy.

"Take the pistol," said I, handing it to them, "and use it if he ventures near."

The schoolma'ams let down the ladder, and the two girls descended.

"Keep a sharp lookout," warned Miss Peck, "and be ready to run if you catch sight of him."

"Girls," she said to the others, "I wish you would all act as sentinels for a while. I want to speak to Mr. Sibley." She came in with a contrite air which I was just mean enough to enjoy.

"Mr. Sibley," she began in an humble, friendly tone, "I owe you an apology. You evidently had the best interests of all of us at heart when you imprisoned that miserable Tom. We had not dreamed that he was capable of such a—a misdemeanor. You know the islanders better than we do, and in future we shall abide by your judgment in all such matters. Are you much hurt?"

"No, thank you," said I. "Just shaken up a bit by my fall. My head feels a little fuzzy—that's all."

"I hope you will be better soon," she said in sympathetic tones.

Presently Angela came up the ladder and into the tent with a shell containing water, which she handed to me. I drained it gratefully. Dorothy had also brought water in another shell. Angela wet her handkerchief, folded it, and laid it on my forehead, while the others retired to the little porch.

"That feels good," I said, and thanked her. But what felt better was the touch of her cool, dainty fingers upon my brow as she stroked it gently in smoothing back my hair before she put on the handkerchief.

"Have they seen anything of the Kanaka lately?" I asked her.

"Not for a couple of hours. Just

before sunrise we saw him poking about in the woods in and around your shack."

"Was he in the shack long?" I asked eagerly and with a sinking feeling at my heart.

"In the shack? Yes—half an hour or more. He was in and out several times."

"Did he—did he carry away anything?" I sprang up as I spoke, and she looked curiously at me.

"We didn't see him go away. He must have torn aside the brush and gone out through the woods. Lie down again. It isn't good for you to be—"

"Are you sure he isn't there yet?" I broke in excitedly.

"Yes; we saw him through the gap, away down below the coral hut, just before you woke up."

"There he is now—away down the beach!" cried Dorothy, pointing at a distance-diminished figure walking along the lagoon shore a quarter-mile beyond the coral hut. Then she turned and looked at me in a way that made me know she understood my eager inquiry about Tom having taken something from the shack. "Some of you keep a lookout while Ruth and I go and get breakfast. I'm hungry enough to eat half a dozen eggs."

"Very well," said I; "but give me the pistol. I'll keep guard up here." And I sat up in bed with the weapon in my hand and a miserable sinking feeling at heart; for it mattered not how well I guarded the camp, he had the treasure, and I might never see it again.

Soon the smoke of the camp-fire was drifting past the roost, and appetizing smells arose to where I lay. The girls, though still on the alert, were jolly again, and were venturing little jokes about the situation.

As I was able to eat a good breakfast, I knew that my injuries were not serious. What troubled me most was the thought of the Kanaka having ransacked my shack. The chest was buried in the sand in a corner near my couch.

Had he ferreted it out? If so, it was no wonder that he had made a secret exit through the rear and into the grove.

I was burning to be up and to find out the worst, but it was some hours before I could persuade Angela to let me leave the roost and go to my couch in the shack. She consented only upon my insisting that I felt much better and was fully able to walk.

But I had to brace myself pretty stiffly as I made my way light-headedly along the sand and into the shack. There I found everything in the wildest confusion. The brush couch had been torn to pieces, and the sand under it had been burrowed into. The ground had been probed all around as if with a sharp stick, and a quick glance into the corner where the chest had been buried revealed the sickening fact that it had been unearthed and removed.

CHAPTER XV.

Watching and Waiting.

THOUGH I live a hundred years, I probably never shall feel again such a bewildered sense of bafflement and dismay, nor such anger as I felt, standing there in that little shack and staring into the vacant hole from which my precious treasure had been rifled.

The brass chest and its great wealth of jewels and gold were gone and might never be recovered, and all because of the silly sentimentality of a lot of meddling schoolma'ams! True, the island was a small one, but the jungle was over a mile long, and the hiding-places were many. It might be difficult for the Kanaka king ever to get his loot off and away to a place where he might enjoy it; but that loot was in the possession of a man who, as proved by what had happened during the past two nights, had lapsed back into a state of perfect savagery.

It would be necessary to maintain the strictest guard over the camp to keep him from descending upon us and kill-

ing us all. I felt that his greedy regard for the treasure and the safe making away with it to Alamaka, whenever occasion might arise, would lead to such a bloody action on his part if he could devise the means. Just what those means might be, seeing that he was not armed in any way, I could not surmise, but one thing was certain—from that time forth my vigilance must never be relaxed for a moment.

Here was the white man's burden with a vengeance, but nothing remained for me to do, despite my enfeebled condition, but to take up that burden and bear it as best I might. It came to me as I stood there looking off over the sands in the vain hope of catching sight of the robber that the wily islander had planned the looting of the pearls in a manner to do justice to the most strategically minded white man.

What better way could have been devised to have gotten me out of the shack, away from the treasure, than this ruse—for it evidently was a ruse—of trying to enter the girls' tent in the night? It had been a clever, though dastardly, plan, and, worse luck, it had worked.

For a long time I stood in the door of the shack, looking down over the lagoon and the dazzling strip of white sand that lay on either side of it and trying to rally my physical forces to the point of going forth to hunt down the piratical chieftain, but the more I endeavored to prod myself up to the action, the weaker I seemed to become, and soon I dropped limply upon the couch.

I must have lain there half an hour in a sort of drowsy torpor, during which I tried vainly to keep on the lookout for the return of the murderous chief, when I heard Angela calling to me.

I steadied my voice to reply, but my tone must have alarmed her, for she came running down, and soon her sweet face was bending over me, and she was crying in a dismayed voice:

"Oh, I should never have let you

come out here! You are worse off than you were trying to make me believe. You must go back to the roost and remain there until you are well."

"I'm all right," I tried to reassure her. "It's just my head. It's awfully hot and—"

Her hand touched my forehead.

"Why, you are feverish!" she cried. "You must go back at once."

She went out and called Dorothy, who came immediately, and was beginning to scold me for overtaking my strength, when, of a sudden, her eye took in the upheaved condition of things in the shack, and she cried off-guardedly:

"The treasure! Has he stolen it?"

"What treasure?" demanded Angela with a puzzled air.

"Tell her," I said, nodding to the other girl.

Dorothy told her.

Angela's face whitened a little. It was in character that she should care less for the pearls, or the loss of them, than for the humiliating fact that no knowledge of them had been transmitted to her.

"Oh, a secret!" she flung out with a show of coolness. "And I was not considered of enough importance to be let into it!"

"Well, you see—" I began in apologetic tones.

"Remember, my dear Angela," broke in Dorothy, "that at the time Mr. Sibley brought in that treasure from the wreck you and the others were not in a state to inspire confidences. In fact, Mr. Sibley couldn't get near you. You had chosen to accept the idle tale of that criminal Kanaka rather than any statement a reputable gentleman might offer."

"Oh, I was wrong—I was wrong!" admitted Angela readily. "Only I couldn't bear the thought of—"

"Of my having three native wives in Panipa," I put in rather indifferently.

"No, I couldn't bear it," repeated Angela. "I suppose it is my nature to be—"

"To be awfully jealous," finished Dorothy with a smile. "Will you let me say something? It has been apparent from the first that you two have cared a lot for each other. I don't know just how much you were taken by that long-legged Wallace Little, dear; but I am sure you cared for Mr. Sibley, and that you have been very silly to listen to these tales about him."

"He couldn't tell any of you about the treasure while you were holding him off at arm's length and looking so accusingly at him; but he did tell me, for he knew that I didn't believe what that old Tomato had been babbling to us just before he sprung his wholesale proposal. But now you know everything about the treasure and the fact that it has been stolen, which is enough news for one day."

"What I propose is, that after we get Mr. Sibley back to the roost he shall let me take the pistol and go and hunt down that thieving Kanaka and take that brass chest away from him."

I shook my head. I said that she was a brave girl, but that I could not dream of letting her go out on such a dangerous errand. In a little while I should be able to go myself, and perhaps she might accompany me. The idea of her going along was put forth simply to satisfy her, for I had no intention of letting her help me hunt down a desperate thief in the jungle.

They fussed a lot over me, and so did Miss Peck and the others, all insisting that I should return to the platform; but I stubbornly remained there in the shack until toward evening, when a cool wind rose and seemed to revive me. Then, with Angela on one side and Dorothy on the other, and the rest trailing along in the rear, I was led toward the roost. My queer procession of schoolma'am escorts helped me up the ladder to the platform, and at my suggestion a couch was made on the little porch in front of the tent.

By this time all the teachers knew about the treasure and of its loss. Miss Binney's interest in the story was fair-

ly palpitant. She kept talking and talking about the pearls and bewailing the loss of them.

"I have always hated school-teaching," I heard her say to Ruth Deming, "and to think that I have really had a fortune of at least fifty thousand dollars—that's what he said each girl would have gotten, didn't he?—and knew nothing about it! I think it's real mean he didn't tell us. We might have kept those pearls in a safer place—on the platform or somewhere."

"Mr. Sibley did what he thought was for the best," replied Ruth. "And really, Fanny, as long as he was staying each night in the shack, guarding the treasure and us with his revolver, I don't see how he could have done any better."

"But if he had told us we should at least have had the pleasure of knowing about our good fortunes while they lasted," demurred Miss Binney. "As it was, there's no satisfaction in it at all."

"I don't see what you've got to grieve about, my dear," said the sunny Ruth. "Why should you bemoan the loss of a treasure that you knew nothing about?"

"But I ought to have known about it—he should have told us all, instead of simply making a confidante of Dorothy Shaw."

"Oh, Fanny!" cried Miss Peck, who, like the rest of us, had overheard this strange bit of talk, "don't chatter so. We ought to be thankful matters are no worse. Beside, the treasure may be recovered."

"I certainly hope it will be," returned Miss Binney, "though I suppose there's small chance of that."

Despite my lack of sympathy with the girl's cynical way, I could not help thinking that her last remark held a lot of truth.

I lay on the platform before the tent that night, pistol in hand, nervously thrashing about on my rude bed. Angela and Ruth Deming kept watch through the tent-flap, and thus I was

able to sleep a little from time to time, awakening now and again to peer into the palm shadows, or down the beach for the return of murderous Tom.

During the night I planned to rise early, and go forth in quest of my rebel Caliban, but when the gray dawn stole up from the eastern sea, and I started up to venture forth on my quest, I found myself still giddy and uncertain of motion, so that I was compelled to lie down again, which I did with a baffled sigh, and with such a nervous fretfulness as I never felt before.

In the morning, that I might not be in the way of the girls, I insisted on returning to my shack. That day, thanks to the ministrations of the schoolma'ams, I gained some strength, but three days and three nights of this irritating, almost maddening waiting and watching in the shack and on the roost must needs pass before I was in any sort of condition to begin the man-hunt and the quest of the stolen treasure.

CHAPTER XVI.

Angela in Peril.

BEFORE setting out upon what was to prove the most hazardous adventure of all this island history, I gave Angela my knife and Dorothy the ax, and asked the schoolma'ams to help me gather as many heavy lumps of coral as could conveniently be stowed upon the platform, to be used in case of a threatened attack by the Kanaka outlaw, who might easily elude me in the jungle and make his way back to camp during my absence.

The teachers obeyed the order with alacrity, and soon we had piled upon the platform a formidable stack of coral ammunition, as well as all our stores of food, water, and sap.

I did not know or even suspect that, while they worked away so diligently gathering the coral, they were planning something outside the bargain, and of which they doubtless knew I would

wholly disapprove. But though I heard them talking low among themselves, nothing of their plan drifted to my ears.

The schoolma'ams made light of the loss of the treasure, which most of them seemed to think would be recovered, if not that day, at least before we should leave the island.

"I don't want to go until those pearls are found," declared Miss Binney. "If he has hidden them, as he probably has, we ought to rake the island with our side-combs until we turn them up."

For once, she seemed to share the sentiments of the majority, for on looking about, I saw the eyes of the girls brighten and their faces set determinedly. They acted just as a lot of men would have done in a similar case. But to what length their feeling in the matter would carry them I did not dream, though I was soon to know.

After breakfast I saw them all safely up the ladder to the roost, and, waving my hand to them and bidding them to stick closely to their present position, and not to come down on any account, I strode away hastily across the little sand strip and plunged in among the palms, deeming it best to do my hunting under cover.

I had not been gone from camp five minutes, when I heard fleet footsteps behind me and a scurrying through the brush. Turning, revolver in hand, I saw the whole troop of teachers bearing lightly down upon me through the grove, Dorothy leading the way with the ax, followed by Angela with the knife, and all the others armed with clubs, which they had cut secretly and hidden away until their plan of action was ripe for carrying out.

Yes, this was the plan, and as I scowled back upon the armed Amazons, they must have seen how much I relished it. Not but that I admired the spirit that had led them to join the chase, but to go man-hunting in an island jungle with a lot of schoolma'ams was not to my taste.

My protests, however, were as little heeded as the dropping of the coconuts from the trees. They had forestalled them all.

"We knew that you would object," said Miss Peck, smoothing back her great mass of rich brown hair, which had been disarranged in her run through the brush. "That would be only natural in one of your chivalrous character." I bowed and smiled satirically. "But we knew that you were far from being well and strong, and we wanted to assist you."

"Also," put in Miss Binney, "we felt that as each of us was to have her share in the treasure, we should all help to recover it."

"That's putting it on very mercenary grounds," protested Angela. "We wanted to help because—"

"Because it was our duty," finished Miss Peck.

"And because we'd be glad to see King Tomato safe in his coral prison again," added Dorothy.

"Yes," owned Miss Peck. "We unwisely let him loose and caused you all this trouble, and we wanted to make the best amends we could."

"But I can't let you go with me to hunt down this wild cannibal," I said. "You don't know what it means. It's too dangerous."

"But we are all armed," said Angela, "and there can really be no harm in our going along if we all stick together."

"Come!" cried Fanny Binney. "Let's be moving on! He may be burying our pearls this very minute."

"Well," said I, seeing that objection was useless, "if you will stick together, as Miss Alvarado suggests, you may come. Let there be no stragglers."

"All right," they chorused. And we started, I in the lead with my revolver, Dorothy and Angela just behind with the ax and knife, and the rest of the schoolma'ams bunched up in the rear with their clubs.

There was a world of devil-vine in that jungle, and the girls were con-

stantly getting hung up on it. Again and again I had to assist them to disentangle their skirts from the impaling "stickers," as they called them. But they were all so good-natured about these mishaps, and so apologetic, and their faces were so bright and hopeful, that I didn't have it in my heart to send them back, as I was on the point of doing several times.

Although I had deemed it best that we remain under cover during the greater part of the hunt, we twice left the wood and cautiously emerged upon the sand. Once we ventured out to where we could see the white surf pounding upon the outer beach, and looked up and down the long strip of glaring white sand, over which the heat lines were twirling, but we saw nothing of our man. We looked for footprints in the sand, but there were none.

When, after another fight with the jungle, I led the way out upon the lagoon side of it, we all stared up and down the flat rim of sand, but saw no living objects, save the wheeling birds and the land crabs that scuttled away upon our approach.

We were now midway between the camp and the wreck, and could look back through an opening in the trees and see the white tent upon the roost, and the curling smoke of our camp-fire.

In the direction of the wreck, and about five hundred yards distant, was a little palm clump, thick with clustering shoots, above which rose tall, smooth trunks, topped by long-leaved branches—a green island in the sand. Standing about two hundred feet from the grove, and gazing long and narrowly at this clump, I thought I saw a dark figure move quietly amid its shadows, and then disappear in them.

Springing forward instantly, and telling the teachers to remain where they were, I ran toward the place where I had seen the figure which, of course, must have been that of the Kanaka.

Thinking possibly he might try to escape from the tree-island to the main

belt of woods, I approached the place from that side of it and, standing between it and the edge of the jungle, I leveled my pistol and called forth in commanding tones:

"Come out of there, Tom, and give yourself up!"

There was no reply. The light wind rustled and the palm branches and a sea-bird squawked from somewhere. Those were the only sounds I heard, save the moaning of the surf to seaward, and a singing in my ears which reminded me of my weakened condition.

But though he now probably was able to overcome me if it came to a tussle, I was armed, and he was not; at least, he had no firearms, and if I got within range, I would be master of the situation.

It seemed likely that he had chosen the detached clump of trees as a place from which he could get a good view up and down the inner beach, and be on guard against my coming. But I was not fully assured that he was there, as I had seen no further sign of his presence beside that first and possibly deceptive one.

Again I called, demanding that he come forth, and saying that if he did not do so, I would come in after him. But still there was no reply.

I hesitated about carrying out my threat to go into the clump, fearing that he might elude me and dash away into the forest. While I stood there, I heard a flurry of skirts and the sound of footsteps, and here came my precious schoolma'ams, all in a flutter of excitement.

"Is he in there?" demanded Dorothy.

"I think so," I replied; "but you girls had better go back. He might—"

"Let's rout him out!" cried the athletic maiden, waving her ax, while her eyes blazed with excitement. "Let's surround the place, set fire to the brush, and roast him out, if he won't come any other way."

"But the pearls!" protested Miss

Binney. "If he has them in there the fire might damage them, and—"

"The better plan," suggested Miss Peck, "is for us to surround the thicket—it's small, and there's enough of us to do that—while Mr. Sibley goes in and tries to secure him. If he should emerge, we women can set upon him with our weapons, and I am sure we can overpower him."

It was a sight to see her wave her club like a queen of melodrama, and to see her eyes flash defiance toward the Kanaka's hiding-place.

"Don't try anything of the sort," I objected. "It's too dangerous." Better fall back while I go in and nab him."

But while I advanced toward the thicket to carry out my resolution, they proceeded to "surround" the place, as the doughty Miss Peck had suggested. The sight of this thin line of valiant schoolma'ams, strung out about twenty feet apart all around the palm clump, would have made a strategic warrior smile; but they took their sentinelship seriously, and no one more so than Miss Peck, who stood with her club raised, ready at a moment's notice to close in with the rest upon the Kanaka chief. As for Angela, she stood quietly, knife in hand, looking at me with interested, fearful eyes, as if she did not fancy my beating about alone in that dangerous bush.

Peering cautiously into the tangle of vines and young palms, I pushed aside the brush and entered the thicket. I had not gone twenty feet before I saw my man crouching behind a mass of small screw-pines.

"I've got you, Tom!" I cried, flashing the bright barrel of my pistol toward him. "Come along with me."

"All ri'," he assented with a grin, as he rose from his hiding-place and took a step or two toward me.

It looked like an easy game, and I felt that he and the treasure were already mine, for doubtless he could be made to yield it up now that he had surrendered. Still, I was on the alert for a Kanaka trick. It came quickly

enough—quicker, indeed, than I had anticipated.

"Where are the pearls?" I asked him. "Did you bring them here?"

"Yes—me got um all ri'," he grunted, still grinning.

"Well, show them to me? Give them up or you'll get a hot shot or two out of this."

"All ri'—all ri'!" he assented eagerly. "Pearl ri' over there." He pointed to the tallest of the palms in the clump. "Me get um, bring um you."

"Well, hurry up," I cried, eagerly, anxious to get sight again of that old brass chest.

That was where I made my mistake. I thought that while I had him covered he would hardly dare to elude me, but that is precisely what he did. I lay it all to my impetuous haste to get my fingers again on that brass chest. While he went over to the big palm and stooped down and poked the dead leaves away from its roots, I could have yelled out in delight over the prospect of the speedy return of the treasure. But, even while I was gazing full at him and covering him with my gun, the shifty Kanaka, with incredible swiftness, dodged behind the big, round hole of the palm, and darted through the brush like a deer toward its outer edge.

I fired at his retreating form, and a scream rang forth from one of the cordon of girls on the sand outside, followed by answering screams from the others. Had I shot one of them? I ground my teeth in rage to think I had permitted such a foolish piece of strategy as the surrounding of the clump by the teachers. I was afraid to fire again, thinking I might risk the life of some one of the schoolma'ams, possibly Angela. Tom probably counted upon this when he ran out toward them. But I had fired, and probably with results fatal to one of my charges.

In a fever of alarm, though with no thought of letting my man escape, I charged after him through the thicket. He dashed out a little way ahead of

me. As luck would have it, the girl nearest to his point of exit was Angela.

I was horrified to see him dash toward the dear girl. Though she flourished the knife threateningly, he made straight at her, seized her by the wrist that held it, quickly wrenched the glittering weapon from her hands, and, holding her slight form before him, as a shield from my threatened pistol attack, dragged her backward toward the jungle.

The women screamed again in helpless fright; but Dorothy waved her ax and ran to the rescue, while I dashed toward the treacherous Kanaka, who, still shielded by Angela's form, backed away while he pressed the point of the knife close to her bosom and cried out:

"You come near me, me kill him! Me tink you no come!"

Dorothy and I paused in uncertainty, while the Kanaka pulled the half-fainting Angela toward the jungle. I did not dare shoot, for fear of killing the sweet creature whom he was using for a shield, nor did I dare to move forward, but stood in agonized terror for the life of the precious girl. For I knew that the desperate islander would have carried out his threat in an instant, had we ventured upon an attack. But Dorothy did not seem to realize this fully, and I had to hold her back from rushing in pursuit of the treacherous Tom with her ax.

It was a terrible moment—the most terrible in my life—but all I could do was to stand there and gaze in helpless rage and horror, while the beast made his way toward the jungle, holding my Angela between him and danger, and all the time threatening her with the knife.

CHAPTER XVII.

Hunting for the Loot.

YES; it was an awful moment while I stood there in agonized impotence, quickly revolving plan after plan for the rescue of Angela from the

hands of the big, brown brute. Nor was it conducive to clear thinking or ready action to hear the shouts of the teachers to each other and to me, nor even those of Dorothy who, though cooler than the rest, suggested nothing but the impossible.

"Why can't we rush in and get her away from that savage?" she cried as she clutched the handle of her ax, and would have made after him had I not seized her arm and held her back.

"For God's sake, don't move!" I cried. "If you go toward them he will kill her! Stand back, all of you!"

"Do you really think he would do such a thing?" cried Miss Peck.

"Of course he would," I replied in tortured tones.

"Well, perhaps he would," she admitted. "You know his nature better than we do; and I'm very sorry we ever let him loose."

She continued to babble on, but I hardly heard her, for I was frantically intent upon every move made by the desperate islander while he dragged Angela across the sandy space between the tree clump and the jungle.

Presently, they reached the fringe of the forest, a mass of short, bushy screw-pines. Into this dense foliage he bore her, and soon they were lost to view among the thick, dark shrubbery. And, still, I could trace their movements by the flutter of the branches, and could see that he was going directly toward the inner wood, in which he doubtless thought to make his escape. Would he try to take Angela with him? What would become of the precious girl in such a case?

It hardly seemed likely that he would make off with her, now that he would no longer need her for a screen. A faint cry issued from the jungle, and, as it was impossible for me to stand there chafing under this terrible restraint, I started on a mad run across the sands toward them, the teachers following me. Into the thicket I plunged, and on to the place whence the cry had come.

Tom's entrance had broken a sort of trail through the shrubbery, and I followed this like a hound on the scent until I came to the taller vegetation. Not two minutes elapsed between the time that I heard the cry and the moment that I caught sight of him, dragging Angela along through the wood and looking back furtively from time to time.

I dodged from tree to tree, and I am sure he did not see me, though I gained upon him in the passage through the woods. Deeming himself safe by this time, and no longer in need of his human shield, he was pulling the girl along by the wrist, forcing her to a half-run by repeated threatenings with the knife.

It was a mighty risky thing to do; but in that fraction of a second, when I could see the clear space of an arm's length between them, I sent a bullet flying toward the brute. It must have grazed his right cheek, for he let go of the girl and clapped his left hand upon it.

Instantly she sprang aside, and he darted through the underbrush like a deer, with my bullets singing about his ears. I charged madly after him, firing from time to time, but he got away, whether wounded or not, I did not know, and I went back to Angela, and found the precious girl crouching behind the hole of a big palm, unharmed.

"Where is he?" she cried, stamping her foot upon the earth. "Oh, I wish I could have killed him! But he was so strong. He got my knife away from me. The brute! I wonder what Miss Peck thinks of him now, and of her idea of setting him free. But, oh, Mr. Sibley, you saved me, and I have forgotten to thank you!"

"Never mind about that," I said. "Are you sure you are not injured?"

"Not in the least, though I was badly scared. Where are the girls?"

For the time I was glad that the schoolma'ams had not found us—they had passed a little way to the north, and I had let them go while I attended

to Angela, pleased to be alone with her at this delightful moment when she was restored to me from out of the hands of that beastly Kanaka. But Angela's question brought with it the thought of their danger, and of the pearls, and the further pursuit of Tom. So I called out to them, and they came trooping over in response to my shouts, full of joy to learn that the fleeing rascal had left her unmolested.

The schoolma'ams wanted to know all that had happened in the tree clump and in the jungle, and, of course, I had to tell them.

"Well," said Miss Peck with a heartfelt sigh, "I am glad that we escaped a fatality during that terrible adventure. And I am very sorry that we were unable, when we had surrounded his hiding-place, to capture him as we had planned."

"I think if he had come within reaching distance of my ax," said Dorothy grimly, "that he would never have troubled us again."

"But the pearls!" cried Miss Binney. "Perhaps he left them there at the foot of that big palm-tree, as he told Mr. Sibley. Let's go back and see."

"Yes," assented Dorothy. "We'll get them if they're there."

So we all picked our way out of the jungle, Angela proceeding sturdily, apparently none the worse for the adventure, and not requiring my assistance, though it was freely offered. I was more full of joy because of her escape from the hands of the savage islander than over any prospect of the recovery of the treasure.

Emerging from the jungle through the fringe of screw-pines, we walked slowly across the sand, behind the others who hastened on intent upon the treasure. I could not help smiling, when, with Dorothy and her ax in the lead, the teachers broke through the brush and disappeared in the grove.

"I should think you would want to be there when the treasure is found," suggested Angela to me. "It has cost

you so much labor and so much trouble."

"Oh, the treasure is all very well," I said, "and I am eager enough to recover it, but just at this moment I am glad that they are all out of sight, and that I am alone with you."

Her color mounted a little as I breathed the words and went on in ardent tones to tell how rejoiced I was over her escape.

"You don't know how much you are to me," I said, "or how much—"

"But, Mr. Sibley," she broke in in protesting tones, "aren't you anxious about the treasure?" She started toward the tree clump; but I would not let her go. "Aren't you interested in it?"

"Not half as much as I am interested in you," I declared fervently. "You are the treasure I am looking for now; the other can wait. Forgive me for bringing it up so soon after what's happened, but it's the only chance I've had to tell you that I love you, Angela, and I want you to marry me. Will you?"

Her face clouded a little, but just as her lips parted to make reply a joyous cry arose from one of the girls.

"Come quick, Mr. Sibley—Angela. We've found the chest!"

At this call, Angela, who seemed little the worse for her misadventure, sprang into the thicket, and I followed her to where the girls were bending over the brass chest.

"Isn't this fortunate?" cried Miss Peck. "Now, we can take the treasure back to camp and hide it safely away from that lawless marauder."

"I think we'd better divide it first," suggested Miss Binney. "Let's open it up and see the pearls."

"No," said Ruth Deming. "Let's wait until we get the chest into camp. We can take turns carrying it. It's not as large as a suit-case."

"And it isn't very heavy," remarked Dorothy as she picked up the chest.

"Let me carry it," said I, taking it from her hands. Then I gave a groan,

and the girls looked at me, reading disappointment and dismay in my face.

I hardly dared to say what was in my mind, but Dorothy was right—it was not heavy. In fact, it was very light. Setting it upon the ground, I lifted the lid, which had been left unfastened, and groaned again. In fact, we all groaned in as dismal a chorus as I ever have heard, Miss Binney's voice being heard above all the rest.

"Why, it's empty!" she wailed. "It's empty! That miserable thief has taken them all out."

"And the gold is gone, too!" cried Ruth.

"Where do you suppose he has left them?" asked Dorothy, turning to me with an anxious look.

"I can't surmise," I said, with a world of depression. "Perhaps somewhere among these trees."

"Let's hunt for it!" cried Miss Binney, beginning to poke about with her club.

Soon all the teachers were searching the little grove. I took the ax and cut cross-sections from one end of the thicket to the other, and the girls pulled aside the cut brush and prodded about in every little hollow place, but no *cache* did we discover.

Flushed and tired, the teachers at last gave up the search. The shadows were lengthening upon the sands as, hungry and weary, we made our way back to camp. I was angry with myself for not having gotten Angela back there long before, and helped her to a little of the nourishment, but when, walking by her side, I spoke of this, she said blithely:

"Oh, treasure-hunters live upon excitement, you know! I haven't seemed to miss my lunch at all."

CHAPTER XVIII.

The Menace of the Sea.

THE next morning I tried to get Angela away from the others, and have an understanding with her before

I ventured forth again to recapture Tom and his loot. All during the night that picture of her in the arms of the big savage had fluttered wildly before my eyes. Never had I known how much I loved her as in that moment of her great peril.

I was burning to pursue my interrupted wooing at the earliest possible moment. Whether or not the pearls were recovered was a matter of small importance compared with her longed-for promise that she should be mine.

Impatiently and fretfully I awaited an opportunity to have a word with her alone, but none came, and when I tried to make one, she would be no party to the plan, but held aloof.

Not that she was suffering in any way from the effects of her adventure of the day before, for she seemed to be as blithe as ever, but she paid little heed to the tender looks I gave her covertly from time to time, and seemed to be fearful of being left alone with me lest I should be harping upon the love-string.

What did this mean? I was not one to count upon the part I had played in rescuing her from the arms of the Kanaka, and she must have known it. All I wanted was a chance to renew my suit, and she would not give it to me. Though she had been so solicitous of my welfare after my fall from the platform, and evidently had abandoned the notion that there was anything in Tom's tale about my native wives, it seemed that I had gained nothing by my devotion to her. Sometimes I fancied that, after all, she had left her heart upon the sinking steamer with Wallace Little.

But our situation demanded that I put aside all thoughts of love and make our position more secure. For it was anything but secure, and was constantly threatened while Tom was at large.

It was oppressively hot that morning, and the sea lay dead about the island, with no surf to speak of, and not a breath of air stirring. When I set out to renew the hunt the girls all

wanted to go with me, but my protests, in which I did not fail to cite the sorry example of what had happened the day before, made them desist from their importunities at last.

"I know I could be of some assistance to you," said Dorothy in a disappointed tone, "but, of course, if you don't want me, I won't go."

"You just stay here and help guard the platform," I directed. Then I walked away, waving my hand to them, and stealing a quiet look back at Angela.

Whether it was mere fancy or not, the little one seemed to me a bit more dejected than the rest, though they were all thoughtful enough and loath to let me go upon what they evidently considered a perilous errand.

It was perilous enough, that I knew, for there was but one bullet left in my automatic, and, unless I could bring him down with that, I should be at a decided disadvantage, for he had my knife; and I had insisted upon Angela keeping the other, the one I had taken from Tom on the night of his first attack upon me. But I knew he had a wholesome respect for the pistol at close range, though, at a little distance, he had seemed to disregard it, which latter feeling unfortunately might have been aided by my bad marksmanship on the previous day. Still, though I had not distinguished myself in the matter of running shots, it pleased me to think that the one that had grazed his cheek had saved Angela out of his hands.

Going down to the coral cabin across the hot sands, I stood there for a little while in its welcome shade, and looked down the open space in the direction of the wreck. The lagoon lay like a pan of quicksilver under the cloudless sky, and I had never heard the outside surf send up such a low, lazy roar. I knew the signs. It was going to be a day of merciless heat—such a day as we traders used to loaf away in our hammocks; but there was no loafing to be done with that wild beast loose upon the island.

As Tom was nowhere in sight upon the sands on either side of the lagoon, I went over to the little grove with the intention of skirting it from end to end, and looking into every opening as I passed.

I had got no farther than a quarter-mile, and was just rounding an outlying point, when I was startled by shrill cries from behind, and around the nearest palm-clump swung into view my precious flock of schoolma'ams, each with her club in her hand, waving me wildly to halt. I stopped and gazed at them in consternation. What in the world had happened?

When they came up, Miss Peck called out in explanation:

"We saw him from the platform! He came out of the woods near the coral cabin a few minutes after you left it."

"Yes," cried Miss Binney, "and he had something in his hand—a white bundle."

"Do you know what I think that bundle is?" said Ruth. "I left my middy blouse hanging on a bush near camp two days ago, and I haven't seen it since. It's made of good, stout drilling, and he took it along to put the treasure in, as it would be more easily carried than in the brass chest."

"Where is he now?" I demanded, angry with myself for having overlooked him, though he doubtless had hidden away from me very carefully. "In the cabin?"

"No," said Dorothy; "he stayed there only a minute or two, and then hurried into the woods, his bundle in his hand. But he didn't come near the platform, and he's nowhere between here and camp, for we have hunted all the way along for him."

"Probably he crossed the woods and went along the outside beach," I suggested. "If so, he must have gone on ahead toward the wreck. You girls go back to camp and I'll attend to him."

"No," persisted Dorothy, "we're going along and help hunt him down."

"We're not going to lose those

pearls," declared Miss Binney. "No doubt, he's got them in that bundle. We want to help you get them back."

"But," I cried sharply, "I can't let you come. It's horribly hot and going to be hotter, and—"

"Don't send us back!" pleaded Angela. "We must help you. You want to capture him, and it might be hard to do that alone and unaided."

My reproving frown probably lost something of its sternness when I looked at the girl I loved.

Ruth and the others all joined in the plea to be allowed to go along and help.

For a moment I threatened not to proceed, and, in fact, made a half-hearted pretense of returning; but I saw that they were all in dead earnest, and there was nothing to be done but to play male leader again to this Amazon chorus.

One thing I stipulated, however, and that was: that I was to precede them by at least a hundred yards, which, I thought, should keep them out of immediate danger. To this arrangement they reluctantly consented. After all, they were as brave a lot of girls as ever was, and I could not help being proud of their soldierlike loyalty and sympathetic comradeship.

But brave as they were and ready to aid me, it must have been a hard tramp for the girls over that torrid sand and through the thickets, where the air was stiflingly close and humid. They trudged valiantly forward, however, rarely resting for a moment, for they were as determined to remain near me as I was to keep the allotted distance ahead of them. Their faces were red, and their hair tousled, but they held to the pace, their sticks in their hands, and their bright eyes peering all about. About noon, after we had explored every cluster of palms, every thicket, and every stretch of barren coral sand, from our camp to the lower end of the island, I halted under a wide-spreading palm, and as the girls came up, I gave them a good rest there.

"Isn't it terribly hot?" complained

Miss Binney, throwing herself down languidly on the ground. "So oppressive! I can hardly breathe."

"It is warm," rejoined Miss Peck rather severely, for she, like the rest of us, was tired of the girl's querulous tone; "but we shall have to make the best of it."

"But there's such a sticky, stuffy feel in the air," persisted Miss Binney. "It's generally been quite dry, but now it's so sultry—almost prostrating."

Something significant was conveyed to me by her idle words. I rose and stepped forth into the clear space, just outside the shade of the palm, and stared across the sands and down to the water's edge on each side of the narrow land-strip. As I did so, I became conscious of a meteoric condition that had probably held for some time, though, owing to the rigor of the search, I had not observed it before. A coppery glow was reflected from the sky upon the island, turning the bright verdure of the palms to a sickly, spectral green and making the dead waters of the lagoon burn with an unearthly liquid light, while the sand shone forth a pale yellow.

The air was thick and more oppressive than in a tight, steam-heated room with the mercury at ninety. There was a deathlike silence all about—the outside surf having almost ceased to roll, and the palm leaves standing as still as though in a conservatory.

Of a sudden the silence was broken by the squawks of a great flock of sea-birds, hurtling through the air from some distant place, and settling down upon the placid lagoon.

I had not cruised four years among the islands not to know what these signs meant. A big blow was coming from some quarter. It might be an hour or two before the hurricane struck the island, and it might be half a day. Going back to where Miss Peck sat in the shade, still fanning herself, I spoke to her quietly about the coming storm, and urged her to take the girls back to camp.

"Do you think there is any immediate likelihood of its approach?" she asked.

She saw me hesitate in my reply and instantly added with a smile: "Oh, I fancy you don't apprehend that. It looks so calm, I think we might stay a while longer. There is only a small part of the wood left unexplored. We shall soon find him, and get back the treasure."

I protested against their remaining there a moment longer.

"Very well," said Miss Peck. "We will do as you say, but you must come with us."

"Go on back!" I cried. "I'll rejoin you before the storm breaks." And I swung off through the brush, on the way to the lower end of the woods.

Presently I heard a cry behind me; and, turning, saw Angela, who had run after me, leaving the rest undecided on the sands at the edge of the jungle.

"Mr. Sibley!" she called in wild protest. "You must go back with us. You mustn't go any farther away from camp. The sea might rise while you were down there, and—"

"I don't see any special reason why you should worry about that," I said a little coolly, though I was glad she had been the one to run after me, and insist upon my returning. "But we are losing time. If the storm comes, it will probably mean the loss of the treasure, and I don't intend to lose it now that it's almost within my hands. Run back to camp with the rest, like a good girl, and I'll be with you almost as soon as you get there."

"Well, if you'll promise to start by the time we're half-way to camp," she said. "You can be looking out at us from time to time, can't you?"

"Yes," I said. "Hurry back now. Don't lose a moment."

She walked back rather reluctantly, while I pressed on through the jungle, hopeful every moment of sighting the quarry and the white bundle which I knew must contain the pearls.

Meantime the menace of the storm.

which meant the menace of the sea, increased slowly but palpably. The palms stood stock-still, the island was at peace, but there was an oppressive feeling in the air, the spectral yellowness of the sunlight increased in tone and, catching a glimpse of the far northern sky through the trees, I saw just above the horizon an ink-black cloud that grew slowly before my eyes.

CHAPTER XIX.

The Race for the Platform.

A LITTLE way ahead of me stood a cluster of tall palms that looked down upon the rest of the wood. Toward these palms I made my way through the underbrush. No sooner had I stepped into the shade of the first tree than I heard a sudden scurry ahead, and there, about two hundred feet ahead of me, ran my man with the white bundle in his hand.

"Stop!" I cried as he made away amid the woods. At the same moment I raised my pistol. "Stop, I want you! Come along with me!"

He paused irresolutely, then ran on again at a sharp clip. Again I yelled for him to stop, but he dashed through the thinning vegetation, and I ran after him.

My only remaining shot was hardly to be risked at that distance. I thought to get a little nearer and make my single bullet an effective one. But to do this was not so easy, for he probably had been resting there in the shade and refreshing himself, while I had been plodding up and down in the jungle, and was dog-tired and heat-worn.

He had headed straight on through the jungle toward the lower end of the island, but though he was still gaining on me, I managed to keep him within sight or sound, and soon I saw him breaking through the brush and across the sand, on the way to the lagoon. As I emerged from a tangle of devil-vine, four or five hundred feet behind him, I glanced up the open stretch toward

camp, and saw the schoolma'ams standing midway between me and Flagstaff Mound. The white flag was flying straight out from the pole, and I knew that a stiff breeze, the forerunner of the storm, had struck the northern part of the island, and would soon be sweeping my way.

Tom was nearing the lagoon on a slant that was taking him back toward the wreck. But of a sudden I saw him pause and turn a little, his head up and his eyes taking in the great, black cloud that was swinging rapidly down from the northward.

As the cool breeze, blowing down the island, whisked over the lagoon, streaking its smooth surface, I saw without surprise the brown brute wheel about and make northward toward camp. I say without surprise, because it must have flashed upon his native intelligence that the coming storm boded destruction to life upon the island, and that the safest place to be was on top of the platform, which he knew had been built to serve us in just this kind of an emergency. It is true that he might have climbed a tree above the threatening wash of waters, but in such a storm as was coming, only one tree out of a hundred might stand, loosely rooted as they were, while the well-braced, coral-heaped posts of the platform would probably endure a pretty harsh siege from the wind and waves.

His back-tracking, slight as it was, had been to my advantage, for the distance between us was lessened, and though he was soon gaining again, as we ran up the smooth lagoon shore with the freshening wind in our faces, I still hoped to overtake him, counting upon the handicap of the treasure. But, for one advantage, he was barefoot, which was probably why he had not kept to the jungle with its spiked devil-vine; and, what was unaccountable to me, his burden of treasure did not seem to weary him.

When I remembered how heavy the contents of the brass chest had been in my hands I could not see, for the life

of me, how he could run so fleetly over the sand, if the white bundle contained it all, which I was beginning to doubt. My heart sank when the thought came to me that he might have left the greater part of it hidden somewhere in the forest.

If the sea swept the island, as it threatened to do, judging by the sudden uplift of the surf, which was now roaring loudly, our chances of finding his cache after the waves subsided would be pretty slim. But I was grimly determined to have whatever of the treasure he carried, and to have him, too, though the chances of either acquisition seemed remote at the moment.

He kept on ahead of me in the increasing wind, making straight up the lagoon shore toward camp, gaining slowly but steadily as we made our way over the heavy sand.

And now let me relate the most exasperating of all the baffling circumstances that beset me on that fatal forenoon. Those schoolma'ams—of course, it relates to them! Instead of keeping on toward camp, as I had particularly directed, and as they had expressly promised, what should they do but stand in a huddled bunch on the lagoon beach, in about the same position in which I had sighted them on getting into the open. In other words, they had moved no farther on the way to the platform and safety, but were intently observing the cross-island Marathon and looking as if they would like to take a hand, or a foot, in it.

Presently I saw them separating, Miss Peck waving her club and Dorothy shouldering her ax. While I groaned inwardly, and tried to wave them on toward camp, they stationed themselves in a straight line, some little distance apart, Miss Peck nearest the lagoon, and awaited the coming of the desperate Taumatoa, their skirts fluttering wildly in the wind, which was now blowing a gale. It was plainly their intention to intercept the flying Kanaka, and to assist me in running him to earth.

Again I waved to them to be off to camp, which was about half a mile away, but my signals meant no more to them than the leaves in the wind. And by this time, let me tell you, there were not only leaves, but branches flying across the sand and into the troubled lagoon, whose waves were lashing the shore in a cheap imitation of the titanic rollers that were running up the outside beach.

Great rushing ink-stains were streaking the sky and blotting out the sun, the air was full of sand, and soon it became difficult to see the brown runner ahead, while only now and then could I catch sight of the heroic schoolma'ams, where they still bravely held their ground.

Presently the wind became so strong that it was hard to make headway against it, but still pursuer and pursued pressed on. The race was an uneven one, and after all, I must have gained a little upon the chief, for when he neared the girls, I was not more than two or three hundred feet away, and could catch little glimpses of them through the gathering murk of the flying sand.

Taumatoa made a feint as if to buck the center of the line, and then, when most of the girls had gathered there, he dodged down toward the lagoon with the obvious intent of running around the end. Miss Peck, being nearest the lagoon, was in a way to encounter the savage chief, but through the flying sand I caught a glimpse of Dorothy rushing down that way to help her. Again I yelled to them to hurry on to camp while there was still time to reach the platform, but the wind blew my words away.

Seeing that the lagoon side was blocked by Dorothy and her ax, supported by the others with their clubs, the chief without hesitation splashed into the water, that he might round the line in that way. Dorothy pluckily splashed in after him, and the other girls lined up on the beach and kept moving along to intercept him, if he

should come ashore. The waves of the little lake were running so high that they came near tumbling the chief off his feet two or three times, so he waded in a little nearer toward the beach.

I was now well up with the teachers and shouting every little while for them to be off on their way to the platform, telling them that I would attend to Tom, but they gamely kept after him.

Twice, when I was within thirty or forty yards of him, I leveled my pistol with the intention of firing, but each time I desisted, not caring, after all, to risk my last bullet.

The chief began to see that he was at a disadvantage in the water. Taking a moment when I had rushed to the assistance of Angela, who had tripped and fallen in the sand, the heavy wind having made her lose her balance, he dashed shoreward and made another dash to get around the women on the beach. As it so happened, Miss Peck ran directly into his path, brandishing her club. He made at her with his knife, but before I could spring to her aid, she had hit him upon the forehead with her heavy stick, and the knife dropped from his hand. She struck at him again, but he jumped in close to her and, seizing her by her heavy hair, stooped to regain his knife, while she screamed lustily for help, and tried to beat his legs with her club.

By this time I had nearly reached the place where the two were contending, and was rushing in to throw myself upon the Kanaka in his half-recumbent position, when Dorothy, who was a little nearer, sprang toward him with her ax upraised.

He saw us coming and, picking up the knife, he started forward still in his bent position, and dashed away up the beach in the teeth of the wind, one hand still clinging to the white bundle, while in the other was a dark, mysterious object, something like a bird's nest.

So again the chase was taken up, with Tom leading us all, myself second, and the teachers stringing out behind, while the wind hooted over our heads

and roared in our ears, and the leaves and the sand scudded about us.

Tom had not gone but a little way when I saw him drop the dark object from his hand, and as it flew toward me in the wind it opened out, and in the next instant it was fluttering lovingly upon my breast—a big, brown switch of human hair. I knew whose it was, because I had seen from what particular head it had been wrested—Miss Peck's. I brushed it aside and it went flying down the wind, while I chased after the fleet Kanaka.

For now it was a race for the platform, with Tom too far in the lead for comfort. His obvious intention was to gain the safe retreat above the threatening sea, and probably to prevent the rest of us from climbing to the place, if he could do so.

You may be sure, considering this threatening state of affairs, that I was glad I had saved that last cartridge.

CHAPTER XX.

My Last Cartridge.

AS nearly as possible my eyes held to the bounding silhouette of the Kanaka making its unsteady way over the low, undulating dunes that lay between us and camp. His black figure would beat its way up one side of a sandy hillock and then down again. For, by this time, the wind was a distinct factor in the race, and particularly so with the skirt-hampered girls.

Such fleeting glances as I cast behind dimly revealed the forms of one or more of my Dianas outlined by the wind, against which they were fighting their way. I was glad to see that Angela was holding her own with the rest, but I feared that if the gale increased none of them would be able to reach the platform.

Presently, the air grew less gritty. All the loose grains seemed to have been blown away. So that far ahead, in the direction of the camp, and away beyond the struggling form of Tau-

matoa, I could see the flying spume from the breakers as it was tossed like cotton-balls high over the land. The spray fell upon the dark, wind-tortured palms of the grove like snow, and to seaward the air was full of it.

A mass of lather, blown up from the outside beach, was thrown at my feet, and, as it rolled back toward the girls, I shuddered.

Was this the first assault? Was this the hour I had foreseen from the time of our landing upon the low atoll? How long would it be before the whole island should be swept over by the waves which, judging by the increasing volume of their roar, were rising at every moment, as the wind and tide certainly were rising.

To gain the platform was now our only hope. But what if Tom got there first and kept us from mounting? I knew his nature, and knew he could be as merciless as that. It might be that he would let the women up, though, in his maniacal mood, there was no counting upon it, but there was one thing I could rely upon, and that was: that he would never permit me to get up there as long as he could fight me off.

Those heaps of coral ammunition! I groaned to think that we had provided him with stones to heave down upon us.

Stung to new effort by this maddening thought, I set myself against the wind and pushed on so determinedly that I soon had the cheering satisfaction of seeing that I was gaining a little upon the wild Kanaka. If I could but reach him and detain him, no matter at what cost, until Angela and the others should arrive at the platform—that would be a victory worth fighting for. It might mean the lives of all of us.

But here was the irritating feature of the pursuit: The terrific buffets of the wind so hampered our progress that it was coming to be like a race of turtles. Neither Tom nor myself was now proceeding at anything faster than a dragging walk. But I kept gaining a little, and, before long, I was almost

within pistol-range, while not far ahead, through the feathery spume which now flecked all the island, I could see the platform, with the overturned tent thrashing crazily from its fastenings.

I decided to approach the camp by way of the grove, thinking to gain a little by its shelter, and willing to risk the danger of the toppling palms if only I could keep him from getting possession of the platform.

But no sooner had I turned toward the grove than I saw him do the same thing, so I was not to be advantaged by that, though I thought I might gain upon him somewhere among the overturned trees. There was a tremendous uproar in the grove, the great gusts bellowing through it in a bull-like chorus. From the sharp serrated branches, which cut the gale, there came a prolonged hiss as of escaping steam, while the tumultuous clatter of the flat, hard leaves was like the noise of some colossal mill. Great leafy branches hurtled through the air, the coconuts pelted the ground with resounding thumps, and now and again a tall palm would measure its length upon the ground or fall supine upon its fellows.

Though my strength was pretty well spent, I should have reached the platform as soon as he but for the overthrow of one of these very palms. Its branches crashed down upon me and threw me to the ground. Luckily I was not struck by anything but the lighter foliage, but when I had disentangled myself from the mass of verdure, and gotten to my feet, I saw the savage chief spring toward the ladder, mount it quickly, and pull it up after him.

When I approached the place my welcome home was a well-aimed coral lump that came near putting an end to me, for it whizzed past my head within an inch or two. But as he was raising another lump to fling after the first, I raised my automatic, took careful aim, and fired.

For a moment I saw no result from the shot save that he did not pick up the stone, but retreated a little way from the edge of the platform.

When next I saw him he was pressing his left hand upon his right arm, near the shoulder, while a look of pain and anger flashed forth from under his scowling brows. My last bullet had crippled him. That was something to be thankful for.

I darted toward the nearest post of the platform, seized it, and was about to climb up when a piece of coral, about half the size of my head, dropped suddenly upon my back. I dodged the next one and retreated under the platform, amid a surprising volley of lumps. Despite his wound, he was not only able to fight me off by throwing with his left hand, but it seemed, by the number of missiles, that there were a dozen embattled men upon that platform, all doing their best to hold it.

Panting from my severe exertions, I stood for a moment under the center of the pole-floor, deliberating upon what my next move should be. A sudden and tremendous roar resounded to windward, and the spume flew in more thickly than ever. The sea was rising rapidly. I could see the waves curling above the roots of the outlying palms. Soon they would engulf the whole island. And the teachers—my precious Angela among them—were nowhere in sight!

Glancing upward with an agonized feeling at my heart, I saw Tom's great, black head projected over the edge of the platform and two malignant eyes glowering upon me in a mingled look of triumph and pain.

Quickly I raised my empty pistol and pointed it directly in his face.

"Let down that ladder!" I cried. "We've got to get up there! Quick, or I'll fire!"

My answer was a coral lump, hurled so skilfully by the ambidextrous islander that it would have struck my head had I not dodged in time.

"Your gun no good!" he grunted

back, amid the resounding beats of the wind and waves. "I count um. You shoot no mo'!"

It was useless. I retired from the place, believing that, if I remained there, I should be killed, in which event the Lord knows what would have become of Angela and the others.

CHAPTER XXI.

A Hard Climb and a Pistol-Shot.

I RAN hastily back with the wind to look after the girls, and to see if there were not some other way out of our terrible dilemma. There was Flagstaff Mound. Would the sea rise above it? I feared so, and that it would be an insecure retreat.

As I hurried across the sand there came a lull in the wind. Would the storm abate, and would we be safe off the platform, after all? Something fluttered up from the lagoon beach, and in another moment I saw Dorothy, and behind her the straggling line of schoolma'ams, making their way toward me.

"Give me the ax!" I cried, seizing upon the weapon as upon a last forlorn hope.

"Where's Tom?" she cried, relinquishing the ax.

"On the platform. He's holding it against us."

"He won't let you up? Oh, the villain!" Her eyes flashed in blazing ire. "But maybe we could persuade him. Miss Peck's influence—"

"Oh, he's gone completely daffy," I explained. "Perhaps it was a mistake for me to have shot him."

"You shot him—he's wounded?" exclaimed Dorothy.

"Yes."

"That's different," said the wise young woman thoughtfully. "But still, Miss Peck may be able to do something with him."

"Well, let her try," I cried in desperation.

A glance at Miss Peck revealed an

odd sight. Her head seemed strangely flat and shrunken. Over her wet brow and behind her ears straggled the few thin locks of thin hair that had been so carefully covered by the big, brown switch Tom had snatched from her head. She seemed twenty years older, but perhaps her hard fight with the storm had helped to age her.

"Yes, I'll go," she said eagerly when Dorothy quickly explained the tragic position to her. "I will reason with him. I think I can persuade him to let down that ladder and receive us upon the platform."

"And if your urgings don't work," I cried angrily. "I'll threaten to cut down the supports. That may bring him to his senses."

Of course, I went with her. Angela and the rest of the teachers lay down upon the sand in a little hollow to await our return. But to no word from Miss Peck would that ugly savage listen—to no syllable, in fact—for he began heaving coral at us the moment we got within range, and kept it up until we retired a little way out of range to deliberate.

I had thought the great gale was abating, but it had been a mere lull. For the wind now lashed the palms with more devilish energy than ever, making some of them bend almost to the ground, while others snapped off with terrific cracks.

I saw Miss Peck and the other teachers safely over to Flagstaff Mound, and then made my way swiftly back to the platform, determined upon a final attempt to bring the chief to his senses by threatening to bring down the pole flooring with my ax.

Dodging the white missiles which he flung in my direction, I made toward him, and sprang under the flooring. There I yelled forth my threat, and, for a moment, it seemed to have its effect upon him. But, when his eyes were not upon me, and I struck one of the posts with the back of the ax, to give a semblance of reality to my bluff, he yelled down insultingly, and,

in the next instant, I was dodging coral again.

It looked hopeless. With a more baffled and dismayed sense than I had yet felt in this predicament, I made a sudden and desperate resolve to gain that platform or fall under the attack of his missiles. Seizing the post which I had just struck with the ax, I began to mount it, recking not of results, and expecting every moment that my skull would be crashed in by the falling stones, when, of a sudden, I heard a piercing cry above the wind and the wave-beats, and saw Angela, standing a little way off, with her hands upraised in terror. Wildly she beckoned me, and faintly I saw her lips move in what was intended for a warning cry, though I could not hear it.

The sight of her gave me heart. Dodging the descending lumps, as best I could, I climbed up under the corner of the platform. The nearer I got to the pole-flooring the better I was shielded from the coral attacks, and, though I could see the white lumps hurling about me, and feel them as they struck my shoulders or back, I was making my way up, against desperate chances, to be sure, for he had all the vantage ground, but men will do hazardous things in such situations.

Bruised and bleeding from the sharp contact of many jagged stones, I struggled up, seized the cross-pole where it jutted from the corner, and tried to pull myself up to the platform. For a moment there was a cessation of Tom's hostile efforts, and I was wondering if, after all, he might not take pity upon me and the teachers, and attempt no longer to keep us out of this one safe retreat.

Hopefully I raised my head and shoulders above the edge of the flooring, and was about to climb upon it when the brown demon darted at me, seized me by the hair, and raised his flashing knife above his head, its sharp point in a direct line with my throat. A piercing shriek rang up from below, and I knew that Angela had run to the

platform in a vain attempt to aid me in my tragic plight.

"Now, me kill you!" panted the islander, his black eyes flashing vengefully. "Me stick you all same pig! When you dead me, let down ladder, and all women come up. Me let him live—you die!"

The knife quivered above my throat; but in that tense moment, when all hope of a life of love and joy with Angela were as good as blotted out by the swift thrust that would follow his murderous threat, I heard a sharp whistle above my head—the zip of a bullet! The brown brute tottered above me, crumpled up like a leaf, and went down over the edge of the platform, his knife in his hand.

Then I heard a bull voice yelling from below:

"Are you all right, old man?"

There was only one person on earth that had such a voice—Wallace Little! But there was no time to call back, or to ask how, by the wonderful super-vention of the Divine Power, he had come upon the scene at that supreme moment. For now the sea was booming all about the little dot of high land above which the platform stood and crashing among the palms, and all my remaining physical force was called upon to pull myself upon the platform and let down the ladder.

This I did with a world of pain from my stinging wounds. But it was as in a fantasmal vision that my blurred eyes saw Wallace and the blessed schoolma'ams seize the end of the ladder, its foot washed by the first low, foam-crested wave that swept under the platform. The ascending teachers, the splashing palms, and the great expanse of wild water, that had engulfed the whole island, swam before my eyes.

I dropped upon my knees as the vision faded, murmured some grateful gibberish or other, amid which I could hear the thankful cries of the teachers as they huddled upon the platform. Then Angela breathed some unintelligible words in my ear, my head pil-

lowed itself upon her sweet bosom, and the whole surging world about me was lost to my inert sense.

CHAPTER XXII.

"Ich Liebe Dich."

WHEN I came out of it Angela was bending over me, her dear hand gently stroking my hot forehead and her dark eyes looking their love into mine. The wind had slumped a little, but the platform rocked and creaked, and at times was nearly swept over by the great combers that rolled high above the island, blotting out everything but the tufted tops of the palms. Scarcely a third of these remained standing, the others having gone down before the heavy waves that had washed the sand from their roots, and had borne them off to be thrown upon distant shores or to sink, water-logged, into the ocean depths.

"Where's Wallace Little?" were my first words to Angela. "And how in the world did he come to be here just when we needed him most?"

"He's lying over there on the canvas," replied Angela. "They're attending to him. He's weak and worn from being so long in the boat in which he escaped from the steamer."

"Has he been all this time alone in a boat?"

"No; part of the time he was on a small island, which afforded so little food that he was forced to take to sea again."

"But how did he weather the typhoon in an open boat?" I demanded incredulously.

"He didn't. He landed half-way down the island just as the storm was breaking. It was very providential for him and for us. He was driven up here by the rising sea, saw your terrible plight, and—" She shut her eyes in the horror of the remembrance. "But you—you are injured."

"Only bruised a little in spots," I assured her. "Coral lumps are not

very heavy ammunition. But about Tom—was he really killed?"

"We saw his body drift out with the first waves that swept under the platform. He will never trouble us again."

"And the pearls?"

"We found his bundle, but it contained only the gold."

"Then they're gone?" I groaned.

"What do we care?" she breathed forth with a smile as she looked lovingly at me out of her adorable eyes.

"We care nothing, sweetheart," I replied gently—"nothing in the world! But about Wallace Little—are you sure you—" I broke off, for she had put her finger to her lips.

"Not so loud!" she said warningly. "He's a dear, good fellow, and he has saved all our lives, but—They're looking this way."

"Is Mr. Sibley all right?" cried Miss Peck above the roar of the abating wind.

"Yes; but please don't disturb him. He's going to lie back and sleep."

Which I pretended to do, just to please her, and because, when you are out in the open sea, lying on a stationary raft, there isn't anything in particular that you can do except to pray God that the raft doesn't get loose.

But, thanks to the bracing, staying, and anchoring of the four stout trees that held the platform in place above the flood, our little company of nine healthy, hopeful women and two pretty well used up men was for the time out of harm's way.

And let me tell you that our stationary raft, though wet with spray, and sometimes splashed a little by the highest wave-tips, seemed a mighty comfortable thing to be on—indeed, far better than any floating one would have been, though ten times the size. I was glad that Tom had used less than half of the coral ammunition, for the weight of the remaining lumps must have helped the platform to a stability which the uplifting force of the great waves must have tested severely.

But toward night the wind lulled, and a welcome rain began to fall. The teachers rigged the displaced canvas anew and caught a quantity of water, without which we should have fared very poorly.

Toward evening the clouds rolled away, the sea subsided, and the coral sands gleamed forth again. But what foliage was left looked pitifully be-draggled and storm-swept.

We had a supper of birds' eggs and such things as were handy, and were thankful that we had carried all our stores up to the platform, and that Tom had not disturbed them. At supper Wallace Little, who had been eating all the afternoon, ate again with us.

"The next time I set to sea in an open boat," he said, between bites, "I'm going to load her to the gun-wales with everything in the pantry."

He told us how he had come to be alone in the boat. Being a heavy sleeper, he had not been awakened by the crash of the steamer striking the reef nor by the commotion. It was only when the water came into his berth below decks that he sprang from his cabin to find the ship sinking and deserted by everybody, including the captain. One boat had been left alongside, doubtless because of its leaky condition; but he managed to stop the leak and bale out the water. He had found enough food and fresh water in it to sustain him after a fashion until he had reached our island.

"And it looks to me," he burred forth in his great bass, "as if I arrived just in time, not only to escape that awful typhoon, but to be of some little assistance to my fellow voyagers."

"A great big assistance," amended Dorothy, with a grateful and, it seemed to me, admiring glance at the long-legged hero of the hour.

What remains to tell needn't take many words. We found the pearls tied up in another white bundle under a heap of stones in the coral cabin. This wonderful restoration of our for-

tune made Miss Binney shed tears of joy, and I know the rest of us were mighty happy over the discovery of Tom's cache, which we fully had expected never to find.

Of course, Wallace Little came in for a share of the treasure, though he protested against taking it. And, of course, Miss Binney wanted some of the biggest pearls when the division of the spoils was made, and, of course, she didn't get them.

But we settled it all quite amicably; and when a little trading schooner bore down upon us, a few days later, and we actually saw its boats entering the lagoon to take us off, I am sure none of us was much the worse for being cast-away upon Schoolma'am Island, though we should have had to resort to a purely fish diet had we remained there another week.

Delight was the only word to picture that cruise down to Butaritari, where we all took the steamer for home. Wallace Little and Dorothy were not the least delighted. For it was on this cruise that they came to a complete understanding—the kind of understanding which Angela and I had arrived at with but few words on the platform with the menacing sea all about us.

Yes, the teachers, now that each had a goodly fortune, all decided to return home, and let others less fortunate fill the empty young Filipino brain with golden knowledge.

The pearls panned out even better than I had estimated—there's nothing like a New York market for such luxurious baubles—and the combined share of Angela and myself, invested in securities that are really secure, gives us

enough to live in good style in our Monterey home.

The last time I heard from Wallace and Dorothy, they were about to buy a prune orchard in the Santa Clara Valley.

Miss Peck invested her pearl money in a Connecticut boarding-school, over which she presides with great dignity. She has many scholars, and is highly prosperous. When she came out to see us last summer, she wore a beautiful blue silk gown, and her hair was as luxuriant and wavy as ever.

Fanny Binney is married to a New York stock broker. She has her pearls in a safe-deposit vault, holding them for a rise in the market.

Ruth Deming is traveling in Europe with her mother.

Yes; it has turned out very happily for all concerned, and I think Angela and I are as full of the joy of life as any of the castaways of Schoolma'am Island.

"But just suppose," she said, turning her adorable eyes to me, one night a year after our wedding, as she stood, violin in hand, in the music-room—"just suppose that the Loyalty never had touched at Florikiva and picked you up."

"It's too awful to suppose anything of the kind," I declared. "Play 'Ich Liebe Dich,' dear, and dispel the horrible thought."

"Not only will I play it," she said, bending over me where I sat on the divan, "but I'll act it." And her soft lips sought mine in one of those kisses that only Angela can give. After which she played "Ich Liebe Dich" as only Angela can play it.

(The end.)

Coquettes are like misers in that they seek quantity rather than quality.

THE SINISTER SOUVENIR

A SERIAL

BY EDGAR FRANKLIN AND GILBERT RIDDELL

CHAPTER I.

Back from the Wilds.

IN the far corner of the office—the particularly cheerful corner by the south window—stood a brand-new desk.

Howard Street turned from his own littered, high-piled roll-top and glanced toward it; and the energetic little stenographer, after a last survey of the new blotting-pad, the new pens, the new stationery, moved away from the new desk and favored Street with a brief, businesslike little nod, and:

"I think everything is there, Mr. Street."

"Um-um!" Street pursed his lips. "Did the sign come?"

"I've left it on top," the girl smiled. "I didn't know whether he'd prefer it on the wall or on the desk itself."

She reached for the flat, tissue package and turned back the wrapping, and for a moment Howard Street looked thoughtfully at the strip of black glass with its bold gold:

MR. HARVEY STREET

He nodded then, and sighed a little as he murmured:

"We'll leave that to him. Er—Miss Bartley?"

"Yes, Mr. Street."

"When my brother really settles down here for work to-morrow or next day," Howard said slowly, "it may be necessary for you to look in here once in a while and straighten out that desk—for a little time, at least, until he's used to things, and preferably when he is out of the office. I shall hardly have time for it myself, and Harvey"—he laughed a little—"well, Harvey isn't quite as methodical as I am."

The girl smiled faintly.

"Very well."

"And in the general course of business, particularly when I am not about, you will—oh, sort of keep an eye on him, Miss Bartley, won't you?" Street went on thoughtfully. "I don't know exactly what he has been doing these last few years. He may have altered altogether and turned into the most sedate and orderly citizen in the world, but—"

His voice slowly trailed away. The stenographer paused with one hand on the knob of the door to the general office.

"Well, do you consider him the sort of man one can explain things to, Mr. Street?"

Street's smile was almost miserable.

"You mean without rubbing the fur the wrong way, Miss Bartley?" he muttered. "Not if you go about the explaining in a way that may suggest you're giving him orders," he said frankly. "I hardly think he has changed sufficiently to take orders, even from me, but—oh, you'll have to

do it diplomatically, Miss Bartley, until we've broken him into the business. That's all."

With a nod of rather dubious understanding the girl stepped out. Howard Street sat far back in his desk-chair and lighted one of his thick cigars and stared gloomily at that other glitteringly new chair. To a certain small extent he felt the humiliation of explaining his brother to his stenographer—even to so perfect a stenographer as Miss Bartley, who was business and sound sense from the tips of her small pumps to the last coil of chestnut hair.

And yet, unless Harvey had lost his old nature completely and acquired a new and radically different one, he needed explaining—now, before his arrival; later, after he had become an office fixture, and even—oh, bosh!

The proprietor of the office brought down his chair with a slam and planted his elbows on the desk, to stare savagely at the calendar and wonder. Why on earth did this beastly uneasiness over Harvey's advent haunt him—why had it been haunting him ever since the arrival of Harvey's letter, three weeks ago, with the news that he was coming back East to stay? Certainly, the boy had never been addicted to crime; just as certainly, he owned as lovable a nature as one might find in a long journey; and, even more certainly, Harvey was Howard's one, solitary surviving relative.

And yet, here in the quiet of his perfectly ordered office, something akin to nervous terror had crept over Howard; little beads of perspiration were standing on his forehead, and with a sharp snarl he rose and stared out of the sky-scraper window at the roofs below. And presently he understood.

The trouble wasn't with Harvey; it was with Howard himself. A grave and methodical boy, he had grown into a graver and more methodical man. A book, once placed on the upper left-hand corner of his desk, remained there, year in and year out; the two

visitors' chairs over by the wall stood each on four clean little spots of flooring, so conscientiously had they been set, night after night, in the same position before he locked up. On the stroke of ten each morning Miss Bartley walked through that door and sat in the same spot to take his letters; on the stroke of twelve she brought in the morning batch of correspondence for his signature; at one-fifteen, to the second, she appeared once more for the scanty afternoon mail. It was quite the same with the one bookkeeper; the same with the sober little chap who attended to the telephone and carried in cards. They worked according to a perfect system in the little establishment, like so many pieces of fine, automatic machinery—and Howard Street had devised the system and built the machine.

And into all this nice exactness Harvey Street was coming—probably the most care-free and irresponsible citizen between the two oceans—to take his own place.

The elder brother groaned aloud, and swore at himself for groaning. Actually, if he had not mailed the stern, elder-brother letter three weeks ago, he would have gone out at this minute and looked up a job for Harvey somewhere else. A job, of course, where some total stranger would have the task of drilling conservative business principles into Harvey and—Howard turned with a start, for the sober office-boy had entered.

"It's only Mr. Colden, sir. He asked if you're busy."

"Ask him to step in here," Street said shortly. "You know that I'll always see him if nobody's here, John."

He turned toward the door and smiled suddenly and with real pleasure. As a matter of fact, he liked Colden immensely, and with much cause. Colden, who conducted the little detective agency across the hall—which was slowly but surely growing into a big and important detective agency, by the way—Colden was one of the few

people who owned a fund of energy and perseverance equal to his own. Genial always, incisive in his methods of thought as a fine razor, Colden's company in leisure moments was always welcome.

The lithe, thin-featured, youngish man, cheerfully informal in his shirt-sleeves and with the long cigar sticking straight from the corner of his mouth, sauntered into the private office and kicked the door gently to behind him.

"I've come in for congratulations," he said with a grin. "I've got my bank-robber, and he hadn't spent more than fifty dollars of the stuff."

"Well, I'm mighty glad to hear it!" Street cried heartily. "I knew—"

"You—eh?" Colden's sharp eyes settled upon the new desk, and a grin lighted up his face. "Never mind crime now, Howard. This is the big day, isn't it?"

"Big?"

"The day the prodigal brother gets back."

Street's smile vanished, and he sat down.

"Yes, Harvey's coming to-day," he said colorously.

"Well—" Colden's eyes opened wonderingly as he found a chair and dropped into it. "You seem tickled to death."

"Well, I—am. And then again, I'm—not." Street laughed uneasily.

"Why? Is he in trouble?" Colden asked sharply.

Howard Street frowned.

"What trouble should he be in? No!"

"I imagined that there might be a posse after him from your expression," the detective said mildly. "What is it?"

"It's nothing, except that I don't know whether he'll settle down here peaceably or not. He's not the settling kind."

Colden laughed outright.

"He'll settle, all right. How old is he?"

"Twenty-seven."

"Five years younger than your esteemed self, eh?"

"Yes."

"What's his profession?"

"He hasn't any, judge." Howard smiled grimly as the questions were shot at him. "He never felt the need of one."

"What's his business, then?"

"He's been dabbling in lumber, I believe."

"Getting anything out of it?"

"Experience."

"Fizzled out as a business man in the great West, then?"

"Absolutely," Street said sourly.

"Well, good Lord, don't you even *like* him?" Colden demanded.

Howard Street flushed and laughed angrily.

"Like him, you confounded clown!" he snapped. "I don't know whether you can understand it or not, but that wretched boy is as dear to me as if he were a son instead of a brother, Dick. Our parents died when Harvey was a little bit of a kid, you know, and I wasn't much better. I've always had that sense of being an utterly inefficient guardian to him. I've never been able to handle him properly, and I never shall be. I wanted him to stay right here when we were both working on a salary, you know; but—"

Colden threw back his head and guffawed.

"Upon my word, Howard," he cried, "when you get one of these fits of taking yourself seriously, it makes the thought of a Methodist funeral seem like a comic weekly! You're sitting here as if some one were on the verge of death; and the chances are that the boy'll walk in, tamed and seasoned, and—how long is it since you've seen him?"

"Five years."

"And he's been knocking around the West that long, eh?"

"Yes."

"Coming back East of his own accord?"

"Certainly."

"Well, I wouldn't worry about him, Howard," Colden chuckled. "He's reaped his crop of wild oats long before this; very likely he's even more somber than yourself now." He turned and stared at the new desk and chair again. "And he's certainly a lucky cuss!"

"Why?"

"To have a job right here, waiting for him."

Street shrugged his shoulders.

"And it's a thundering fine little concern for a young fellow to be with," Colden went on enthusiastically. "For a real-estate brokerage business of its size and shape, I'll guarantee that there isn't another in New York to come up to this one of yours."

"Thanks!" said Street.

"But I mean it. Why, you're knocking a clean twelve or fourteen thousand dollars out of this three-room suite."

"About seven thousand of it comes straight from John Dobson," Howard submitted.

"Suppose the whole thing came from one client—Dobson or any one else—so long as it does come?" said Colden. "Dobson's property and his little deals are no harder to handle than any others."

"They're a good sight easier," Howard laughed candidly. "This last year or two the old chap has been leaving me to handle matters in my own way absolutely."

"I know. How long has he been the star client of the office, Howard?"

"Nearly four years. Ever since—"

"Yes, and it's nearly four o'clock," Colden ejaculated, glancing at his watch and starting up suddenly. "I'll have to get back to the office. When's the wanderer due?"

"He's due now, and I wish to goodness he'd turn up," Street said irascibly. "I've got to catch that five o'clock express for Philadelphia."

He scowled at his own watch as Colden departed. Things were arranged up at the little apartment hotel,

to be sure; the clerk would be expecting Harvey's arrival alone, and would see that he landed in Howard's rooms; but—Howard started, for the outer door had closed a second time, and some one was walking heavily through the general office of the place. A full voice spoke with total lack of restraint, and—the door opened suddenly, and Harvey Street strode through.

In one hand a battered suit-case swung easily. Without so much as a glance at the spot of its probable landing, the tall, brown young man—by no means unlike his paler, older brother—dropped the case to the floor and bounded forward. A quick smile of grave affection came to Howard's lips; his grave, steady hand went out—and Harvey Street had enveloped him in a bear hug, and was fairly babbling joyful greetings, while Miss Bartley in the background laughed a little and closed the door on them.

Some two minutes of chattering were gone before Harvey gripped his brother by the shoulders, and, holding him at arm's length, cried:

"Well, you haven't changed a particle, Howard."

"You've done some changing yourself—externally, anyway, Harvey."

"Well, it's only externally," the younger brother said as he crashed into a chair and sat grinning ecstatically at the other. "I've been banged around a good deal, but it hasn't taken the edge off my glad young nature. Thunder and Mars, but it's good to see you!"

"And it's good to see you, too, kid, and to know that you're back at last to settle down to business."

"Business!" the younger brother cried, with mock terror. "You really meant that about my having a share in your concern here?"

"I surely did."

"Well, it's almighty white of you, Howard, considering that I've had nothing to do with founding the business or building it up—and considering that I've been mainly a nuisance to you

all my life," the returned one said contritely. "I—I'm grateful, Howard."

"Show it by settling right down to your desk to-morrow morning and sticking there, boy," the elder brother said, with a faint smile.

"Without even getting used to New York again, Howard?"

"You're well enough acquainted with New York," the elder Street sighed, for hesitation before the prospect of immediate, serious business fairly oozed from Harvey's neighborhood. "There's a lot to learn about this office, and you can't begin to learn it too soon."

"And that's my desk, eh?"

"That's your desk," Howard said, smiling.

"Um-um. Well, it's a nice desk," said the younger brother, as he shied his hat toward it, and, without emotion, watched the hat fall to the floor and roll against the waste-basket. "I'll get a lot of use out of it—just a little later."

He grinned pleasantly at the founder of the office; and the founder, frowning, leaned toward him earnestly.

"Harvey," he said, "what have you been doing out there?"

"Everybody and everything that would consent to be done," the newcomer responded blithely.

"I mean, did you actually establish yourself in business anywhere?"

"I'm alive, Howard. That presupposes three square meals a day since I've seen you."

"I understand that, boy. And that isn't what I mean at all, and you know it. You've been away for a solid five years, and presumably you've been working all that time."

"Not only presumably, Howard," Harvey said sadly. "I've worked like blazes, now and again."

"All right. Have you anything to show for it?"

The younger brother stared blank amazement.

"Good Lord, no!"

"Nothing in the way of money saved up?"

"I've got about forty dollars in cash, Howard," the newcomer said proudly. "I think that's pretty good."

"And I think it's pretty bad—pretty infernally bad, as the net result of five years' labor," Howard Street said flatly. "And that brings me to what I started to say. Harvey, you've frittered away enough of your life. You—"

"Frit—"

"Yes, frittered!" the elder Street said sternly. "You've got absolutely nothing out of it, boy, and now the time has come to quit. Not day after to-morrow or next week or next month, but sharp at nine to-morrow morning you're going to be at that desk ready for business."

"But—"

"No! No 'buts,' Harvey. *To-morrow morning.*"

"Well, Howard, there's nothing under the sun I'd rather do than take your orders and follow them out to the letter," Harvey said rather awkwardly. "If it comes down to that, I expect to do just that for a good many years to come. But there is just one last piece of indulgence I'll have to beg. Let my business career wait over until day after to-morrow."

"Why?"

"Because there's something I have to attend to to-morrow."

"What?"

"Oh, a little matter about which you know nothing," Harvey said evasively.

"What's the nature of it?" Howard demanded suspiciously.

"Why—there's a fellow I have to see on some urgent personal business, that's all."

He laughed and glanced out of the window. Howard Street's voice, with a considerable effort, changed to a tone of easy unconcern as he asked:

"Who is it, Harvey—any one I know?"

"Nope." The younger brother

grinned at him. "Fellow named Dobson."

"Eh?"

"John Dobson—pretty rich cuss, I imagine. Ever hear of him around these parts, Howard?"

He stared out the window once more and smiled absently; his smile faded then, and he seemed absorbed in thoughts not altogether pleasant—and as a consequence he missed altogether the sudden startled flush on the elder brother's cheeks, and hardly noted the breathless catch in his voice as he cried:

"What on earth have you to do with John Dobson?"

Harvey turned slowly and faced his brother, and there was a distinctly dark and peculiar light in his eye.

"I'm going to kill him, Howard," he said placidly.

CHAPTER II.

To Philadelphia and Back.

FOR the moment, it seemed to Howard Street, Harvey was actually serious, and the elder brother's hair fairly stood upon end.

"You—" he began loudly.

And there he stopped, for Harvey's smile had flashed out again, and—yes, Harvey was leaning back in his chair and laughing mightily as he cried:

"Well, you solemn old owl! You're five times as sober as you were five years ago, and you were bad enough then, Heaven knows!"

"Was that fool remark meant for a jest?" Howard demanded warmly.

"It surely was," the younger brother chuckled. "You don't know the man?"

"I have a client by that name."

"Wealthy?"

"Yes."

"Well, I'm a bad egg, Howard," Harvey said rather impatiently, "but I'm not quite bad enough for murder—yet. I—"

"Jests of that sort don't appeal to

me," observed Howard Street. "They are in rotten bad taste, to put it mildly."

The newcomer looked at him with a rather weary smile.

"Bad taste or not, if it is the same man I'm not at all sure he doesn't deserve it."

"Then it's not the same man, because this one—"

"Tell me about him, will you?" Harvey said earnestly. "Just what is he like, Howard?"

"Like? He's—why, he's like any other wealthy man, of course," Howard said blankly.

"How old is he?"

"Fifty-one or so, I believe."

"Grizzled—gray—seems older?"

"He seems considerably older—yes," the elder brother admitted. "But how do you—"

"Wait a while and maybe I'll tell you!" Harvey Street grinned. "I want to hear more about this fellow. How much is he worth?"

"I'm sure I don't know."

"About four millions?"

"Roughly, about that."

"A-ha!" smiled the newcomer, with growing interest. "Lived East here all his life?"

"No."

"Where did he come from, then?"

"Australia."

"When?"

"Why, about four years ago," Howard Street snapped. "And now suppose we drop Dobson, and talk about the business here, Harvey. You have plenty of time to get acquainted with him in person later on; and I've got to catch a five-o'clock train for Philadelphia, and—"

"All right. Just tell me one or two more things about him, Howard. I'm curious, and I'll tell you why presently. Did he appear with—real money? I have a good reason for asking."

"Howard scratched his chin.

"His money was all in gilt-edged securities when I first met him—negotiable stuff that was as good as cash."

"I see. And he proceeded to spend it?"

"On the contrary, he's one of the most careful and most successful real-estate operators in this section, Harvey. You'll come to know that. I handle all his business, even to some money matters not connected with real estate."

"And he is a pleasant man?"

"Why, he doesn't laugh and crack jokes and make an ass of himself—no!" Howard said shortly.

"In fact, he has a rather ugly temper, eh?" Harvey asked eagerly.

"If it comes down to that, yes."

"Lives here in the city?"

"He lives up at Wildcliffe Manor."

"And where on earth is that?"

"Just a little beyond the city, up in Westchester. He built a big place there."

"When?"

"Oh, three years ago," Howard said desperately. "And now turn off that infernal flow of questions, and let me explain about—"

"Just one or two more about Dobson, and I will," Harvey said, grinning. "He never married, did, he? He just lives there all alone?"

"With half a dozen servants and—the daughter, of course." Howard flushed slightly.

Harvey Street, on the contrary, started violently.

"Daughter? What daughter?"

"His adopted daughter, Harvey," the elder brother snapped. "And now there is no use in beginning a new cross-examination about the young lady, because I've answered fool questions enough. This—"

"How old's the daughter?"

"Just half-way between nineteen and twenty," answered Howard.

"You have pretty accurate information on that, haven't you?" grinned the newcomer. "Do you mind telling me her name?"

"Her name is Eva Carston Dobson, just now," Howard said, with a soft smile.

"Meaning that it may change soon, Howard?" the younger brother inquired, with eyes wide open.

"Meaning nothing of the sort," Howard snapped. "I—bah!"

"Well, when did he adopt her?"

"Only about six months back."

"Well, by Jove!" exclaimed Harvey Street. "*I believe it's the same—Howard! Do you know why he adopted her?*"

The elder Street's head came up with a jerk, and there was a certain glare in his eye that stilled the flood of questions. Hands on his knees, Howard Street leaned closer to his younger brother and spoke sharply:

"I do not know why he adopted her. Neither do I care. Neither is it any of your business or mine just now. You've done talking enough, Harvey. Now I'm afraid that I shall have to do a little, and I'll have to do it in a hurry. Item one: What prompted that fool remark about killing Dobson?"

"It was nothing more than a fool remark, you chump! I—"

"Well, see that you make no more like it, Harvey. That sort of thing may be customary in the section of the State of Washington you've been favoring with your presence, but it's likely to be misunderstood here. Can you remember that?"

"I can," said Harvey humbly.

"And item two, while we're on the subject: I want you to keep away from this particular John Dobson, whether he's the man you want to see or not—understand? He's the best customer of this office, and you're not going to take any liberties with him."

The younger Street grinned and nodded assent.

"And now, to get down to business, I want you here to-morrow morning at nine, boy, without fail—and that doesn't mean quarter past nine, either. I shall have to be away all day to-morrow, and very likely I won't show up at the hotel until late in the evening. You'll come here and make yourself ornamental rather than use-

ful, for to-morrow at least. Look things over. Read the mail. Ask Miss Bartley all the questions you like, and—"

He glanced up, for the door had opened and the stenographer was standing there.

"It's twenty-five minutes of five, Mr. Street," she reminded him.

"Is it? Thanks!" Howard rose slowly to his feet. "I'll have to clear out, Harvey. You know where you live?"

"The Hotel Barnard?"

"That's the place, and they'll be waiting for you. Here!" He scribbled on one of his business-cards. "Pass that to the clerk, and you'll be sure to have no trouble. Come along and I'll put you on the car."

He shook his head as Harvey, whistling, sauntered over and snatched his hat from the floor and kicked his suitcase into an upright position. He shook his head again as he picked up his own remarkably trim grip and his light overcoat and his utterly impeccable derby; and after a perfunctory introduction of the returned wanderer to Miss Bartley he led the way to the elevator and the street.

"You may as well take a surface car, Harvey," he said on the corner, "and look over the town. You'll get up there about dinner-time, if you want to dine early. And this evening," he said anxiously, "what are you going to do this evening, Harvey?"

"I'd thought of the Y. M. C. A., but I may stay home and run through some of the snappy parts of 'Pilgrim's Progress,' Howard," the wanderer said flippantly. "Why?"

"Don't do anything more exciting, kid! Get a good night's sleep. Good-by!"

He turned and hurried off for his Elevated train; and, possibly half-way down the block, he turned back for an instant—and forward as quickly. Just as he had suspected, Harvey was looking after him, and even in the same familiar attitude he had pictured men-

tally. Hands behind his back, head low and thrust forward, the younger brother was staring in pensive wonder after the elder and smiling compassionately.

And for no particular reason, the smile—which had irritated Howard in the old days—fairly maddened him for a moment now. Harvey actually thought him a freak of some sort, because he was all gravity, all business. It had been so when they were on an even footing as regarded money-making achievements; but Howard had cherished a rather smug certainty that things were wholly different now, with that office to show as a result of his hard work. Instead of that—yes, by thunder! Harvey was *still* standing there and grinning his compassion.

A minute or so and the mood passed, and Howard laughed outright as he raced up the Elevated steps. It was the most natural thing in the world. Harvey had inherited, in its entirety, the nature of their gay, petted, pleasure-loving little mother, and, like that same little mother, he was pure gold all the way through; while Howard, with equally nice care as to details, seemed to have acquired every trait of their sober, energetic father. That was the whole proposition, from end to end; and very likely, when once he had settled the boy down to business, that light nature of Harvey's would be a blessing to his brother.

But just now business lay ahead, and big business; and long before he had settled in his Pullman chair, the elder Street's mind was absorbed in it. Harvey, somewhere or other behind, was old enough and large enough to take care of himself; ahead were Marchand and his little clique of moneyed men.

It was to be quite a feather in his cap, this Philadelphia transaction—a deal so huge in its proportions, so fearfully involved in complex details, that the ordinary mind might well have shrunk away from it. Alone, Howard Street had engineered the better part of the thing in most perfect style; and

now, with Marchand sailing for Europe day after to-morrow, they were going to wrestle out the final details.

And then, in some six or eight weeks, when Marchand returned, and the preliminary contracts were due to expire, the world would be mildly startled at the putting through of what might be termed a *real* real-estate deal, with Mr. Howard Street's name carefully advertised and Mr. Howard Street's bank-account considerably the fatter. It was, all of it, just the sort of man's-size affair with which Howard had been seeking to identify himself; now it was coming true.

Marchand and the car were at the Broad Street Station when the train rolled in, and Marchand took him in charge. The big man's family had deserted him weeks ago; the servants were going to-morrow; and the conference would be held in all the unlistening emptiness of the big home. A hotel dinner, and Marchand and Howard Street settled in the former's library for a short evening of details and documents.

Morning dawned rather unfortunately, with the arrival of a telegram from Kenton, telling of the stalling of his train in a wreck, two hundred miles west. Kenton was as essential to this affair as money itself, and now he would hardly be on hand before late afternoon. The others, half a dozen of them, drifted in and waited; papers were signed, signatures witnessed, checks passed—with blank spaces left for Kenton and an apathetic notary drowsing over his newspaper in the corner.

The traveler arrived no more than in time for the dinner Marchand had ordered from a near-by hotel. He was passing on again; indeed, he would have to board a nine-o'clock train for the South; and there was another grand scurrying of papers—and, when Kenton had flitted on again, a confusion of things in general that would have procured most people a clean ticket to the madhouse. It would have to be straight-

ened out; and, alone in the house, Street and Marchand set about the straightening. Midnight came and went. At nearly three in the morning, with a million or so of documents neatly bundled and ready for the safe-deposit vaults, two utterly fagged men tottered to two bedrooms above and rolled into bed.

As concerned Howard Street, nine o'clock in the morning found him with as vicious a headache as he could remember in all his life! He grunted and yawned and shuffled over to the mirror; and he laughed a little and shook his head; late hours, obviously, were not for him. When a man has made a rule of slipping into bed at eleven, tired out, an extra four hours are likely to leave their marks—and they seemed to have left them on Howard, for his eyes were dark-circled and tired, and the corners of his mouth drooped.

There was more rushing ahead—a lightning chat between Marchand and his watchman, a galloping breakfast, a mad race for the train, and a plunging express for New York. Marchand left him at the station and whizzed wildly off in a taxicab for his pier. Howard Street, yawning still, boarded a humbler surface-car for the Hotel Barnard and his comfortable rooms. There was no particular need of diving pell-mell for his office; he had worked hard enough last night, and he would get down to business after luncheon and a shave.

A moment he chatted with the clerk at the hotel desk. Harvey, it seemed, had arrived in good order, night before last, and been duly installed. Howard, for no very good reason, heaved a sigh of relief and rode up to his rooms; and, on the very threshold, he stood aghast.

For Harvey, beyond question, had been there.

The beds, to be sure, were neatly made—and there the chambermaid seemed to have stopped in despair. Howard Street's books, never out of

their case, were piled on the table to the number of a dozen or more; Howard Street's magazines, invariably in their rack, had wandered from one end of the place to the other, perching on floor, chairs, and sofa impartially. And his little silver cigar-box was standing open, with ashes here and there and everywhere; and his stationery was piled, in every possible way, on his trim desk; and—yes, even half a dozen of his neckties were ranged on the back of a chair, as Harvey had left them after making his selection. An uninformed observer might have scented the recent passing of a cyclone. Howard Street understood; his younger brother had merely been occupying the rooms after his own fashion.

And the tenant of the place decided that he'd be hanged if he'd set about tidying the place now. He was too infernally tired, just at present. He'd emulate Harvey by sweeping the things off the couch and stretching out—and he was in the middle of that astonishing operation when the room telephone rang, and the clerk desired to know if he would see Mr. Colden.

It was a surprising sort of call. Colden lived in a remote part of the city, and during business hours, as a general thing, only a case could take him from his office; yet he and Howard had discussed the Philadelphia proposition again and again, and now, evidently, he had felt sufficient interest to come and get the news while it was fresh.

Yawning, Street greeted him cordially and turned back to his unusual task; he paused, instinctively, to bunch the magazines and carry them back to their rack; and only when he had arranged them in a neat pile did it dawn upon him that Colden was staring silently at him. He straightened up and faced the other with a laughing:

"What's wrong, Dick?"

Colden queerly avoided his eye.

"I was—well, thinking that you looked the worse for wear, Howard," he muttered.

Street laughed outright.

"I am," he said. "But it's only hard work, you know. I haven't taken to midnight roistering, even away from home."

"I—didn't suspect that, you know," the detective muttered.

"The session, or the tail end of it, lasted until three in the morning, Dick. I was all in when we were through with it."

"The session—where?"

"Where?" Street stared at his friend. "In Philadelphia, of course. Why on earth did you ask that question?"

Colden, evidently, was straying from his own mathematically straight mental paths. Colden, still avoiding his eye, rammed his hands in his pockets.

"You seem thundering unconcerned," he said oddly.

The real-estate man laughed again.

"I'm not, Dick," he said. "I'm tickled to death all through!"

"But—"

"But I'm not hysterical about it, because I'm too tired just now," Street chuckled. "There were half a dozen hitches before we were through with it, but in the end everything straightened out beautifully. In the whole affair, from one end to the other, there isn't a solitary flaw or—"

With a jerk, the detective was at his side, and one rather nervous hand had landed on his arm.

"Look here, Howard; *you're* talking about that real-estate deal, aren't you?"

"Well—of course!" Street said blankly.

"Well, is it possible you haven't heard?" Colden asked, looking straight at him.

"Heard what?"

"At least, you've seen the morning papers?"

"I haven't laid eyes on a newspaper since yesterday morning, Dick, and I didn't pay much attention to them then. I—"

He stopped short, for Colden had twitched a folded sheet from his pocket

and was opening it. He flattened out the front page and folded it back again, so that the first two columns were uppermost; and then, silently, he thrust it into Street's hands and—

"'Westchester Millionaire Murdered in Cold Blood,'" Howard Street read aloud. "Who—"

Colden's laugh was a queer little bark.

"Yes!" he said. "John Dobson!"

CHAPTER III.

Wildcliffe.

FOR a moment or two Street's usually quick brain, thoroughly tired now, failed to catch the significance of the words.

His forehead wrinkled; an instant, an odd, incredulous little smile flickered across his lips as he glanced at Colden, and he muttered:

"What?"

"It's there! Read it!" the detective said shortly.

"But—*good God!*" The news suddenly swept into Street's brain with full force. "Dobson—John Dobson isn't dead?"

Colden turned away and found a cigarette on the table.

"Isn't he, Howard?" he said.

"Then possibly it's a newspaper story."

"But—"

"Read it!" snapped the detective.

"I supposed that you knew."

He scratched a match with elaborate care and kindled the cigarette; and, limply, Street dropped to the couch and stared at the smudgy sheet in his hands. His head seemed to be steadying again now; the printed lines had ceased their momentary insane dancing.

And the head-line persisted as a fact, and under it: "John Dobson Shot Down in Library of His Home by Unknown Assassin." He clutched the sheet until the margins tore loose; and he read swiftly the meager details.

Dobson had been murdered; that much alone seemed clear to the indi-

vidual who had written the article. At some time between ten and twelve on the previous evening a shot had been fired in the library, and Dobson's dead body found, with a bullet-hole straight through the head.

The Wildcliffe coroner, plainly an energetic person, had gone to work instantly and reached an official conclusion, bare enough and obvious enough: the deceased had been shot down by a person or persons unknown, who had made good their escape. Most crimes have a motive; this seemed to lack one. No weapon had been found about the place, nor had Mr. Dobson entertained any strangers—or, indeed, any callers at all—last evening. The servants had been very positive on that point; the butler, in fact, had sworn flatly that the door of the mansion had been within sight all afternoon and evening, and that no one outside the household had passed it.

But for the early evening hour, the paper went on, it might have seemed that an attempted robbery was at the bottom of the awful affair. Mr. Dobson's private safe, always containing more or less actual cash, had—for some reason known only to himself—been particularly well filled last night. As a matter of fact, a quantity of bills of large denomination had been upon the very desk beside which he fell; they could have been snatched up in a matter of seconds; yet they were found when the room was entered.

The window, it seemed, had been open; the heavy vines beneath it were broken in several places, and there were footprints on the soft ground, for it had rained most of the evening. Beyond that, the article stated, the police were working on the case and—the paper dropped from Street's hands, and he was fairly glaring at Colden as he cried:

"Have you been up there?"

The detective looked at him quietly.

"Why on earth should I go up there, Howard? I'm not an officer of the county, and nobody retained me."

"But I thought—why—look here, Dick, *you* should have been there and—"

"*Why?*" the detective shot at him. "Why?"

"Why—why—" Street laughed helplessly and leaned against the table. His forehead was dripping, and, wondering rather at Colden's unwavering stare, he mopped it again and again. "I—Lord! I don't know why, Dick! I'm—staggered. That's all! This thing has fairly knocked the senses out of me, you know. It struck me that you were the one bright detective in the world and—oh, I don't know!" He shrugged his shoulders and gripped himself with an effort; and he ended weakly: "It's—awful!"

"It's all of that, Howard."

"Who—who could have done it?"

"I haven't an idea in the world," the detective said steadily. "Have you?"

"I? Of course not! I—why, who on earth could want to kill him?" Street said blankly. "Do you suppose, with the window open, yeggmen could have—"

"Yeggs don't wander up to a brilliantly lighted house, Howard, with servants and people about. It's not good form in that circle."

"But—"

"And they don't leave five or ten thousand dollars lying loose when they leave, you know. To my mind, there isn't a sign of the professional crook about the murder anywhere."

"Then—" The real-estate man stopped short and his eyes dilated; and, in the vaguest way, he saw that Colden had winced, and, eyes narrowed, was waiting for his next words. "By George! The girl's up there all alone!"

"What?"

"Eva! Dobson's adopted daughter!" Street cried feverishly. "That poor kid's all alone with the tragedy, except for the servants. I'm going up, Dick!"

"But—"

"Yes, and quick, too!" Street cried, as he dashed for the telephone and gave

the number of his office. "I'll tell Harvey to attend to matters as best he can and then— Hello, Miss Bartley!"

"Is that you, Mr. Street?" came over the wire.

"Yes, and I want to talk to my brother, quick!"

"Well, he isn't here, Mr. Street," the girl said mildly. "That's why I'm answering the phone, you know."

"Not there?" Street gasped.

"No, sir."

"When did he leave, Miss Bartley?"

"Leave?" asked the voice with a rising inflection.

"Yes, yes, yes!" snapped the proprietor of the office. "And where has he gone, and when will he be back?"

"I'm afraid I can't very well tell you that, Mr. Street," said the even voice. "He hasn't been here to-day."

"He—*what?*" Street scowled suddenly. "Did he telephone in?"

"No, sir."

"Then what did he say when he left the office last night?" the real-estate man went on desperately. "If he was going anywhere to-day he must have mentioned it and said—"

"He didn't, Mr. Street," the voice interrupted. "He wasn't here yesterday either. I haven't seen him since you left together day before yesterday."

"And he—he didn't phone in yesterday either?"

"No, sir."

"Are you—sure of that?" Street gasped.

"Quite!" said the voice crisply. "I've been attending to everything myself."

"Well, you'll have to keep at it to-day, then," her employer said rather blankly. "I—good-by."

He turned to the detective and found that calm person smiling faintly, and it seemed, with a touch of cynicism.

"He's not there, Dick!" he cried.

"What of it?" asked Colden. "I could have told you that. I dropped in twice to pay my respects."

"Then where on earth is he?" Street

demanded wildly. "He got here all right. He's been here. He doesn't drink or carouse, you know, and—"

"Was he here last night?" Colden asked suddenly.

"Of course! Or—I'm sure I don't know. I suppose so. Wait!"

He turned back to the telephone; but this time the call went no further than the hotel office, and a moment later the clerk's voice came up with:

"Well, sir?"

"Parker!" cried Street. "Do you happen to know where my brother has gone?"

"Why—no, Mr. Street."

"Was he around the house yesterday?"

"All day long," the clerk answered promptly. "He was sitting around the lobby from morning until night."

"Sitting around the lobby?"

"Yes, sir."

"What for?" Street asked.

"I give it up!" laughed the clerk. "He took a chair over by the door about nine in the morning, and sat there until lunch. Then he took the table by the door of the dining-room, if I remember correctly, and kept the lobby in sight. After lunch he spent the afternoon in the same chair."

"But why did he do it?"

"He didn't say, Mr. Street."

"Then was he here last evening?"

"I can't tell you anything about that, or—yes, I can, too! Just hold the wire a minute, Mr. Street. The night man's just coming into the office." Scowling, Howard Street waited for perhaps a minute, then: "He wasn't here last night, except for a minute or two, sir!"

"And when was that minute or two?"

Another pause, and:

"He went out right after dinner, sir, and came in again for a few minutes after midnight. He stayed up-stairs for ten minutes or so, and then went out again. That's all I can learn."

"Well—thank you!" muttered the real-estate man as he hung up the instrument.

Once more he turned to the detective, watching him still; but this time it was without indecision. Instead, he shrugged his shoulders and said:

"Harvey's disappeared! That's the usual thing with Harvey, Dick—when you want him he's somewhere else. Well—I don't know that it matters much just now. Miss Bartley can attend to the office. I'm going up to Wildcliffe."

"Now?"

"Certainly. Eva's all alone there. I can't let her—"

"Well, pardon me, Howard," Colden said bluntly, "but is your presence absolutely necessary to her?"

"Why—I don't know! I—"

"I mean, you're not engaged to her?"

"No!"

"Well, is there an—er—an understanding between you, or—"

"What understanding should there be between us?" Street demanded.

"Well, don't excite yourself!" Colden smiled faintly. "The point I'm trying to make is just this: if she has no particular reason for expecting you to rush to her side, why go?"

"Well, why not go?" Street demanded blankly. "I was as close to Dobson as any one, and I doubt if any one knowing his business affairs is in charge."

"At the same time—don't you see—" Colden began haltingly—and stopped.

And having stopped he looked squarely at Street for an instant and shrugged his shoulders in the queerest fashion and turned away. He walked across the room and stared savagely at a photograph on the book-case; he turned back suddenly and his lips opened—and again he seemed to change his mind, for they snapped together again and Colden, throwing his cigarette into the open fireplace with an emphatic "damn!" looked at the floor until Street asked wonderingly:

"What in Heaven's name is the matter with you? What's on your mind?"

"Well—" Colden began sharply. "See here, Howard, with whom were you last night?"

"Eh? Marchand, of course."

"All night?"

"Yes."

"All evening—I mean, you were in Philadelphia all evening?"

"Of course I was!" Street almost shouted. "Why—"

"With Marchand? Where's Marchand now? In Philadelphia?"

"No. He's somewhere on the ocean." The real-estate man strode down on the other and shook him violently. "What is it, Dick? What's wrong with you? Why—" He glanced at the clock just before him and started. "See here, if you have anything to say, say it quick, boy. I'm going to get that noon train for Wildcliffe."

A long half-minute the other looked straight into his eyes. The stare ended with something as near a tremulous smile as one could imagine appearing on Colden's thin, calm features.

"I've nothing to say, Howard!" he said. "Go ahead and get your noon train, old man, and God be with you."

He turned with a nod and, hands in pockets, walked straight out of the rooms.

Some few seconds Street stared after him uncomprehendingly. Outside, the elevator gate clanged, and the real-estate man went so far as to walk to the door and stare into the empty hallway. Colden had indeed left, and, apparently, Colden had also taken leave of his usually very active senses.

What on earth had he been talking about in that funny disjointed fashion? Had the puzzle of this or some other crime distracted him, or—or what did his wanderings matter, anyhow? There were things ahead of Street considerably more important than Colden's incoherence, and the quicker he went about them the better. Eva, all alone up there, with a hair-raising murder in the house! Howard Street, snatching up hat and overcoat once more, rushed out of his comfortable—and decidedly

untidy—suite, and headed for the railway terminal that sent a train toward Wildcliffe every hour or so.

Perhaps half a minute, when the train had started, he devoted to wondering what had become of Harvey. Another half-minute, too, he spent at wondering what was amiss with Colden. That, also, left his mind promptly, and he settled down to planning a course of action in the unusual emergency ahead.

Very likely it would be best for him to remain at the Four Oaks, as Dobson had chosen to name his country-place, until the funeral was over at least. There were a thousand and one little details in the unfortunate man's business which he knew more intimately than any one else. And there was Miss Carston—or Miss Dobson—to be considered, too. It was no situation for any girl to handle alone—and far less for so inexperienced, so high-strung a young woman as Eva. Mrs. Aden, the housekeeper, was all right in her way, of course; and Fenn was thoroughly capable as a butler; and, for that matter, genial Dr. Evans was probably doing, probably would do, everything in his power to make matters easier for Eva. But the whole wretched business were better in some such hands as Street's—and into them he proposed to take it.

Excitement buzzed around Wildcliffe depot when he descended.

There were a dozen more or less familiar faces about. He looked absently at them, and found them staring at himself with round, popping eyes; and he grunted. The natives seemed thoroughly startled—and none of them more so than the elderly person with the elderly hack, who usually rattled him over to the ornate Dobson place. This elderly person for a moment looked him full in the face with mouth wide open; he turned then, and gathered up his reins and whipped up his horse—and, swearing audibly, Street looked about for another conveyance.

He found one in charge of a boy,

and climbed into it quickly; and he noted with grim amusement the lad's start as he named their destination and they trotted away from the station. Some hundred yards the boy kept silence; and then:

"You one o' them city detectives, mister?"

"No. Have there been some up here?"

"Three or four," said the boy. "You a reporter?"

"No."

"They won't let 'em in over there. My boss told me that."

"I'm glad to hear it."

"Why?" the lad asked wonderingly. "Who are you?"

"My name is Street, if it interests you particularly," said that gentleman.

"Not Mr. Howard Street?" gasped his driver.

"Certainly."

"My Lord!" ejaculated the boy as he lashed the horse.

"Is there anything amazing in that?"

"Well—no." The boy favored him with an uncanny smile. "Only—somebody killed the old man last night, you know."

"Well, I didn't do it, son," said the real-estate man. "Did you think I did?"

"My Lord, no!" choked the unusual boy.

Speech seemed to fail him after that, and in cold truth Street very nearly forgot his existence. The rig was making time, and that was the main thing. Ahead, around the turn they were just taking, the big stone pillars of the gateway appeared, and beside them a sober-looking native with a shield pinned on his coat. He halted the rig unceremoniously with:

"Nobody's allowed in there."

"Well, I'm Mr. Dobson's broker," the visitor snapped. "And I'm going in."

"You Mr. Street?" the other rasped in plain amazement.

"Yes."

The man with the shield considered him very thoughtfully.

"All right, then," he said suddenly. "Drive in. And say, mister, we may want to hold you as—a witness. There's an investigation going on, of course."

"You'll have no trouble getting me," Street said impatiently. "Go on, boy."

He turned back, frowning, for a final glance at the man by the gates. That individual was watching him still, and—here was the house! With a bound, Street left the rig and tossed a dollar to the boy; with another bound, he was up the three broad steps and confronting Fenn at the open door.

And Fenn, usually smiling respectful welcome, scowled at him. Not that, under the circumstances, Mr. Street expected an effusive greeting, but—

"I'm here at last, Fenn!" he stated.

The butler regarded him for a moment when he had closed the door.

"I beg pardon, sir, but did any one send for you?" he asked.

"What? No!" Street said blankly.

"I came because—why, because it was right for me to come, of course. Are Mr. Dobson's lawyers here?"

"They're not, sir," Fenn said flatly.

"Why not?"

"Because they telephoned up to know should they come, and I told 'em as they might come when they were sent for," the butler said astonishingly.

"And who under the sun told you to take that much on yourself?" Street demanded warmly.

"Miss Eva and Dr. Evans, sir, after talking it over," said Fenn. "And if I may make so bold, Mr. Street, the matter of sending for you was brought up as well, I may say."

"And—" Street asked wonderingly.

"And it was decided not to send for you, sir," said the butler as he laid a suggestive hand upon the knob of the door.

"Well—" The visitor stopped, and his eyes narrowed as he studied the servant. The man, it seemed, was tell-

ing the truth, but—what was wrong? Just an instant he searched his memory for some possible recent dereliction that might have made him unwelcome in such a crisis. He could find none, and he knew very well that Dobson's lawyers belonged here, even more properly than himself. And yet Fenn was waiting, with the door open an inch, and—

"Say, are you inviting me to go?" Street rasped.

"I wouldn't make so bold as to say that, sir," Fenn replied stolidly.

"Well, I'm not going," the visitor snapped. "I don't know what's behind all this; but I'm going to find out, and if I find that you're exceeding your orders, I'll see that you smart for it, Fenn. Got that?"

"I hear you, sir."

"Then say to Miss Eva that I am here."

"Well—"

"Do it!" Street snarled savagely.

He hurled hat and coat upon the table and walked up and down the big corridor as he waited. Death seemed in the very air of the place; the tall clock in the corner had stopped; the shades were drawn, and the ground-floor curtains as well—and a little shiver ran through him as he came to the end of the corridor and glanced through the space between the hangings.

It was the library that lay between Dobson's den and the rest of the house; and just now its sole occupant was a long, still form at the far side of the room—a form outlined only by the white sheet that covered it. The real-estate man shut his teeth and turned away quickly—and even as he did so quick steps came down the stairs, and he was face to face with Dobson's adopted daughter.

His heart pounded furiously for an instant. Her eyes were red, and her cheeks white—and even so, she was the most beautiful thing he had seen in all his life. He hurried forward and clasped the slender hand; and he for-

got Fenn's grim, disapproving countenance on the stairway, for Eva was saying:

"I knew that you would come, Mr. Street."

"I'd have been here sooner, if I'd heard of it sooner," Street said fiercely, as he drew her toward the shadowy drawing-room at the side. "And now—"

He broke off helplessly, for she was crying afresh—not violently or with any overwhelming grief, as Street understood thoroughly, but rather with the relax at the sight of a familiar and, he hoped, trusted face. In chilliest truth, there had been no tremendous amount of love lost between John Dobson and his ward, and Street was perhaps better aware of the fact than many others.

A little while he waited, until the weeping had subsided, hardly daring to move, for she was clasping his hand tightly and unconsciously as they sat on a little divan at the far side of the room. But the girl looked up at last and fairly at him—and as swiftly looked away and bit her lips.

That was odd, too, for she had a disconcerting little trick of looking straight into one's eyes and reading their very thoughts; it had caused him more than one uncomfortable flush before this, and for a moment the plain evasion of his eyes impressed Street; and then:

"Do you—want to tell me about it, Eva?"

The name slipped past his lips and he started. And he started more violently an instant later, for no rebuke came. Instead, for the tiniest fraction of time the deep eyes flashed upon him a mystic smile—and the girl's face had clouded again, and she was looking away.

"There is—nothing to tell," she said faintly. "Dr. Evans says that the papers printed everything—everything that is known."

"But there must be a thousand things, big and little, that escaped what

reporters have been here," Street urged in some astonishment. "There *must* be a clue, or a dozen of them, you know, which—"

"No. There is not," the girl murmured, almost inaudibly.

"But you don't want to talk about it, and I'm a brute to urge you," the visitor muttered. "I'll ask Fenn and Mrs. Aden and—"

His words died in utter amazement, for the girl had whirled upon him. She was breathing rapidly, and for the moment her eyes were dilating with wild excitement. One hand clutched tighter over his own, and the other caught his arm and clung there, trembling.

"No, no! Please don't! Don't ask them—anything, please!" she panted. "No one suspected! I'm sure—oh!"

CHAPTER IV.

Questions Unanswered.

IN some remote part of the house a door closed. A woman's voice was audible for a moment, and fell silent again as Street and the wide-eyed girl stared at one another—the real-estate man rigid with sheer astonishment, Eva with—yes, it seemed to be fear.

And then, as Street's lips opened, a little cry escaped her, and she turned swiftly from him and, face buried in her hands, shook with hysterical sobs.

The visitor's hands dropped helplessly to his sides. Was it possible that Eva knew—or suspected—or—he gave it up and stared at her.

And in hardly a minute the girl straightened up again, lips compressed, and a difficult little smile flickering in her eyes; and those eyes gave Street a curious impression which his steady, unimaginative mind did not seek to analyze. There was a hint of appeal in them, a hint of defiance; and there was much more than a hint of firm resolve.

"Please pay no attention to what I am saying, Mr. Street," she said

very quietly. "I—this has shocked me so—so dreadfully that—"

"I know."

"There is no one to suspect, they say, just now, and—and certainly no one that I suspect. It—all came so suddenly—"

"When he was alone?"

"When he was alone, there in the library," the girl repeated. "There was—just a shot." She shuddered. "We—Fenn and I—we went in and found him."

"And there was no sign—"

"There were no traces of any one having been there, Mr. Street. The window was wide open, but it—it may have been that way before, you know. They say there are footprints outside the window. That is—all."

The deep eyes rested steadily upon Street again, as if looking through and through him; and now at his quiet smile a certain calm came into them. The soft hand was resting in his own again, and he heard:

"And now you—will let me thank you for coming, Mr. Street, and—let me go?"

"Go?"

"Yes, to be alone until I have gained some sort of control over myself." The difficult smile flickered into being for an instant, and a sudden tremor ran through the hand within his own. "I'm thinking—acting—certainly talking wildly just now, I'm afraid, and—oh, I must go!"

"Well, is Mrs. Aden looking after you?" Street asked, almost fiercely, as she arose.

"Yes. She is—doing what she can."

"And Dr. Evans? I should think that he—"

"Oh, he is good! They are—all so good!" the girl cried brokenly. "I—good-by, Mr. Street!"

"But just one thing!" the visitor cried. "Do you wish me to remain here, Eva?"

"I? Yes." A sudden wave of something closely akin to terror drove the sudden flash of hope from her eyes;

a new fit of trembling had attacked the girl. "But they think—Dr. Evans says—"

She stopped suddenly, for the curtains had parted, and Mrs. Aden, the housekeeper, had entered soundlessly. A second or two she looked from one to the other, and a new wonder came to Street—placid, smiling, comfortable, and cheery always—the murder had brought to Mrs. Aden's expression an uncompromising, almost masculine, stern quality and—obvious disapproval of himself.

"I don't think that you are in condition to receive visitors, Miss Eva," she said.

"I—"

"Won't you go to your room again?" the elder woman asked steadily, not as a question, but as a command. "I will see Mr. Street."

She waited angrily, it seemed, as with a quick, silent pressure of Street's hand the girl turned and hurried from the room. Angrily, too, she glanced after the slender figure for a moment, and then:

"Well, Mr. Street?" she snapped.

"Well—" the visitor began in bewilderment.

"Is this a time to force business matters on the household?"

"But I—didn't come for any such purpose," Street stammered. "I—confound it. Either there is something I'm incapable of understanding here, or I'm altogether misunderstood. Have I—done anything to offend any one, Mrs. Aden?"

"Nothing."

"Then—"

"What do you wish here, Mr. Street?" the housekeeper demanded impatiently.

"Why, I came to be of what assistance I could," the visitor cried as his senses returned. "I was pretty well acquainted with Mr. Dobson and his affairs, you know, and I assumed that, there being no man to take charge of things—why, that I could be of material aid, of course."

"Dr. Evans has attended to everything, thank you," the woman said stonily. "It will not be necessary to trouble you."

"But—good Heavens!" Street rasped. "Is there such an infernal superfluity of executive capability for such emergencies as these that—that—" He floundered helplessly to a standstill.

In complete silence Mrs. Aden regarded him. Seconds drifted by uncomfortably; a minute was gone—and suddenly Street demanded:

"Mrs. Aden, *what on earth is it?*"

"What?"

"This forbidding air. This—"

"There is no forbidding air, Mr. Street, and no mystery, except the awful one of which you already know. It is simply that this is a time when—and I am sure the rest feel as I do—when no purely business connection of Mr. Dobson's should force his way into the house."

The visitor came near to tottering backward. She was actually saying the words he heard, actually regarding him with a stare that savored of positive hatred—and it was Mrs. Aden, always merry, always kindly, whom he had come to regard, not as a mere acquaintance or the head of Dobson's household, but as a friend, and a good one.

"Well, I—I'm sorry that—that you look at my visit in that way, Mrs. Aden," he stammered. "I'll—go, I suppose, or—"

Not the slightest hindrance to his departure was to be offered, it appeared; the woman merely nodded and waited—and Street all but shuffled toward the door and into the corridor. Fenn was waiting, grim and disapproving as before, and he picked up the visitor's hat and coat with alacrity and proffered them unsmilingly. Rather stupidly Street acquired them—and the door was open before him—and on the top step stood Dr. Evans himself, wholly sane and normal, at least, and apparently rather astonished.

A moment he, too, surveyed the visitor through his rimless glasses, and he reached a decision, for at a nod the door closed behind Street, and the two of them were alone in the open air, and—

"You want to talk to me, Street?" the doctor asked as he shook hands.

"Yes. I want to ask you what—well, what I've done to the household?"

"Nothing that I know of." The physician looked at him in bland, mild astonishment.

"Then—"

"It isn't just a time for social calls."

"I didn't come to make one, Evans. I came to find out about this dreadful affair."

"Have you read the papers, Street?"

"Of course."

"Then I'm afraid there's nothing more to tell you," said the doctor.

"And I'm afraid that there is a good deal more," the real-estate man said vehemently. "I want to know the whole business from one end to the other, Evans."

The physician looked him over once more, and this time with mild amazement.

"The whole business, Street," he said smoothly, "is that they heard a shot here last night in the library. They went in. Dobson was lying there dead—and they sent for me."

"What time did it happen?"

"About ten, I imagine."

"And what time did they send for you?"

"Immediately, of course."

"And you came?"

"I came at once, Street."

"And then?"

"Well, then I pronounced him dead, my dear boy," the physician said ironically. "I'm not a wizard, you know. Science, as yet, hasn't told us how to restore a man with a bullet-hole straight through his brain."

"Well, was there—was there anything about the wound—" Street began, frowning.

The quizzical smile broadened.

"There was this about the wound, Street: it was the clearest, most indubitable case of simon-pure gunshot I ever saw. In addition to the wound itself, the bullet was imbedded in the woodwork across the library. The main fact is utterly beyond question. Dobson was killed by a thirty-eight-caliber bullet, fired at short range."

"How short?"

"I give it up. Pretty short," the doctor said without great concern.

"You—well, you looked over the room, of course?"

"Naturally."

"What did you find?"

"Nothing whatever."

"No weapon?"

"Of course not, Street," the doctor said rather impatiently. "What's the point of all this?"

"The point is that I owe something to Dobson himself, and I want to find out what happened to him and what has been done toward finding and arresting the murderer," Street said forcefully. "I'm—not particularly apt at asking questions, perhaps; but I want to know what's been *done*, and—"

"I can inform you fully," the doctor said with a dry smile. "The coroner appeared about midnight and took charge of things in a cyclonic fashion. The local police also lost their night's sleep, and asked, I fancy, about three million idiotic questions. They discovered a quantity of footprints under the library window, and just at present they are carefully covered up with boarding and a man is standing guard over the boards. They also found that the creeper under the window is pretty well torn to pieces, which was—even to our local police—pretty convincing evidence that the thug, whoever he was, climbed into the window by way of the vines. As to the identity of the murderer, I'll bet ten years of my life that they haven't a suspicion, and never will have, unless some lucky accident puts them on the trail."

"And what is your own idea, doctor?"

"My own idea," said Dr. Evans, "is that I'm a physician and not a detective, and that just at present I'm mighty glad of it." He looked at Street and smiled whimsically. "I'm frank to say that I give it up. The thing was done unquestionably by some wanderer, whether a professional crook or otherwise, who strayed into the grounds, looking for what might be picked up. Perhaps he saw Dobson's money from outside and assumed that he had a chance of getting it—Dobson's back may have been turned, or he may have been out of the room for a moment in his den, or somewhere else. The only conjecture I've made on the known facts is that Dobson walked in and surprised him, and that he lost his head and shot the poor chap, and then jumped from the window and ran. The only two absolute certainties are that he did do it, and that he did get away."

"So that—"

"So that that's all there is to it, Street," concluded the doctor. "And now I'll have to go in and see what I can do for the poor little girl. I never imagined that she was passionately fond of Dobson, but this affair has turned her nerves upside down. Well"—he extended his hearty hand and smiled blandly at Street—"going home now?"

"Evidently," said the visitor rather unpleasantly.

"Home's the best place for you, my boy—anywhere but here at this time." The doctor smiled vaguely. "You—ah, there's Peter!" He turned with an elaborate surprise that was not at all lost on Street to the chauffeur of the establishment, who had just rolled into view from the rear at the wheel of poor Dobson's big roadster. "Which way are you going, Peter?"

"Station," the driver proclaimed loudly.

"Well, take Mr. Street along with you," the physician fairly vociferated.

"Hop in, Street. It'll be pleasanter for you than a hack. Good-by!"

He turned and walked straight into the house; and the door, which had opened instantly before him, closed with a loud click. The chauffeur, staring straight ahead, was waiting; and Street, lips tight shut, stepped down to the car and into it. One angry moment he contemplated quizzing the chauffeur; but, even as he studied the strange, wooden expression, the man settled the matter for him by glancing at the clock on the dashboard. They had, if the clock happened to be right, just three minutes in which to make the next down train—and the car whirled off down the drive at a pace that drove back Street's puzzled breath.

They made the train with not more than ten seconds to spare. Savagely the rejected profferer of assistance swung aboard as the wheels began to turn, and mile after mile had rolled by before anything like coherent thought came to him.

What had Eva meant with that strange "no one suspected"? Or had she meant anything at all? Had it been merely hysteria or—what?

Bit by bit the queeriness of his whole visit to Wildcliffe came back to Howard Street—the stares that had greeted him at the station—the inexplicable fashion in which his old driver had fled—the violent emotion of the boy when he learned his passenger's identity. What had been the significance of those manifestations?

He dismissed speculation on that particular score very shortly and with an impatient snarl. The little town itself was hysterical over the sensation; doubtless all sorts of wild talk was floating about—had been floating and would be for weeks to come, until somebody's fire or somebody's runaway gave a new twist to local conversation.

The townspeople and their attitude were a matter of indifference to him, after all; but what in the name of all sanity had turned the household against

him? Because they *were* against him—Fenn and Mrs. Aden and Dr. Evans—each in their own way had shown distaste at his presence. And why—why—*why?* Eva—and he recalled with a thrill that twice he had called her by that very name—would have preferred him there. So much he felt that he knew. But the rest of them—

A long time he sat with his head against the back of the seat, staring at the ceiling of the rocking car; and after the long time a slow, sheepish, ashamed suspicion began to creep over him. It was possible that, in actual fact, he had taken altogether too much upon himself on going up there with his unasked assistance.

It was possible—nay, in the light of many facts it seemed probable—that Fenn's attitude, and Mrs. Aden's and Evans's, too, for that matter, had merely expressed their genuine conviction: he was a business connection of Dobson's, an employee, if it came down to that, and his fancied standing as a friend of the household simply did not exist.

Such little misunderstandings have a way of happening where there is much money on one side and paid service to the money on the other. It seemed perfectly incredible in this particular case, and yet—there was a brick-red flush on Street's cheeks as his train came into the city. He had, or he had not, made a sad and clumsy break. If the former, the less Wildcliffe saw of him until he was summoned for purely business purposes, the better.

If the latter—the real-estate man came near to tearing his hair as he stood and looked at the busy street before the depot. It *must* be the latter. Something told him—and be it confessed that the something was altogether Eva and her odd behavior—that there was more behind the queer situation than he had fathomed.

And if that were the case Colden could and should do the fathoming. Mr. Street startled several people by

bringing his clenched right fist into his open palm with a resounding whack; after that, while they still stared at him, he hurried to the telephone-booths and called up Colden's office.

The sharp young clerk answered. Mr. Colden wasn't there. He had not been there more than fifteen minutes all day—and who was this? Street informed him, and a light seemed to break on the clerk, for he cried:

"Well, I think you're the one he wants to see, Mr. Street."

"Why?"

"I don't know why, but he's called up three or four times to know if you were in the office."

"Well, if he comes in, ask him to wait. I'll be down there before closing time."

"Well, I guess he'll wait, Mr. Street," the clerk said dryly. "I've got four or five telephone numbers here now, and orders to go through them and find him the second you turn up."

So Colden was looking for him, too!

A little while Street stood and wondered dully; he gave it up with a weary shake of the head, and boarded a car for his hotel. Back in town again, unearthy weariness was creeping over him once more. The effects of last night were returning with new vigor; he had altogether forgotten that such a thing as luncheon existed, too. The first thing now would have to be a plunge and a long-delayed bite; after that, whether he liked it or not, Colden should go straight to Wildcliffe.

Head down in deep thought, the real-estate man trudged into the lobby of his little hotel—and the head came up very suddenly.

Some one had fairly shot across the tiling and grabbed his arm; he looked up to face—Colden himself.

And he was no longer the utterly calm, rather cynical, private detective, either. His face wore an excited flush and his eyes a perturbed expression such as Street had never observed before in those keen, cool eyes. An

instant he glanced past Street and around the lobby, and then he cried hoarsely:

"You really went up there, then, and—came back?"

"I—of course."

"That's good, at least," the detective muttered. "Come up-stairs, Howard."

"But—"

"Don't stand here and argue about it," said Colden, with another sweeping survey of the place. "Come!"

"Well, I'll go without being dragged, Dick," Street said mildly. "But what under the sun—"

"Hush!" whispered the detective.

A steady, cautioning hand rested upon Street's arm as the elevator shot upward. There it remained, gripped a little tighter, as they walked down the corridor; and only when Street's key had admitted them to the upset suite did the hand fall away. One last look down the corridor—a sigh—and Colden himself closed the door and stood before his friend.

"Howard," he said, "I've known you for some years."

"What?"

"We've been pretty good friends, and I thought I knew you pretty well—and I still think so, for the matter of that. I don't know—just how to go about this thing," Colden said uncomfortably, "but—I may as well tell you that I was up at Wildcliffe myself at seven this morning."

There was a remarkable significance in the words, apparently, and Colden waited for their effect. The effect failed altogether of materialization, for Street no more than stood and gazed at him as he asked:

"What sent you there, Dick?"

"Primarily, I went because I knew that Dobson was one of your main-stays, Howard, and—well, I asked a good many questions of the natives, you know."

Street's face brightened. "What did you find out?"

"I found out enough to worry me,

Howard," Colden said gravely. "When I got back to the city, just about the time you appeared, I learned enough to worry me some more."

"I don't understand."

"I hope to God that you *don't!*" the detective cried. "But—this afternoon—I've been around police headquarters, and from what I heard there I decided that the time had come to warn you."

"Of what?"

"Well, of the fact—" Colden began loudly and desperately.

He said no more. A rule of the house, evidently, had been broken; a caller, and one owning a very peremptory set of rapping knuckles, had penetrated to the door of the suite unannounced.

A startled second or two they stared toward the door, and the knob turned, and straight into the living-room walked a tall, broadly built citizen, clean-shaven and determined—and Street started forward gladly, because it chanced to be none other than Darton, headquarters detective lieutenant, one of the best-trained minds in the bureau and Street's particular friend.

"Well, I'm glad to see *you*," he began.

"Are you?" Darton asked grimly, as he dropped the other's hand after a brief, strong grip and a quick, hard stare straight into the real-estate man's eyes.

Behind him Colden's fingers snapped loudly, and in the detective's voice came a simple, heartfelt:

"Damn it!"

"Why damn it?" Darton asked curiously. "*You're* not wise?"

"I'm so wise that—" Colden broke off with a bitter little laugh.

The fingers snapped again, and Street stared from one to the other.

"Well—what's *this?*" he inquired.

"It's only that I've come to see you on business, old man," Darton said quietly.

"Business?"

"My business, you know."

"Police business?" Street asked wonderingly.

"Yes, and I've come to see you!" Darton said quickly, and his hard eyes bored straight into the real-estate man. "It's about the murder of this John Dobson, up in Westchester."

CHAPTER V.

When Evidence Piled High.

IT was the first time that Howard Street had heard Colden sigh. In fact, he recalled suddenly several dissertations of the detectives on the sigh as a promoter of disaster in general; and now, at this long, whistling, trembling exhalation of breath, which might well have indicated that hope had left the world altogether, Street turned and laughed outright, with:

"What's wrong, Dick? Darton hasn't come for me, you know!"

"Hasn't he?" Colden muttered as he turned away.

"Well—God bless my soul! I—" Street shouted in utter amazement, as he faced the officer. "You—"

"Listen!" Darton held up a commanding hand. "First of all, keep cool. I *had* to come—you understand that. And it was better me than somebody else, wasn't it?"

"Better you—than—" Street stutted.

"Certainly! We're friends, Street, and I flagged the job quick, because I wanted it for your sake. I—"

"Darton!" Colden burst out. "Is there a warrant—"

The officer grinned queerly.

"Do you mean, have I come for him this trip?"

"Yes!"

"No!" The grin broadened. "Do you think I'd walk in on as good a friend as Street's been to me, when there are telephones working day and night to—"

"I understand," Colden said, with a sigh of relief.

"Well, I *don't*!" Street gasped as breath returned to him. "Does this mean, Darton, d-does it actually mean that—that I'm suspected of murdering the poor devil?"

"Street, if you've made part of your money winning these here guessing contests, I don't wonder at it," Darton said dryly. "You're good!"

"But—" The thunderstruck glaze left Street's eyes, and his head went back in a mirthless laugh. "That's positively the most ridiculous thing I ever heard in all my life."

"Is it?" asked Darton soberly. "Why?"

"Because—what time did it happen?" Street demanded angrily.

"About ten o'clock."

"Well, I was in Philadelphia!" the real-estate man snapped. "And by George, I hate to knock a good friend, but that's about the limit of you people's intelligence!"

"Ah?" said Darton, without emotion.

"Yes," Mr. Street cried, cooling slowly. "I don't know how the thing got into the hands of the New York police, but it's a swell comment on their methods that, while the murderer is probably somewhere over the Canadian border on the trucks of a freight, you come here and tell the dead man's—*bosh!*"

He sat down and smiled disgustedly at Colden. Colden looked away in complete silence. He turned to Darton, and the officer smiled faintly.

"Done, Street?" he asked calmly.

"Quite!"

"Will you answer some questions?"

"Of course—that is, if they don't relate to Dobson's private business."

"Have no fears on that score," Darton said dryly as he pursed his lips for a moment and considered his half-smoked cigar. "Street, you really were in Philadelphia?"

"Certainly," growled the real-estate man.

"Where?"

Street gave Marchand's address.

"With whom?"

"Theodore Marchand, of course."

"The millionaire, eh?"

"Yes."

"What time were you there—last night, I mean?"

"All night."

"Early evening, too?"

"Yes."

"And until this morning?" Darton frowned.

"Certainly."

Several seconds the police officer considered him thoughtfully; and he ended with a little sigh of relief.

"I'm glad of it," he said candidly. "What's Marchand's telephone number?"

"I don't know, and it doesn't matter. He's gone away."

"Where?"

"To Europe."

"Well, his servants saw you, of course? That's his home?"

"It is his home, but his servants were not around last night. They had been dismissed. The house is closed for the summer and fall."

"But *somebody* else was there?"

"Henry Kenton."

"The millionaire, too?"

"The same," Street grinned.

"Well, you keep elevated company, anyhow," Darton observed. "Kenton has a New York office, hasn't he?"

"He has, but he's not there."

"Why not?" asked Darton sharply.

"Because he went South, somewhere or other, last night."

"Well, *where*?"

"I haven't an idea, Darton."

"Well, who else was in the house during the evening?"

"Nobody."

"Not a soul?" the police detective asked, looking up sharply.

"Not a soul."

"So that Kenton, who is away, and Marchand, who is away, are the only two people who saw you last evening inside the house?"

"Exactly."

"Well, who saw you outside of the house, then?"

"Nobody, Darton. I didn't leave it. Marchand and I were working together until three this morning."

"And *that's* why you look so like the devil, is it?" Darton asked curiously.

"Very likely."

Again the officer looked him over, and there was no impenetrable veil over Darton's mental processes. He was weighing the answers in the coldest and most impersonal way; and perhaps the result of the weighing was indicated by the faint shrug of his shoulders as he asked with dwindling interest:

"Marchand sailed this morning?"

"He did."

"What boat?"

Street named it and, uneasily, watched the detective jot it down and renew his unwavering stare; and it seemed to the real-estate man that a new quality had come into the stare. A moment back it had held a faint grin. Now the grin was altogether gone, and Darton's steady eyes might have meant anything or nothing at all.

"I don't like it!" he muttered.

"Don't like what?" Street asked.

"The color of the moon on a night like this, Street," Darton said lucidly. "You don't mind a thousand more questions?"

"I don't mind a million, if they'll ease you, Darton," the real-estate man answered grimly.

"We'll begin, then. Street, did you ever have any trouble with Dobson?"

"What sort of trouble?"

"Any sort—violent arguments, disputes about money or anything else?"

"We've had a good many warm discussions, first and last, but nothing that could well be called violent—if you mean physical violence, Darton."

"Well, that's exactly what I mean," the officer said quickly. "Did you ever have any really angry sessions?"

Street scratched his chin.

"Um—no."

"Sure?"

"Quite."

"He never threatened you in any way?"

"Of course not."

"And still, he had a pretty violent temper and an active tongue?"

"He's dead now, but—yes."

"And so, by the same token, Street," Darton rambled on easily, "in one or another of these energetic talks, you never threatened *him*?"

"I never did," Street replied, with a dry smile. "I don't know how you treat your customers in the police business, but in real-estate circles it isn't considered etiquette to blackguard a man who's worth seven or eight hundred dollars a month to one."

"Very likely not," said Darton, as he leaned back and gazed at the ceiling through a cloud of cigar-smoke, "and still I fancy that you're independent enough to speak your mind, money or no money, if you were roused."

"Maybe," laughed Street.

He, too, leaned back and sighed wearily. Darton seemed to have finished his rather senseless examination, for he murmured:

"It was nasty last night, wasn't it?"

"What?"

"Chilly for the end of May—rainy."

"Yes."

"Did you wear an overcoat?" the detective asked.

"I took one with me."

"What kind of a coat?"

"A plain, ordinary spring overcoat, bought three years ago for thirty-two dollars and fifty cents, ready-made, and still doing excellent service," Street answered patiently.

"What color?"

"Black."

"Black?" Darton looked at him suddenly.

"As black as pitch!"

"And not brown?"

"Certainly not."

"But you own a brown overcoat,

Street—a long, loose brown overcoat?"

"I've got an old raincoat that answers that general description," the real-estate man said in some astonishment. "Why?"

"When did you wear it last?"

"Oh—weeks ago, Darton. I don't remember when."

"Well, you're an aristocrat, owning two overcoats like that!" Darton grinned. "You seem to have a lot of clothes, Street. Do you mind telling me some more about them?"

"Darton," said the other wearily, "all the clothes I own are in that closet, that wardrobe, and that dresser. If you'll let me lie down and doze while you do it, I give you full and free permission to dig out every rag I possess and examine it under a high-power microscope."

"I'd rather have you tell me about 'em," the detective droned on, lazily and persistently. "I'd like to hear about your shoes now."

"Well?" Street stared at him.

"Do you own a high-heeled pair?"

"Eh? I've got a pair of hunting-boots with pretty high heels—yes. I bought 'em down South three or four years ago. Why?"

"Wear them last night, Street?"

"I haven't had them on since last fall."

"Um-um?" Darton nodded. A little space, he seemed to look past the other; and then: "Street, you're *sure* that you never threatened Dobson in any way?"

"Absolutely!"

"In any way?"

Street sat up with a scowl.

"Look here, Darton; there's a limit to everything, and you've reached the limit of this cross-examination. I'm not lying, you know. I don't do it, in the first place; and, in the second, there's nothing here to lie about. Ask me a question once, and I'll tell you the truth; but don't go on asking the same thing over and over and over again!"

The detective grinned a little.

"All right. I won't," he said. "Street, do you carry a gun?"

"I do not."

"Never tote a pistol with you?"

"Never!"

"Well, do you mind if I browse around the room here for a little among your intimate possessions? You've a perfect right to forbid it, you know."

"Why on earth should I want to forbid it?" Street asked wonderingly. "There is nothing here that you're not at liberty to examine, except the contents of that desk."

"What's in there?"

"Private papers that have no connection with you, Dobson, or anything else except confidential matters of my clients!" Street rapped out.

"Be calm—no finger shall be laid on 'em!" chuckled Darton as he rose.

Colden, standing by the window, looked squarely at him for an instant and, picking up a magazine, sat down with a thud. Street, looking from one to the other with weary disgust, saw the police officer saunter toward his clothes closet and snorted.

And then he ceased to snort, and his eyes opened, for Darton had not been in there half a minute when his face appeared around the corner of the door, and he inquired rather huskily:

"One more query, Street! What kind of soil do they have around Dobson's place?"

"Clay, mostly."

"What color?"

"Redder than sin, what I've seen."

"And you haven't worn those boots recently, Street?"

"No!" shouted the real-estate man.

"Then—" The officer disappeared—and reappeared again, just recovering from a quick stoop. He walked directly to Howard Street and dropped a pair of boots on the floor before him; and: "Hell, old man! Use a little common sense with your lying!"

He pointed silently at the high boots. He picked one up then and held it directly before Street's face—and a gasp escaped the real-estate man. They

were, indeed, his own. And they were soaking wet even now. And the high heels, and even an inch of shoe above them, were coated thickly with half dry, brilliantly red clay.

"Why—I—" he stammered.

"Think it over. Don't do any more talking just now!" Darton snapped. "Things seem to have reached a point where I may have to use whatever you say, you know. Just a moment."

He strode back to the closet muttering angrily, and fumbled about noisily. He strode into view again, and this time his eyes shone unwilling triumph; and he held up a long brown overcoat, hastily slung on a hanger, and with back and sleeves and shoulders still nearly black with the soaking they had recently received.

Street started to his feet and reached for the thing; and Darton snatched it back, even as he cried:

"You'll have to keep your hands off, Street, until I've looked it over." He whisked the thing a yard or two farther from the real-estate man and ran his hands rapidly over the pockets; and Darton's face clouded the more, and he snapped:

"Upon my word, Street! I've always known that you were a pretty solid, unimaginative sort of cuss; but I'm beginning to believe that either you're a downright fool or you've sized me up for one."

"What!"

"Keep back, and get down to the truth! Don't you carry a revolver?"

"I do not! I—"

"Then, what's this?" snarled the detective lieutenant, as he reached into the side pocket of the brown overcoat and held up—not the battered old cigar-case which Street remembered as having occupied that particular pocket, but a heavy, glittering revolver.

Mouth open, eyes bulging, he stared at the thing, from the gleaming muzzle to the big, flashy pearl handle; and in the end his knees weakened suddenly, and he dropped back to the couch with:

"Well—"

"The same meaning that you never thought I'd really look for the things, eh?" Darton asked shortly, as he tossed the coat to a chair and looked hard at the revolver. "If there's one exploded cartridge in this thing and four good ones—" he muttered.

And his fingers had picked open the action, and his sharp eyes were looking at the percussion-caps of the brass shells. Four showed smooth and new; the fifth had been struck squarely by the hammer of the gun. A growl, and the detective emptied the cylinder on Street's table. Four sinister gray bullets poked from four shining cartridges; out of the fifth chamber came an empty brazen cylinder, powder-stained and begrimed.

Darton, replacing them carefully, dropped the pistol into his pocket and faced his friend with a bitter smile.

"Now, do you want to hand me a straight line of talk?" he demanded.

"But I—I have done that! I—I—" Street stammered.

"Look here!" The detective's voice rose to a shout, and his fist came down on the table with a slam that sent two or three books to the floor. "I've got a little bit of intelligence, Street! I couldn't hold down my job without some brief lucid spells now and then, you know. You may have nerve enough to sit there and lie to me, and think you're getting away with it; and I may feel sort of inclined to believe you—when it's only a matter of questions and answers. But—by Heaven! When it comes to a pile of real, actual, material evidence like this, even you must have sense enough to see—"

"I've sense enough to tell you that I don't know anything about it!" the real-estate man cried wildly. "How that coat comes to be wet—how those shoes—"

"But good Lord, Howard! The pistol—" Colden broke in, in agonized protest. "He's found that and—"

"And that's the first time in my life

a pistol was ever in a pocket of mine!" Street thundered. "I know no more about—"

"All right!" Darton interrupted sternly. "We'll let it go at that, and we won't yell until the hotel management sends up to find what the trouble is. Just one thing more, Street—and by this time you may know enough to tell the truth, first time. *Did you, or did you not, threaten Dobson?*"

"I did not!"

"Did you tell him that you intended to call on him last night?"

"Most certainly not! I never had such an idea in my head!"

The detective lieutenant's eyes blazed anger for a second or two. He snarled aloud and felt in his coat-pocket—and he tossed upon the table a folded letter-sheet.

"Well—you confounded fool!" he said impatiently. "Read that, and don't try to tear it!" He slapped the bewildered man's shoulder sharply and pointed at the thing. "*Read it!*"

He flipped the sheet open; and Street's lips, parted for savage protest, closed suddenly.

Because, for one thing, the letter was written on his own private stationery—the sort he used at home and never at the office; the sort with "Howard Street" and the name of the hotel engraved at the top. For another, the letter had been written day before yesterday, and he had not used a sheet of that paper for a week or more.

But more dreadful than all was the text itself; and Howard Street's knees bent under him, and with a suppressed groan he dropped into a chair and stared at the hastily written lines:

DONSON:

Lawrence Wilder is here in New York with me. We shall wait at this hotel for you until six to-morrow. If you have not appeared, ready to settle your score in full, we shall call upon you in the evening to collect. You know what that means in Wilder's country. *Your end is at hand!*

H. STREET.

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

THE SHADOW*

A SERIAL

BY ARTHUR STRINGER

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS

"NEVER-FAIL, BLAKE," the second deputy, is sent after a notorious bank robber named Connie Binhart, who had long been successful in eluding arrest. The move appears to be a plot on the part of certain officials higher up to oust Blake from the department, the famous detective of the old school, and believer in the third-degree treatment being an impediment in their way. They trust to his fame for clinging to his quarry to keep him away while certain departmental changes come about which will result in his downfall. He starts for Montreal on a false scent thrown him through the medium of Elsie Verriner, an old sweetheart of Blake's, and a woman with a "record." The latter becomes a valuable implement in the hands of the officials in furthering their scheme.

CHAPTER V.

The Trail Warms Up.

NEVER-FAIL, BLAKE, at the news that Binhart had slipped through the fingers of the Montreal officials, had a moment when he saw red. All that these people knew was that the man they were tailing had bought a ticket for Winnipeg, that he was not in Montreal, and that, beyond the railway ticket, they had no trace of him. Blake felt, during that moment, like a drum-major who had "muffed" his baton on parade. Then, recovering himself, he promptly confirmed the Teal operative's report by telephone, accepted its confirmation as authentic, consulted a time-table, and made a dash for Windsor Station. There he caught the Winnipeg express, took possession of a stateroom, and indited carefully worded telegrams to Trimble, in Vancouver, that all outgoing Pacific steamers should be watched, and to Menzler, in Chicago, that the American city might be covered in case of Binhart's doubling

southward on him. Still another telegram he sent to New York, requesting the police department to send on to him at once a photograph of Binhart.

In Winnipeg, two days later, Blake found himself on a blind trail. When he had talked with a railway detective on whom he could rely, when he had visited certain offices and interviewed certain officials, when he had sought out two or three women acquaintances in the city's sequestered area, he faced the bewildering discovery that he was still without an actual clue of the man he was supposed to be shadowing.

It was then that something deep within his nature whispered its first faint doubt to him. This doubt persisted even when, late that night, a Teal Agency operative wired him from Calgary, stating that a man answering Binhart's description had just left a certain hotel for Banff. To this latter point Blake promptly wired a fuller description of his man, had an officer posted to inspect every alighting passenger, and early the next morning received a telegram, asking for still more particulars.

* This story began in *The Cavalier* for September 21.

He peered down at this message, vaguely depressed in spirit, discarding theory after theory, tossing aside contingency after contingency. And up from this gloomy shower slowly emerged one of his "hunches," one of his vague impressions, coming blindly to the surface very much like an earth-worm crawling forth after a fall of rain.

There was something wrong. Of that he felt certain. He could not place it or define it. To continue westward would be to depend too much on an uncertainty; it would involve the risk of wandering too far from the center of things. He suddenly decided to double on his tracks and swing down to Chicago. Just why he felt as he did he could not fathom. But the feeling was there. It was an instinctive propulsion, a "hunch." These hunches were to him, working in the dark, as he was compelled to, very much what whiskers are to a cat. They could not be called an infallible guide. But they at least kept him from colliding with impregnabilities.

Acting on this hunch, as he called it, he caught a train for Minneapolis, transferred to an express, and without loss of time sped southward. When, thirty hours later, he alighted in the heart of Chicago, he found himself in an environment more to his liking, more adaptable to his ends.

He was not disheartened by his failure. He did not believe in luck, in miracles, or even in coincidence. But experience had taught him the bewildering extent of the resources which he might command. So intricate and so wide-reaching were the secret wires of his information that he knew he could wait, like a spider at the center of its web, until the betraying vibration awakened some far-reaching thread of that web. In every corner of the country lurked a non-professional ally, a secluded tipster, ready to report to Blake when the call for a report came. The world, that great detective had found, was indeed a small one. From its scattered four

corners, into which his subterranean wires of espionage stretched, would in time, come some inkling, some hint, some discovery. And, at the converging center of those wires, Blake was able to sit and wait, like the central operator at a telephone switchboard, knowing that the tentacles of attention were creeping and wavering about dim territories, and that in time they would render up their awaited word.

In the mean time, Blake himself was by no means idle. It would not be from official circles, he knew, that his redemption would come. Time had already proved that. For months past every police chief in the country had held his description of Binhart. That was a fact which Binhart himself very well knew; and knowing that, he would continue to move as he had been moving, with the utmost secrecy, or at least protected by some adequate disguise.

It would be from the underworld that the echo would come. And next to New York, Blake knew, Chicago would make as good a central exchange for this underworld as could be desired. Knowing that city of the middle West, and knowing it well, he at once "went down the line," making his rounds stolidly and systematically, first visiting a West Side faro-room and casually interviewing the "stools" of Custom House Place and South Clark Street, then dropping in at the Café Acropolis, in Halsted Street, and lodging-houses in even less savory quarters. He duly canvassed every likely dive, every "melina," every gambling-house and yegg hang-out. He engaged in leisurely games of pool with stone-getters and gopher men. He visited bucket-shops and barrooms, and dingy little Ghetto cafés. He "buzzed" tipsters and floaters and mouth-pieces. He fraternized with till-tappers and single-drillers. He always made his inquiries after Binhart seem accidental, a case apparently subsidiary to two or three others which he kept always to the foreground.

He did not despair over the discovery that no one seemed to know of Bin-

hart or his movements. He merely waited his time, and extended new ramifications into newer territory. His word still carried its weight of official authority. There was still an army of obsequious underlings compelled to respect his wishes. It was merely a matter of time and mathematics. Then the law of averages would ordain its end; the needed card would ultimately be turned up, the right dial twist would at last complete the right combination.

The first faint glimmer of life, in all those seemingly dead wires, came from a gambler named Mattie Sherwin, who reported that he had met Binhart, two weeks before, in the café of the Brown Palace in Denver. He was traveling under the name of Bannerman, wore his hair in a pompadour, and had grown a beard.

Blake took the first train out of Chicago for Denver. In this latter city an Elks' convention was supplying blue-bird weather for underground "hay-makers," busy with bunco-steering, "rushing" street-cars and "lifting leathers." Before the stampede at the news of his approach, he picked up Biff Edwards and Lefty Stivers, put on the screws, and learned nothing. He went next to Glory McShane, a Market Street acquaintance indebted for certain old favors, and from her, too, learned nothing of moment. He continued the quest in other quarters, and the results were equally discouraging.

Then began the real detective work about which, Blake knew, newspaper stories were seldom written. This work involved a laborious and monotonous examination of hotel registers, a canvassing of ticket agencies and cab-stands and transfer companies. It was anything but story-book sleuthing. It was a dispiriting tread-mill round, but he was still sifting doggedly through the tailings of possibilities when a code-wire came from St. Louis, saying Binhart had been seen the day before at the Planters' Hotel.

Blake was east-bound on his way to St. Louis one hour after the receipt of

this wire. And an hour after his arrival in St. Louis he was engaged in an apparently care-free and leisurely game of pool with one Loony Ryan, an old-time "box man" who was allowed to roam with a clipped wing in the form of a suspended indictment. Loony, for the liberty thus doled out to him, rewarded his benefactors by an occasional indulgence in the "pigeon-act."

"Draw for lead?" asked Blake.

"Sure," said Loony.

Blake pushed his ball to the top cushion, won the draw, and broke.

"Seen anything of Wolf Yonkholm?" he casually inquired, as he turned to chalk his cue. But his eye, with one quick sweep, had made sure of every face in the room.

Loony studied the balls for a second or two. Wolf was a "dip" with an international record.

"Last time I saw Wolf he was out at Frisco, workin' the beaches," was Loony's reply.

Blake ventured an inquiry or two about other worthies of the underworld. The players went on with their game, placid, self-immured, matter-of-fact.

"Where's Angel McGlory these days?" asked Blake, as he reached over to place a ball.

"What's she been doin'?" demanded Loony, with his cue on the rail.

"She's traveling with a bank sneak named Blanchard or Binhart," explained Blake. "And I want her."

Loony Ryan made his stroke.

"Hep Roony saw Binhart this mornin', beatin' it for N' Orleans. But he wasn't travelin' wit' any moll that Hep spoke of."

Blake made his shot, chalked his cue again, and glanced down at his watch. His eyes were on the green baize, but his thoughts were elsewhere.

"I got 'o leave you, Wolf," he announced as he put his cue back in the rack. He spoke slowly and calmly. But Wolf's quick gaze circled the room, promptly checking over every face between the four walls.

"What's up?" he asked. "Who'd you spot?"

"Nothing, Wolf, nothing! But this game o' yours blamed near made me forget an appointment o' mine!"

Twenty minutes after he had left the bewildered Wolf Ryan in the pool-parlor he was in a New Orleans sleeper, southward bound. He knew that he was getting within striking distance of Binhart, at last. The zest of the chase took possession of him. The trail was no longer a "cold" one. He knew which way Binhart was headed. And he knew he was not more than a day behind his man.

CHAPTER VI.

And Leads Westward.

THE moment Blake arrived in New Orleans he shut himself in a telephone booth, called up six somewhat startled acquaintances, learned nothing to his advantage, and went quickly but quietly to the leading hotel. There he closeted himself with two dependable "elbows," started his detectives on a round of the hotels, and himself repaired to the Levee district, where he held offhanded and ponderously facetious conversations with certain unsavory characters. Then came a visit to certain equally unsavory wharf-rats and a call or two on South Rampart Street. But still no inkling of Binhart or his intended movements came to the detective's ears.

It was not until the next morning, as he stepped into Antoine's, on St. Louis Street, just off the Rue Royal, that anything of importance occurred. The moment he entered that bare and cloistral restaurant where Monsieur Jules could dish up such startling uncloistral dishes, his eyes fell on Abe Sheiner, a drum snuffer with whom he had had previous and somewhat painful encounters. Sheiner, it was plain to see, was in clover, for he was breakfasting regally, on squares of toast covered with shrimp and picked crab meat

creamed, a bisque of cray-fish and *papa-bottes* in ribbons of bacon, to say nothing of fruit and *bruilleau*.

Blake insisted on joining his old friend Sheiner, much to the latter's secret discomfiture. It was obvious that the drum snuffer, having made a recent haul, would be amenable to persuasion. And, like all yeggs, he was an upholder of the "mocassin telegraph," a wanderer and a carrier of stray tidings as to the movements of others along the undergrooves of the world.

So while Blake breakfasted on shrimp and crab meat and French artichokes stuffed with caviar and anchovies, he intimated to the uneasy-minded Sheiner certain knowledge as to a certain recent coup. In the face of this charge Sheiner indignantly claimed that he had only been playing the ponies and having a run of green-horn's luck.

"Abe, I've come down to gather you in," announced the calmly mendacious detective. He continued to sip his *bruilleau* with fraternal unconcern.

"You got nothing on me, Jim," protested the other, losing his taste for the delicacies arrayed about him.

"Well, we got 'o go down to headquarters and talk that over," calmly persisted Blake.

"What's the use of pounding me, when I'm on the square again?"

"That's the line o' talk they all hand out. That's what Connie Binhart said when we had it out up in St. Louis."

"Did you bump into Binhart in St. Louis?"

"We had a talk, three days ago."

"Then why'd he blow through this town as though he had a regiment o' bulls and singed cats behind him?"

Blake's heart went down like an elevator with a broken cable. But he gave no outward sign of this inward commotion.

"Because he wants to get down to Colon before the passenger-boat hits the port," ventured Blake. "His moll's aboard!"

"But he blew out for Frisco this morning," contended the puzzled Sheiner. "Shot through as though he'd just had a rumble!"

"Oh, he *said* that, but he went South, all right."

"Then he went in an oyster-sloop. There's nothing sailing from this port to-day."

"Well, what's Binhart got to do with our trouble, anyway? What I want—"

"But I saw him start," persisted the other. "He ducked for a day-coach and said he was traveling for his health. And he sure looked like a man in a hurry!"

Blake sipped his *brulleau*, glanced casually at his watch, and took out a cigar and lighted it. He blinked contentedly across the table at the man he was "buzzing." The trick had been turned. The word had been given. He knew that Binhart was headed westward again. He also knew that Binhart had awakened to the fact that he was being followed, that his feverish movements were born of a stampeding fear of capture.

Yet Binhart was not a coward. Flight, in fact, was his only resource. It was only the low-brow criminal, Blake knew, who ran for a hole and hid in it until he was dragged out. The more intellectual type of offender preferred the open.

And Binhart was of this type. He was suave and artful; he was active bodied and experienced in the ways of the world. What counted still more, he was well heeled with money. Just how much he had planted away after the Newcomb coup no one knew. But no one denied that it was a fortune. It was ten to one that Binhart would now try to get out of the country. He would make his way to some territory without an extradition treaty. He would look for a land where he could live in peace, where his ill-gotten wealth would make exile endurable.

Blake, as he smoked his cigar and turned these thoughts over in his mind,

could afford to smile. There would be no peace and no rest for Connie Binhart; he himself would see to that. And he would "get" his man; whether it was in a week's time or a month's time, he would get his man and take him back in triumph to New York. He would show Copeland and the commissioner and the world in general that there was still a little life in the old dog, that there was still a haul or two he could make.

So engrossing were these thoughts that Blake scarcely heard the drum snuffer across the table from him, protesting the innocence of his ways and the purity of his intentions. Then, for the second time that morning, Blake completely bewildered him, by suddenly accepting those protestations and agreeing to let everything drop. It was necessary, of course, to warn Sheiner, to exact a promise of better living. But Blake's interest in the man had already departed. He dropped him from his scheme of things, once he had yielded up his data. He tossed him aside like a sucked orange, a smoked cigar, a burnt-out match. Binhart, in all the movements of all the stellar system, was the one name and the one man that interested him.

Loony Sheiner was still sitting at that table in Antoine's when Blake, having wired his messages to San Pedro and San Francisco, caught the first train out of New Orleans. As he sped across the face of the world, crawling nearer and nearer the Pacific coast, no thought of the magnitude of that journey oppressed him. His imagination remained untouched. He neither fretted nor fumed at the time this travel was taking.

In spite of the electric fans at each end of his Pullman, it is true, he suffered greatly from the heat, especially during the ride across the Arizona desert. He accepted it without complaint, stolidly thanking his lucky stars that men weren't still traveling across America's deserts by ox-team. He was glad when he reached the Colorado

River and wound up into California, leaving the alkali and sage-brush and yucca palms of the Mojave well behind him. He was glad in his placid way when he reached his hotel in San Francisco and washed the grit and grime from his heat-nettled body.

But once that body had been bathed and fed, he started on his rounds of the underworld, seined the entire harbor front without effect, and then set out his night-lines as cautiously as a fisherman in forbidden waters. He did not overlook the shipping offices and railway stations, neither did he neglect the hotels and ferries. Then he quietly lunched at Martenelli's with the much-honored but most-uncomfortable Wolf Yonkholm, who promptly suspended his "dip" operations at the beaches out of respect to Blake's sudden call.

Nothing of moment, however, was learned from the startled Wolf, and at Coppa's six hours later, Blake dined with a chink smuggler named Goldie Hopper. Goldie, after his fifth glass of wine and an adroit decoying of the talk along the channels which most interested his portly host, casually announced that an Eastern crook named Blanchard had got away, the day before, on a certain mail steamer. He was clean-shaven and traveled as a clergyman. That struck Goldie as the height of humor, a bank sneak having the nerve to deck himself out as a gospel-spieler.

His elucidation of it, however, brought no answering smile from the diffident-eyed Blake, who confessed that he was rounding up a couple of nickel-coiners and would be going East in a day or two.

Instead of going East, however, he hurriedly consulted maps and timetables, found a train that would land him in Portland in twenty-six hours, and started North. He could eventually save time, he found, by hastening on to Seattle and catching a steamer from that port. When a hot-box held his train up for over half an hour, Blake stood with his timepiece in his

hand, watching the train-crew in their efforts to "freeze the hub." They continued to lose time during the night. At Seattle, when he reached the docks, he found that his steamer had sailed two hours before he stepped from his sleeper.

His one remaining resource was a steamer from Victoria. This, he figured out, would get him to Hong-Kong even earlier than the steamer which he had already missed. He had a hunch that Hong-Kong was the port he wanted. Just why, he could not explain. But he felt sure that Binhart would not drop off at Manila. Once on the run, he would keep out of American quarters. It was a gamble; it was a rough guess. But then all life was that. And Blake had a dogged and inarticulate faith in his "hunches."

Crossing the Sound, he reached Victoria in time to see the ship under way, and heading out to sea. Blake hired a tug and overtook her. He reached the steamer's deck by means of a Jacob's-ladder that swung along her side-plates like a mason's plumb-line along a factory wall.

Binhart, he told himself, was by this time in the mid-Pacific, untold miles away, heading for that vast and mysterious East into which a man could so easily disappear. He was approaching gloomy and tangled waterways that threaded between islands which could not even be counted. He was fleeing toward dark rivers which led off through barbaric and mysterious silence, into the heart of darkness. He was drawing nearer and nearer to those regions of mystery where a white man might be swallowed up as easily as a rice grain is lost in a shore lagoon. He would soon be in those teeming alien cities as underburrowed as a gopher village.

But Blake did not despair. Their whole barbaric East, he told himself, was only a Chinatown slum on a large scale. And he had never yet seen the slum that remained forever impervious to the right drag-net. He did not know

how or where the end would be. But he knew there would be an end. He still hugged to his bosom the placid conviction that the world was small, that somewhere along the frontiers of watchfulness the impact would be recorded and the alarm would be given.

A man of Binhart's type, with the money Binhart had, would never divorce himself completely from civilization. He would always crave a white man's world; he would always hunger for what that world stood for and represented. He would always creep back to it. He might hide in his heathen burrow, for a time; but there would be a limit to that exile. A power stronger than his own will would drive him back to his own land, back to civilization. And civilization, to Blake, was merely a rather large and rambling house equipped with a rather efficient burglar-alarm system, so that each time it was entered, early or late, the telltale summons would eventually go to the right quarter. And when the summons came Blake would be waiting for it.

CHAPTER VII.

To the Orient.

IT was by wireless that Blake made what efforts he could to confirm his suspicions that Binhart had not dropped off at any port of call between San Francisco and Hong-Kong. In due time the reply came back to "Bishop MacKishnie" that the Rev. Caleb Simpson had safely landed at Hong-Kong, and was about to leave for the mission field in the interior.

The so-called bishop, sitting in the wireless-room, received this much relayed message with mixed feelings. He proceeded to send out three secret service code-despatches to Shanghai, Amoy, and Hong-Kong, which, being picked up by a German cruiser, were worried over and argued over and finally referred back to an intelligence bureau for explanation.

But at Yokohama, Blake hurried ashore in a sampan, met an agent who seemed to be awaiting him, and caught a train for Kobe. He hurried on, indifferent to the beauties of the country through which he wound, unimpressed by the oddities of the civilization with which he found himself confronted. His mind, intent on one thing, seemed unable to react to the stimuli of side-issues. From Kobe he caught a steamer for Nagasaki and Shanghai. This steamer, he found, lay over at the former port for thirteen hours, so he shifted again to an outbound boat headed for Woosung.

It was not until he was on the tender, making the hour-long run from Woosung up the Whangpoo to Shanghai itself, that he seemed to emerge from his half-cataleptic indifference to his environment. He began to realize that he was at last in the Orient.

As they wound up the river past sharp-nosed and round-hooded sampans, and archaic Chinese battle-ships and sea-going junks and gunboats flying their unknown foreign flags, Blake at last began to realize that he was in a new world. The very air smelled exotic; the very colors, the tints of the sails, the hues of clothing, the forms of things, land and sky itself—all were different. This depressed him only vaguely. He was too intent on the future, on the task before him, to give his surroundings much thought.

Blake had entirely shaken off this vague uneasiness, in fact, when twenty minutes after landing he found himself in a red-brick hotel known as The Astor, and guardedly shaking hands with an incredulously thin and sallow-faced man of about forty. Although this man spoke with an English accent and exile seemed to have foreigneered him in both appearance and outlook, his knowledge of America was active and intimate. He passed over to the detective two despatches in cipher, handed him a confidential list of Hong-Kong addresses, gave him certain information as to Macao, and an

hour later conducted him down the river to the steamer which started that night for Hong-Kong.

As Blake trod that steamer's deck and plowed on through strange seas, surrounded by strange faces, intent on his strange chase, no sense of vast adventure entered his soul. No appreciation of a great hazard bewildered his emotions. The kingdom of romance dwells in the heart, in the heart roomy enough to house it. And Blake's heart was taken up with more material things. He was preoccupied with his new list of addresses, with his new lines of procedure, with the men he must interview and the dives and clubs and bazaars he must visit. He had his day's work to do, and he intended to do it.

The result was that of Hong-Kong he carried away no immediate personal impression, beyond a vague jumble, in the background of consciousness, of Buddhist temples and British red-jackets, of stately parks and granite buildings, of mixed nationalities and native theaters, of anchored war-ships and a floating city of house-boats.

For it was the same hour that he landed in this orderly and strangely English city that the discovery he was drawing close to Binhart again swept clean the slate of his emotions. The response had come from a consulate secretary. One wire in all his sentinel network had proved a live one. Binhart was not in Hong-Kong, but he had been seen in Macao; he was known to be still there. And beyond that there was little that Never-Fail Blake cared to know.

His one side movement in Hong-Kong was to purchase an American revolver, for it began to percolate even through his indurated sensibilities that he was at last in a land where his name might not be sufficiently respected and his office sufficiently honored. For the first time in seven long years he packed a gun, he condescended to go heeled. Yet no minutest tingle of excitement spread through his lethargic body as he

examined this gun, carefully loaded it, and stowed it away in his wallet-pocket. It meant no more to him than the stowing away of a sandwich against the emergency of a possible lost meal.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Clismas."

BY the time he was on the noon boat that left for Macao, Blake had quite forgotten about the revolver. As he steamed southward over smooth seas, threading a way through boulder-strewn islands and skirting mountainous cliffs, his movements seemed to take on a sense of finality. He stood at the rail, watching the hazy blue islands, the forests of fishing-boats and high-pooped junks floating lazily at anchor, the indolent figures that he could catch glimpses of on deck, the green waters of the China Sea. He watched them with intent, yet abstracted, eyes. Some echo of the witchery of those Eastern waters at times penetrated his own preoccupied soul. A vague sense of his remoteness from his old life at last crept in to him.

He thought of the watching green lights that were flaring up, dusk by dusk, in the shrill New York night, the lamps of the precinct stations, the lamps of headquarters, where the great building was full of moving feet and shifting faces, where telephones were ringing and detectives were coming and going, and policemen in uniform were passing up and down the great stone steps, clean-cut, ruddy-faced, strong-limbed policemen, talking and laughing as they started out on their night details. He could follow them as they went, those confident-striding "flatties" with their ash night-sticks at their side, soldiers without bugles or banner, going out to do the goodly tasks of the law, soldiers of whom he was once the leader, the pride, the man to whom they pointed as the Vidocq of America.

And he would go back to them as

great as ever. He would again compel their admiration. The newspaper boys would again come filing into his office and shake hands with him and smoke his cigars and ask how much he could tell them about his last haul. And he would recount to them how he shadowed Binhart half-way round the world, and gathered him in, and brought him back to justice.

It was three o'clock in the afternoon when Blake's steamer drew near Macao. Against a background of dim blue hills he could make out the green and blue and white of the houses in the Portuguese quarters, guarded on one side by a lighthouse and on the other by a stolid square fort. Swinging around a sharp point, the boat entered the inner harbor, crowded with Chinese craft and coasters and dingy tramps of the sea.

Blake seemed in no hurry to disembark. The sampan into which he stepped, in fact, did not creep up to the shore until evening. There, ignoring the rickshaw coolies who awaited him as he passed an obnoxiously officious trio of customs officers, he disappeared up one of the narrow and slippery side streets of the Chinese quarter.

He followed this street for some distance, assailed by the smell of its mud and rotting sewerage, twisting and turning deeper into the darkness, past dogs and chattering coolies and oil lamps and gaming-house doors. Into one of these gaming houses he turned, passing through the blackwood sliding door and climbing the narrow stairway to the floor above. There, from a small quadrangular gallery, he could look down on the "well" of the fan-tan layout below.

He made his way to a seat at the rail, took out a cigar, lighted it, and let his veiled gaze wander about the place, point by point, until he had inspected and weighed and appraised every man in the building. He continued to smoke, listlessly, like a sightseer with time on his hands and in no mood for movement. The brim of his black boulder

shadowed his eyes. His thumbs rested carelessly in the armholes of his waistcoat. He lounged back torpidly, listening to the drone and clatter of voices below, lazily inspecting each newcomer, pretending to drop off into a doze of ennui. But all the while he was most acutely awake.

For somewhere in that gathering, he knew, there was a messenger awaiting him. Whether he was English or Portuguese, white or yellow, Blake could not say. But from some one there some word or signal was to come.

He peered down at the few white men in the pit below. He watched the man at the head of the carved blackwood table, beside his heap of brass "cash," watched him again and again as he took up his handful of coins, covered them with a brass hat while the betting began, removed the hat, and seemed to be dividing the pile, with the wand in his hand, into fours. The last number of the last four, apparently, was the object of the wagers.

Blake could not understand the game. It puzzled him, just as the yellow men so stoically playing it puzzled him, just as the entire country puzzled him. Yet, obtuse as he was, he felt the gulf of centuries that divided the two races. These yellow men about him seemed as far away from his humanity, as detached from his manner of life and thought, as were the animals he sometimes stared at through the bars of the Bronx Zoo cages.

A white man would have to be pretty far gone, Blake decided, to fall into their ways, to be satisfied with the life of those yellow men. He would have to be a terrible failure, or he would have to be hounded by a terrible fear, to live out his life so far away from his own kind. And he felt now that Binhart could never do it, that a life sentence there would be worse than a life sentence to "stir." So he took another cigar, lighted it, and sat back watching the faces about him.

For no apparent reason, and at no decipherable sign, one of the yellow

faces across the smoke-filled room detached itself from its fellows. This face showed no curiosity, no haste. Blake watched it as it calmly approached him. He watched until he felt a finger against his arm.

"You clum b'long me," was the enigmatic message uttered in the detective's ear.

"Why should I go along with you?" Blake calmly inquired.

"You clum b'long me," reiterated the Chinaman. The finger again touched the detective's arm. "Clismas!"

Blake rose at once. He recognized the code word of "Christmas." This was the messenger he had been awaiting.

He followed the figure down the narrow stairway, through the sliding door, out into the many-odored street, foul with refuse, bisected by its open sewer of filth, took a turning into a still narrower street, climbed a precipitous hill cobbled with stone, turned still again, always overshadowed and hemmed in by tall houses close together, with black-beamed lattice doors through which he could catch glimpses of gloomy interiors. He turned again down a wooden-walled hallway that reminded him of a Mott Street burrow. When the Chinaman touched him on the sleeve he came to a stop.

His guide was pointing to a closed door in front of them.

"You sabby?" he demanded.

Blake hesitated. He had no idea of what was behind that door, but he gathered from the Chinaman's motion that he was to enter. Before he could turn to make further inquiry the Chinaman had slipped away like a shadow.

CHAPTER IX.

An Adventure Incarnadine.

BLAKE stood regarding the door. Then he lifted his revolver from his breast pocket and dropped it into his side pocket, with his hand on the butt. Then, with his left hand, he

quietly opened the door, pushed it back, and as quietly stepped into the room.

On the floor, in the center of a square of orange-colored matting, he saw a white woman sitting. She was drinking tea out of an egg-shell of a cup, and, after putting down the cup, she would carefully massage her lips with the point of her little finger. This movement puzzled the newcomer until he suddenly realized that it was merely to redistribute the rouge on them.

She was dressed in a silk petticoat of almost lemon-yellow and an azure-colored silk bodice that left her arms and shoulders bare to the light that played on them from three small oil-lamps above her. Her feet and ankles were also bare, except for the matting sandals into which her toes were thrust. On one thin arm glimmered an extraordinarily heavy bracelet of gold. Her skin, which was very white, was further albificated by a coat of rice powder. She was startlingly slight. Blake, as he watched her, could see the oval shadows under her collar-bones and the almost girlish meagerness of breast half covered by the azure silk bodice.

She looked up slowly as Blake slowly stepped into the room. Her eyes widened, and she continued to look, with parted lips, as she contemplated the intruder's heavy figure. There was no touch of fear on her face. It was more curiosity, the wilful, wide-eyed curiosity of the child. She even laughed a little as she stared at the intruder. Her rouged lips were tinted a carmine so bright that they looked like a wound across her white face. That gash of color became almost clownlike as it crescented upward with its wayward mirth. Her eyebrows were heavily penciled and the lids of the eyes elongated by a widening point of blue paint. Her bare heel, which she caressed from time to time with fingers whereon the nails were stained pink with henna, was small and clean cut, as clean cut, Blake noticed, as the heel of a razor, while the white calf above it was as thin and flat as a boy's.

"Hello, New York!" she said with her foolish and inconsequential little laugh. Her voice took on an oddly exotic intonation as she spoke. Her teeth were small and white; they reminded Blake of rice, while she repeated the "New York" bubbly, as though she were a child with a newly learned word.

"Hello!" responded the detective, wondering how or where to begin. She made him think of a painted marionette, so maintained were her poses, so unreal was her make-up.

"You're the party who's on the man-hunt," she announced.

"Am I?" equivocated Blake. She had risen to her feet by this time, with monkeylike agility, and showed herself to be much taller than he had imagined. He noticed a knife-scar on her forearm.

"You're after this man called Binhart," she declared.

"Oh, no, I'm not," was Blake's sagacious response. "I don't want Binhart!"

"Then what do you want?"

"I want the money he's got."

The little painted face grew serious; then it became veiled.

"How much money has he?"

"That's what I want to find out!"

She squatted ruminatively down on the edge of her divan. It was low and wide and covered with orange-colored silk.

"Then you'll have to find Binhart!" was her next announcement.

"Maybe!" acknowledged Blake.

"I can show you where he is!"

"All right," was the unperturbed response. The blue-painted eyes were studying him.

"It will be worth four thousand pounds, in English gold," she announced.

"Is that the message Ottenheim told you to give me?" he demanded. His face was red with anger.

"Then three thousand pounds," she calmly suggested, wriggling her toes into a fallen sandal.

Blake did not deign to speak. His inarticulate grunt was one of disgust.

"Then a thousand, in gold," she coyly intimated. She twisted about to pull the strap of her bodice up over her white shoulder-blades. "Or I will kill him for you for two thousand pounds in gold!"

Her eyes were as tranquil as a child's. Blake remembered that he was in a world not his own.

"Why should I want him killed?" he inquired. He looked about for some place to sit. There was not a chair in the room.

"Because he intends to kill you," answered the woman, squatting on the orange-covered divan.

"I wish he'd come and try," Blake devoutly retorted.

"He will not come," she told him. "It will be done from the dark. I could have done it. But Ottenheim said no."

"And Ottenheim said you were to work with me in this," declared Blake, putting two and two together.

The woman shrugged a white shoulder.

"Have you any money?" she asked. She put the question with the artlessness of a child.

"Mighty little," retorted Blake, still studying the woman from where he stood. He was wondering if Ottenheim had the same hold on her that the authorities had on Ottenheim, the ex-forgery who enjoyed his parole only on condition that he remain a stool-pigeon of the high seas. He pondered what force he could bring to bear on her, what power could squeeze from those carmine and childish lips the information he must have.

He knew that he could break that slim body of hers across his knee. But he also knew that he had no way of crushing out of it the truth he sought, the truth he must in some way obtain. The woman still squatted on the divan, peering down at the knife-scar on her arm from time to time, studying it, as though it were an inscription.

Blake was still watching the woman when the door behind him was slowly opened; a head was thrust in, and as quietly withdrawn again. Blake dropped his right hand to his coat-pocket and moved further along the wall, facing the woman. There was nothing of which he stood afraid: he merely wished to be on the safe side.

"Well, what word'll I take back to Ottenheim?" he demanded.

The woman grew serious. Then she showed her ricelike row of teeth as she laughed.

"That means there's nothing in it for me," she complained with pouting-lipped moroseness. Her venality, he began to see, was merely the instinctive acquisitiveness of the savage, the greed of the petted child.

"No more than there is for me," Blake acknowledged. She turned and caught up a heavily flowered mandarin coat of plaited cream and gold. She was thrusting one arm into it when a figure drifted into the room from the matting-hung doorway on Blake's left. As she saw this figure she suddenly flung off the coat and stooped to the tea-tray in the middle of the floor.

Blake saw that the newcomer was a Chinaman. This newcomer, he also saw, ignored him as though he were a door-post, confronting the woman and assailing her with a quick volley of words, of incomprehensible words in the native tongue. She answered with the same clutter and clack of unknown syllables, growing more and more excited as the dialogue continued. Her thin face darkened and changed, her white arms gyrated, the fires of anger burned in the babylike eyes.

She seemed expostulating, arguing, denouncing, and each wordy sally was met by an equally wordy sally from the Chinaman. She challenged and rebuked with her passionately pointed finger; she threatened with angry eyes; she stormed after the newcomer as he passed like a shadow out of the room; she met him with a renewed storm when he returned a moment later.

The Chinaman now stood watching her, impassive and immobile, as though he had taken his stand and intended to stick to it. Blake studied him with calm and patient eyes. That huge-limbed detective in his day had "pounded" too many Christy Street chinks to be in any way intimidated by a queue and a yellow face. He was not disturbed. He was merely puzzled.

Then the woman turned to the mandarin coat, and caught it up, shook it out, and for one brief moment stood thoughtfully regarding it. Then she suddenly turned about on the Chinaman.

Blake, as he stood watching that renewed angry onslaught, paid little attention to the actual words that she was calling out. But as he stood there he began to realize that she was not speaking in Chinese, but in English.

"Do you hear me, white man? Do you hear me?" she cried out, over and over again. Yet the words seemed foolish, for all the time as she uttered them she was facing the placid-eyed Chinaman and gesticulating in his face.

"Don't you see," Blake at last heard her crying, "he doesn't know what I'm saying! He doesn't understand a word of English!" And then, and then only, it dawned on Blake that every word the woman was uttering was intended for his own ears. She was warning him, and all the while pretending that her words were the impetuous words of anger.

"Watch this man!" he heard her cry. "Don't let him know you're listening. But remember what I say, remember it. And God help you if you haven't got a gun."

Blake could see her, as in a dream, assailing the Chinaman with her gestures, advancing on him, threatening him, expostulating with him, but all in pantomime. There was something absurd about it, as absurd as a moving-picture film which carries the wrong text.

"He'll pretend to take you to the man

you want," the woman was panting. "That's what he will say. But it's a lie. He'll take you out to a sampan, to put you aboard Binhart's boat. But the three of them will cut your throat, and then drop you overboard. He's to get so much in gold. Get out of here with him. Let him think you're going. But drop away, somewhere, before you get to the beach. And watch them all the way."

Blake stared at the immobile Chinaman, as though to make sure that the other man had not understood. He was still staring at that impassive yellow face, he was still absorbing the shock of his news, when the outer door opened and a second Chinaman stepped into the room. The newcomer cluttered a quick sentence or two to his countryman, and was still talking when a third figure sidled in.

Those spoken words, whatever they were, seemed to have little effect on any one in the room except the woman. She suddenly sprang about and exploded into an angry shower of denials.

"It's a lie!" she cried in English, storming about the impassive trio. "You never heard me peach! You never heard me say a word! It's a lie!"

Blake strode to the middle of the room, towering above the other figures, dwarfing them by his great bulk, as assured of his mastery as he would have been in a Chatham Square gang-fight.

"What's the row here?" he thundered, knowing from the past that power promptly won its own respect. "What 're you talking about, you two?" He turned from one intruder to another. "And you? And you? What do you want, anyway?"

The three contending figures, however, ignored him as though he were a tobacconist's dummy. They went on with their exotic cackle, as though he was no longer in their midst. They did not so much as turn an eye in his direction. And still Blake felt reasonably sure of his position.

It was not until the woman squeaked like a frightened mouse, and ran whimpering into the corner of the room, that he realized what was happening. He was not familiar with the wrist movement by which the smallest-bodied of the three men was producing a knife from his sleeve. The woman had understood from the first.

"White man, look out!" she half sobbed from her corner. "Oh, white man!" she repeated in a shriller note as the Chinaman, bending low, scuttled across the room to the corner where she cowered.

Blake saw the knife by this time. It was thin and long, for all the world like an icicle, a shaft of cutting steel ground incredibly thin—so thin, in fact, that at first sight it looked more like a point for stabbing than a blade for cutting.

The mere glitter of that knife electrified the staring white man into sudden action. He swung about and tried to catch at the arm that held the steel icicle. He was too late for that, but his fingers closed on the braided queue. By means of this queue he brought the Chinaman up short, swinging him sharply about so that he collided flat-faced with the room wall.

Then, for the first time, Blake grew into a comprehension of what surrounded him. He wheeled about, stooped and caught up the papier-mâché tea-tray from the floor, and once more stood with his back to the wall. He stood there, on guard, for a second figure with a second steel icicle was sidling up to him. He swung viciously out and brought the tea-tray down on the hand that held this knife, crippling the fingers and sending the steel spinning across the room.

Then with his free hand he tugged the revolver from his coat-pocket, holding it by the barrel and bringing the metal butt down on the queue-wound head of the third man, who had no knife, but was struggling with the woman for the metal icicle she had caught up from the floor.

Then the five seemed to close in together, and the fight became general. It became a *mêlée*. With his swinging right arm Blake battered and pounded with his revolver-butt. With his left hand he made cutting strokes with the heavy papier-mâché tea-tray, keeping their steel, by those fierce sweeps, away from his body.

One Chinaman he sent sprawling, leaving him huddled and motionless against the orange-covered divan. The second, stunned by a blow of the tea-tray across the eyes, could offer no resistance when Blake's smashing right dealt its blow, the metal gun-butt falling like a trip-hammer on the shaved and polished skull.

As the white man swung about he saw the third Chinaman with his hand on the woman's throat, holding her flat against the wall, placing her there as a butcher might place a fowl on his block ready for the blow of his carver. Blake stared at the movement, panting for breath, overcome by that momentary indifference wherein a winded athlete permits without protest an adversary to gain his momentary advantage.

Then will triumphed over the weakness of the body. But before Blake could get to the woman's side he saw the Chinaman's loose-sleeved right hand slowly and deliberately ascend. As it reached the meridian of its circular upsweep he could see the woman rise on her toes, rise as though with some quick effort, yet some effort which Blake could not understand.

At the same moment that she did so a look of pained expostulation crept into the staring slant eyes on a level with her own. The yellow jaw gaped, filled with blood, and the poised knife fell at his side, sticking point down in the flooring. The azure and lemon-yellow that covered the woman's body flamed into sudden scarlet.

It was only as the figure with the expostulating yellow face sank to the ground, crumpling up on itself as it fell, that Blake comprehended. That quick sweep of scarlet, effacing the

azure and lemon, had come from the sudden deluge of blood that burst over the woman's body. She had made use of the upstroke, Mexican style. Her knife had cut the full length of the man's abdominal cavity, clean and straight to the breastbone. He had been ripped up like a herring.

Blake panted and wheezed, not at the sight of the blood, but at the exertion to which his flabby muscles had been put. His body was moist with sweat. His asthmatic throat seemed stifling his lungs. A faint nausea crept through him, a dim ventral revolt at the thought that such things could take place so easily, and with so little warning.

His breast still heaved and panted and he was still fighting for breath when he saw the woman stoop and wipe the knife on one of the fallen Chinaman's sleeves.

"We've got to get out of here!" she whimpered, as she caught up the mandarin coat and flung it over her shoulders, for in the struggle her body had been bared almost to the waist. Blake saw the crimson that dripped on her matting slippers and maculated the cream white of the mandarin coat.

"But where's Binhart?" he demanded, as he looked stolidly about for his black boulder.

"Never mind Binhart," she cried, touching the eviscerated body at her feet with one slipper toe, "or we'll get what *he* got!"

"I want that man Binhart!" persisted the detective.

"Not here! Not here!" she cried, folding the loose folds of the cloak closer about her body.

She ran to the matting curtain, looked out, and called back, "Quick! Come quick!" Then she ran back, slipped the bolt in the outer door, and rejoined the waiting detective.

"Oh, white man!" she gasped, as the matting fell between them and the room incarnadined by their struggle. Blake was not sure, but he thought he heard her giggle, hysterically, in the darkness. They were groping their

way along a narrow passage. They slipped through a second door, closed and locked it after them, and once more groped on through the darkness.

How many turns they took, Blake could not remember. She stopped and whispered to him to go softly, as they came to a stairway, as steep and dark as a cistern. Blake, at the top, could smell opium smoke, and once or twice he thought he heard voices. The woman stopped him, with outstretched arms, at the stair head, and together they stood and listened.

Blake, with nerves taut, waited for some sign from her to go on again. He thought she was giving it, when he felt a hand caress his side. He felt it move upward, exploringly. At the same time that he heard her little groan of alarm he knew that the hand was not hers.

He could not tell what the darkness held, but his movement was almost instinctive. He swung out with his great arm, countered on the crouching form in front of him, caught at a writhing shoulder, and tightening his grip, sent the body catapulting down the stairway at his side. He could hear a revolver go off as the body went tumbling and rolling down—Blake knew that it was a gun not his own.

"Come on, white man!" the girl in front of him was crying, as she tugged at his coat. And they went on, now at a run, taking a turn to the right, making a second descent, and then another to the left. They came to still another door, which they locked behind them. Then they scrambled up a ladder, and he could hear her quick hands padding about in the dark. A moment later she had thrust up a hatch. He saw it led to the open air, for the stars were above them.

He felt grateful for that open air, for the coolness, for the sense of deliverance which came with even that comparative freedom.

"Don't stop!" she whispered. And he followed her across the slant of the uneven roof. He was weak for want

of breath. The girl had to catch him and hold him for a moment.

"On the next roof you must take off your shoes," she warned him. "You can rest then. But hurry—hurry!"

He gulped down the fresh air as he tore at his shoe-laces, thrusting each shoe in a side pocket as he started after her. For by this time she was scrambling across the broken sloping roofs, as quick and agile as a cat, dropping over ledges, climbing up barriers, and across coping tiles. Where she was leading him he had not the remotest idea. She reminded him of a cream-tinted monkey in the maddest of steeplechases.

The town seemed to lay to their right. Before them were the scattered lights of the harbor and the mild crescent of the outer bay. They could see the white wheeling finger of some foreign gunboat as its search-light played back and forth in the darkness.

She sighed with weariness and dropped cross-legged down on the coping tiles against which he leaned, regaining his breath. She squatted there, cooingly, like a child exhausted with its evening games.

"I'm dished!" she murmured, as she sat there breathing audibly through the darkness. "I'm dished for this coast!"

He sat down beside her, staring at the search-light. There seemed something reassuring, something authoritative and comforting, in the thought of it watching there in the darkness.

The girl touched him on the knee and then shifted her position on the coping tiles, without rising to her feet.

"Come here!" she commanded. And when he was close beside her she pointed with her thin white arm. "That's Saint Poalo there—you can just make it out, up high, see. And those lights are the Boundary Gate. And this sweep of lights below here is the *Praya*. Now look where I'm pointing. That's the Luiz Camoes lodging-house. You see the second window with the light in it?"

"Yes, I see it."

"Well, Binhart's inside the window."

"You know it?"

"I know it."

"So he's there?" said Blake, staring at the vague square of light.

"Yes, he's there, all right. He's posing as a buyer for a tea house, and calls himself Bradley. Lee Fu told me; and Lee Fu is always right."

She stood up and pulled the mandarin coat closer about her thin body. The coolness of the night air had already chilled her. Then she squinted carefully about in the darkness.

"What are you going to do?" she asked.

"I'm going to get Binhart," was Blake's answer.

He could hear her little childlike murmur of laughter.

"You're brave, white man," she said, with a hand on his arm. She was silent for a moment, before she added: "And I think you'll get him."

"Of course I'll get him," retorted Blake, buttoning his coat. The fires had been relighted on the cold hearth of his resolution. It came to him only as an accidental afterthought that he had met an unknown woman and had passed through strange adventures with her and was now about to pass out of her life again, forever.

"What'll you do?" he asked.

Again he heard the careless little laugh.

"Oh, I'll slip down through the Quarter and cop some clothes somewhere. Then I'll have a sampan take me out to the German boat. It'll start for Canton at daylight."

"And then?" asked Blake, watching the window of the Luiz Camoes lodging-house below him.

"Then I'll work my way up to Port Arthur, I suppose. There's a navy man there who'll help me!"

"Haven't you any money?" Blake put the question a little uneasily.

Again he felt the careless coo of laughter.

"Feel!" she said. She caught his

huge hand between hers and pressed it against her waist-line. She rubbed his fingers along what he accepted as a tightly packed coin-belt. He was relieved to think that he would not have to offer her money. Then he peered over the coping tiles to make sure of his means of descent.

"You had better go first," she said, as she leaned out and looked down at his side. "Crawl down this next roof to the end there. At the corner, see, is the end of the ladder."

He stooped and slipped his feet into his shoes. Then he let himself cautiously down to the adjoining roof, steeper even than the one on which they had stood. She bent low over the tiles, so that her face was very close to his as he found his footing and stood there.

"Good-by, white man," she whispered.

"Good-by!" he whispered back, as he worked his way cautiously and ponderously along that perilous slope.

She leaned there, watching him as he gained the ladder-end. He did not look back as he lowered himself, rung by rung. All thought of her, in fact, had passed from his preoccupied mind. He was once more intent on his own grim end. He was debating with himself just how he was to get in through that lodging-house window and what his final move would be for the round-up of his enemy. He had made use of too many "molls" in his time to waste useless thought on what they might say or do or desire. When he had got Binhart, he remembered, he would have to look about for something to eat, for he was as hungry as a wolf.

And he did not even hear the girl's second soft whisper of "Good-by."

That stolid practicality which had made Blake a successful operative asserted itself in the matter of his approach to the Luiz Camoes house, the house which had been pointed out to him as holding Binhart.

He circled promptly about to the front of that house, pressed a gold coin in the hand of the half-caste Portu-

guese servant who opened the door, and asked to be shown to the room of the English tea merchant.

That servant, had he objected, would have been promptly taken possession of by the detective, and as promptly put in a condition where he could do no harm, for Blake felt that he was too near the end of his trail to be put off by any mere side issue. But the coin and the curt explanation that the merchant must be seen at once admitted Blake to the house.

The servant was leading him down the length of the half-lit hall when Blake caught him by the sleeve.

"You tell my rickshaw boy to wait! Quick, before he gets away!"

Blake knew that the last door would be the one leading to Binhart's room. The moment he was alone in the hall he tiptoed to this door and pressed an ear against its panel. Then, with his left hand, he slowly turned the knob, caressing it with his fingers that it might not click when the latch was

released. As he had feared, it was locked.

He stood for a second or two, thinking. Then with the knuckle of one finger he tapped on the door, lightly, almost timidly.

A man's voice from within cried out, "Wait a minute! Wait a minute!" But Blake, who had been examining the woodwork of the door-frame, did not choose to wait a minute. Any such wait, he felt, would involve too much risk.

In one minute, he knew, a fugitive could either be off and away, or could at least prepare himself for any one intercepting that flight. So Blake took two quick steps back, and brought his massive shoulder against the door. It swung back, as though nothing more than a parlor-match had held it shut. Blake, as he stepped into the room, dropped his right hand to his coat-pocket.

Facing him, at the far side of the room, he saw Binhart.

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

TRUE LOVE

By Gladys Hall

YOU do not care, little son o' mine;
Though I'm growing faded and gray and old,
You do not see that my youth is dead,
And my hair is no longer gold.

Your love will live, little boy o' mine;
Though others more fair shall pass your way,
You will not treat me with cool disdain
And think "she has had her day."

Somehow you'll know, little love o' mine,
Born of my life you will understand,
And the bitter tears of a dying dream
You will wipe away with your baby hand.

TWO WOMEN, OR ONE?*

A SERIAL

BY E. J. RATH

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS

FOR a six weeks' expedition into the unexplored north woods, Jane Boyce, the woman prospector, engages Ben Mitchell as guide. There is something unusual about Jane's requiring a guide, for she is a perfect woodswoman herself, and a fine specimen of physical womanhood. But there her attraction ends, for she is apparently without heart, utterly methodical and unhuman in her movements, entirely introspective and uncommunicative. She treats Mitchell like a piece of baggage, and his loneliness drives him almost frantic. Jane's mission into the wilds is unknown, but thought to be gold. One day Ben disobeys her orders by taking the obvious side of a rock in a rapid instead of the side he was told to take. As a result the canoe upsets in the white swirl.

Jane rescues Ben from the rapid as a necessary commodity. One day she compels him to lie blindfolded on the bottom of the canoe while she makes a long paddle apparently through a rocky gorge. Then he is marooned on an island while she takes the canoe for the day, returning with a bag of gold. Ben resists this action next day, and in a struggle, Jane falls and cuts her head severely. Ben nurses her back to consciousness, but is thunderstruck to find on her awakening that she is seemingly a totally different woman. She says her name is Molly Hope, and of Jane Boyce and the past five years she knows nothing. Moreover this new creature is kind, and womanly, and lovable. They prepare to return to civilization, but Ben is overcome with the realization that Jane alone knew the way through Blindfold Passage.

CHAPTER XII.

The Search for Escape.

THE realization that I had no more knowledge of the route than she started me. Jane Boyce was but a memory. With her had vanished the pilot. I looked at Molly Hope helplessly, but she did not see me. Her eyes seemed to be fixed on something afar, and I knew that she was thinking of her home and her people. As I felt my own impotence I pitied her.

"Oh, yes," I said lightly. "We'll get away to-morrow without a doubt."

Two things put me in a mood to linger at our camp the next day, despite the anxiety of Molly Hope to get

back to her people. One was the fact that I wanted a chance to explore for the channel by which we had entered the lake. The other was the girl herself, who was now so utterly unfamiliar with woods travel that she needed an opportunity for a brief bit of training. I had also thought that her head might prevent her from undertaking a journey so soon; but in this I was mistaken, for her magnificent health was asserting itself. In fact, it was this physique of hers that I relied upon to carry her through the rough work that was ahead of us. She would have to learn much, but her body was already inured to the task.

But while I hesitated to set out, I none the less realized the need of an early start. Our provisions were ample,

* This story began in *The Cavalier* for September 14.

provided we traveled at the same speed that Jane Boyce and I had maintained; but I knew we would be unable to make that rate of progress. Molly Hope was virtually a novice, and, further, the wound in her head would prevent the use of a tump-line by her in crossing portages. Beside that, I had a reluctance to ask this woman to undertake the severe physical labor which had been a mere incident of the journey to Jane.

There had been a change in command. I was the captain now. True, I was without a course for a part of the distance, but I relied upon my woodcraft to help me there. That part of the journey which I had made with my eyes open did not worry me for an instant. Most of it I had crudely mapped, and even in the absence of that chart my memory would have served me.

Our reversed conditions had a salutary mental effect upon me. I felt that I had recovered my self-respect. Jane's manner had constantly impressed upon me a sense of inferiority that hurt my pride. The most irksome part of it was that I realized much of it to be true. She had been my superior in many things; wholly so in a knowledge of the new country through which we had passed. That was not pleasant to a man who considered himself a woodsman and a guide. I had been educated to feel a sense of responsibility for the safety of my employers; with Jane I had been a mere puppet, serviceable only to cook her food and carry her burdens. Her service had been a humiliation.

The new woman demurred at first when I suggested another day at our outpost camp; she was restless to begin the return. I said nothing then of the most disturbing reason for the delay, but I dwelt entirely upon her own lack of preparation for the trip. She looked at the matter in a sensible way, and soon agreed with me. I offered to begin her education immediately after we had breakfasted, and I secret-

ly promised myself a chance to search for the unknown passage.

Her first night of consciousness as Molly Hope, she admitted to me, had inspired in her vague anxieties. She had awakened several times, not because of any discomfort from her injury, but apparently because of a restlessness born of her strange situation. The stillness of the woods had awed her rather than frightened her, and the strangeness of her awakening after the five lost years was constantly present in her mind. She had dreamed, too, but it was as Molly Hope, with visions of her home, and not as Jane Boyce, following her lone career in the wilderness.

I had been wondering, despite her complete mental separation from the Woman Prospector, whether there lingered in her a subconscious memory; whether the muscles developed during the chapter she had just closed would instinctively follow their long training. It surprised me to discover that she possessed not the slightest notion of things that had been second nature to her. She had the strength to do all Jane Boyce had done, without the least idea how to use it.

She was even timid about entering the canoe, although she assured me she knew how to swim. The absence of a seat surprised her, and when I suggested that she kneel, as Jane had done, she did so doubtfully. Nothing astonished her more as we made that first experimental trip to discover that this position neither cramped nor tired her, but was, on the contrary, quite comfortable.

Of the uses of a paddle she had no conception other than that gained from watching canoeists at a summer resort she had once visited. But the paddle is at once the most primitive and natural manner for man to drive a craft; it is merely a development of the swimming instinct. Rowing is artificial. It did not take her long to wield her blade well, although I could see that she was beginning again at the bottom.

Whither to go in search for the passage I had no idea whatever. When I lay blindfold in the bottom of the canoe I remembered clearly sensing our return into the bright sunlight, after a period of travel through cool dimness. From the instant of emerging from the passage until the canoe had touched the shore where our camp was made I had roughly judged the interval to be in the neighborhood of ten minutes.

But that was mere conjecture; it might just as easily have been twenty, for the elapse of time under the condition which Jane had imposed is confusing to calculate. In ten minutes she could easily have driven the canoe a mile; in twenty minutes twice that distance. Whether she had followed a straight course was also beyond my knowledge. She might have doubled back and forth among the islands in order to destroy my sense of direction to a certainty. The passage might be within a quarter-mile of us, for there was mainland as near as that, or it might be eight times that distance. While I had no serious doubt of my ability to locate it, nevertheless the waste of time that it might involve gave me some uneasiness.

There were numerous islands in this lake, though neither so many as in the adjoining one nor so uniform in their character. I first made a circuit of our own, scanning closely those portions of the surrounding hills that were in view, and finally I struck for the west shore, as being the most likely for our purpose. It was half a mile across, and showed patches of bare cliff that looked promising from the distance. On the other side of the lake the hills were sloping and verdant. It was exhilarating to be at the paddle again, particularly after my experience in being marooned two days before.

It pleased me, also, to note that while Miss Hope found the manipulation of her paddle a strange proceeding, she enjoyed the novelty. Constantly she would ask me if she were doing it cor-

rectly, and I found a readiness in her to follow suggestions that was encouraging. The motion of the canoe ceased to disturb her after a while, and she learned to know that the canvas craft could rise and dip and even roll to a considerable angle with perfect safety. Balance in a canoe becomes instinctive with practise, and I saw signs that she would not be long in acquiring it. But there was no hint of memory in this good progress she made; the work was coming easily to her simply because she had the physique ready-made to undertake it.

"By and by, when you get used to a canoe," I said, "I'll show you how to use the stern paddle and steer."

"You think I can learn that?"

"I know it. As a matter of fact, although you do not know it, you are one of the best steersmen I ever saw in a canoe."

She rested her paddle across the gunwales and looked back at me.

"Isn't it strange," she said, musingly, "that all this should seem utterly new to me. It isn't difficult, exactly; it's just new."

"Are you tired?" I asked.

"Not a bit. That is so puzzling, too."

"It's not astonishing, though," I answered. "Jane was absolutely tireless."

"Is that what you called me—Jane?"

"You ordered me to call you that," I explained. "It was shorter than Miss Boyce, Miss Hope."

The conjunction of the two names, made unconsciously, sounded rather strangely, and she noticed it.

"It must be very curious to you," she said, "to know a person by two names, each given to you in good faith. But I would like you to forget the other one, if you will, and call me Molly, if it is good to have short names in the woods."

"It is convenient," I answered. I was glad to call her Molly, because there was something pleasant about the name. But as forgetting either Jane Boyce or her name, I knew full well

that to the end of my life there had been stamped upon my mind a memory that, even though unpleasant, would never fade.

"And what did I call you?" she asked, suddenly.

"Mitchell," I answered, with a laugh. "Without prefix or handle or decoration—plain Mitchell. But if it's just the same to you, I'd prefer to be called Ben while I'm working at this job. Then, after we get back to civilization, you can give me all the conventional titles that an American citizen has a right to enjoy."

"Very well," she assented, with a nod, and she was picking up her paddle again when I interrupted her.

"By the way, Jane was paying me two seventy-five a day. Does that hold?"

She looked at me with a puzzled air, but saw a whimsical look in my eyes and smiled.

"You've no idea," she said, "how odd it is to be told of things that you've done and don't remember. Have I paid you anything yet?"

"No. But, of course, it isn't customary to pay a guide until the trip is over. There's no place to spend the money, anyhow."

"Of course, I'll pay you; that is, if I have any money. I haven't the least idea about that."

"Better be careful," I warned her, laughingly, "about assuming your former financial obligations. You don't know what they may be. But the two seventy-five was a *bona-fide* bargain."

"It seems little. I shall owe you more than that," she answered, gravely.

Both of us, I think, had forgotten about the bag of gold. All ideas of Jane's mine had been swept from my mind by anxiety to locate our homeward route, and from hers, by her own longing to get news of her people.

We were close under the cliffs of the west shore now, and I let the canoe run along to the southward for nearly a mile, scanning the rocks closely. The contour of this shore-line was almost

straight, with no coves or bays. Stunted and half-starved evergreens clung tenaciously to its steep sides wherever the rock was not wholly bare, but nowhere was there the slightest suggestion of a passage through, nor even a cavelike aperture to hold out encouragement. I swung the canoe around when we had gone as far as I judged would equal the greatest distance that Jane could possibly have covered, and started back over the same course, still studying the rocks carefully.

After a while I noticed that Molly had ceased paddling and was half-faced about, watching me.

"Are you looking for something?" she asked.

"Don't you know?" I had not intended to explain my own motive in this morning paddle of ours, for I had no wish to add to her worries; but it seemed useless now to attempt any evasion.

"I'm afraid I don't," she said, helplessly. "Is it something I did—while I was Jane?"

"Partly," I nodded. "Do you remember my telling you how you had blindfolded me and brought me into this lake?"

"Yes, I do recall you said something about that," she answered. "But I didn't pay much attention to it then. Has it any significance?"

"Simply this: I'm looking for the way you brought us in."

"You mean you don't know where it is?" she exclaimed in a startled tone.

"Not yet," I said, reassuringly. "But don't worry about that. We'll find it, sure. It's somewhere not over twenty minutes' paddle from our camp; perhaps only ten."

"It seems incredible," she murmured, with a little shudder. "Tell me about it."

Then I gave her the details, as well as I could, of that strange trip through a strange place of which I had been denied even a glimpse. I did not blame her for regarding me incredulously.

"But how could you let me do it?" she cried.

"You ordered me," I replied.

"But it must have been maddening. I should have thought you would have torn the bandage from your eyes."

"I was tempted to," I said, truthfully. "But I had promised."

Little she knew about the ways of Jane Boyce, and I felt it would be no kindness to explain. But I saw that the incident had started a line of thought in her mind, nevertheless, and she was pondering over it as she resumed her paddle.

For two miles more we skirted the shore, going northward now, but still there was the same unbroken line of cliff. This brought us to the north end of the lake, and we followed that. The ruggedness of this shore was more thickly covered with verdure, and there was a dip in the hills that suggested another basin beyond.

There were low, wooded points, separating from each other a series of bays, and into each of these we went, scanning every yard of the distance narrowly. There was not a break in the boundary-line of solid land, not even a little brook coming down from the hillsides. I was disappointed and somewhat worried. The west shore and the north had, from their outward aspect, given the most promise of containing the mysterious passage, and both were within the distance that Jane Boyce might have covered from the time we emerged into the daylight.

Molly noticed the baffled expression in my face, for she said, rather sadly:

"I wish I could remember; I wish I could help you."

"I don't," I answered, bluntly.

"But why?" The statement had surprised her.

"Because then you'd be Jane Boyce."

She regarded me silently for a moment, and nodded her head slowly.

"I think I understand," she said.

"I—I was awful, wasn't I?"

"Oh, no," I declared, hastily. "I didn't mean that."

"Yes, but you did mean it. I can see it. Every time you have spoken of me—when I was Jane—I have felt it. You hated me."

"Nonsense!" I exclaimed, but I knew that she was unconvinced.

"What sort of a creature was I?" she asked, persistently.

"Why—you were just businesslike," I said, evasively.

"No, no," shaking her head. "There was something more than that. Won't you please tell me?"

"Some time. I'd rather not now."

"Now; please!"

Well, she was bound to have it, and I told her. I made it as brief as possible, and I softened it as much as I could, yet I knew that she read more than my words expressed. Some of the episodes in which Jane and I had been concerned I omitted entirely, but, with all the delicacy I could command, I gave her an outline of the sort of woman she had been. Her head was bowed during most of the recital, and when, at the close, she lifted it, I saw that her eyes were filled with tears.

"I'm sorry," I said. "But you would have it."

"Oh!" she cried, with a sob. "To think of it! To think that I was like that. To think that there is something in me like—that woman."

"But there is not," I told her. "That's where you're wrong, absolutely. There is nothing in you like Jane. You are utterly different. There is no resemblance whatever."

"But deep in me, somewhere, there's something like it," she persisted, miserably. "There must be. Else how could it have come out?"

"There is nothing like it," I declared. "Jane was one woman, you another. The only thing you have in common is a body. Her mind was not yours, neither was her nature. And she is utterly gone."

"Yet you hated me; I know that."

"I didn't like you," I admitted.

"You loathed me."

"Oh, no; be fair to yourself—or to

her. And, remember, that while I didn't like you, I nevertheless admired you. And in some ways I was jealous of you."

"Still, I was a hated thing—and it makes me ashamed," she said, stubbornly. "I know you can never forget it, but can you forgive me?"

"There's nothing to forgive, Molly. All that belonged to Jane, and Jane is another person. And I even forgave her when she fell and struck her head and became nothing but a helpless woman."

"And died," she supplemented in a whisper.

"Yes—died," I echoed. "Let us think of her that way."

"Will you?" she cried with pathetic eagerness.

"We will never speak of Jane as you," I said. "We will speak of *her*."

"And you won't blame me for what she did?"

"I never blamed even Jane; she couldn't help it. She knew nothing else. And you haven't yet done anything for which I can blame you," I told her.

She considered that for a while, and seemed to be satisfied.

"Thank you, Ben," she said, as she turned and dipped her paddle. But I know that what Jane had been troubled her for a long time, for she spoke seldom from that time until we returned to camp, and seemed to be in a deep study.

Now we were rounding along the west shore, that which had looked least promising from our island; and as we followed it for a long distance, it held out no encouragement whatever. It was filled with indentations, and, though we kept close to the rocky edge all the way, there was no sign of an outlet.

At last we reached a point beyond which it would have been impossible for Jane to have covered the distance to camp within the time I allowed her. Filled with the wonder of the thing, I reluctantly headed the canoe back to-

ward our island. It was nearing noon, and it would not help matters to go without lunch.

Molly joined in the work of preparing the meal, and was not so much of a culinary novice as she had modestly declared herself to be. But her ways were those of the kitchen, and not of the woods, and the primitive awkwardness of our appliances bothered her for a while.

We talked but little as we ate, and my thoughts dwelt entirely upon the curious situation in which we were placed. I had explored the three shores wherein the passage must surely lie, allowing more than a sufficient radius to cover the time occupied by Jane after we had emerged from the channel, yet without result.

It would be useless to go farther south. How far the lake stretched in that direction I did not know, nor did it matter. I had covered every bit of shore that was within possibility of consideration. The only thing to do was to go over the ground again. If I knew in which direction the other lake lay my work would be narrowed down, but I had not the slightest notion of it. Yet this speculation over its compass direction put an idea into my head.

"I'm going over to that west shore again," I told Molly, "to climb that hill. From there I ought to be able to locate the lake we are trying to find. And once I get it spotted, it ought to be easy to find the way into it, even if we have to carry overland. Will you stay in camp, or do you want to come?"

"I want to come," she answered quickly. "I don't want to be left alone."

This feeling of hers was impressed upon me in the days that followed; she was not afraid of the wilderness, but she did not like to be left alone with it. Again, she was the antithesis of Jane Boyce.

After some search along the west shore, I found a likely looking place for an ascent of the cliffs, where the

hardy and courageous little evergreens that grew in the crevices of the rocks could be made of assistance. I drew the canoe out at the foot of the steep climb, and we started upward, for Molly insisted on accompanying me even here.

It was not particularly dangerous work, but it was nothing but sheer toil. We scrambled over rough ledges, swung ourselves along with the aid of the strongly rooted trees, and crawled up steep inclines where the hands as well as the feet had to be employed, always working upward. I estimated that the top must be six or seven hundred feet above the surface of the lake.

We were both hot, breathless, and weary when we reached the summit. She stood the journey fully as well as I, however; and with every fresh demonstration of her strength and hardiness I gave thanks that in the long journey that lay ahead of us I had for a companion one who was not a physical, if perhaps a mental, tenderfoot. I began to think, after all, we might be able to travel as rapidly as I had journeyed with Jane Boyce.

There was a fine sweep of rolling, wooded country to be seen from the eminence on which we stood—but no lake. East, north, and west I studied the view. We were high enough to overlook the hills on the opposite side of our own lake, which lay glimmering below us in the afternoon sun; but there was no water visible beyond. The lake we had left behind, I knew, was a considerable body, and its distance from us was not great. This made my failure to get even a glimpse of it all the more astonishing.

I went over the landscape again and again, with no better result. There were hollows among the hills, but no water that was visible. To the north, where the ridge that girded our lake was lower than at any other point, it was certain there was no water for many miles. The cliff on which we stood was bare of trees at the top, and we could see far to the westward, across

a rocky, jagged, and waterless expanse. The lake below us, which contained our island and our camp, was like a beautiful, living map, but I had no eyes for it. Molly seemed to find something attractive in it, but I was looking for the other water.

"Well," I said, at length, "shall we go down?"

"Have you found the way?" she asked.

"To be frank, I haven't," I answered. "But we sha'n't worry about that. I'll find it."

Her eyes looked troubled, and I think her mother was in her mind again.

"Come," I said. "It will be nearly supper-time when we get back to camp."

She followed me as I began the descent, pausing just for an instant at the edge of the steep rocks.

"Oh, I hate Jane!" she cried. "I hate her!"

CHAPTER XIII.

The Road Home.

MOLLY'S silence on the way back to our island gave me time to think about our unusual situation, and this speculation now began to breed anxiety. It was impossible, of course, that I should not be able to locate our route, ultimately; and if our supply of provisions had not made time a highly important factor, I think the mystery of the thing would have entertained me for a few days.

But I was puzzled and uneasy over the failure to find a solution of the problem, after the magnificent view of the surrounding country which the heights of the west shore afforded. There was something unnatural about it, something of the dark wizardry of Jane herself.

While I had not much hope that the hills of the east shore would offer even so favorable an opportunity to study the landscape as those of the west, I

nevertheless determined to try them the first thing in the morning. I would even climb the low land to the north, although I was certain there was nothing there.

Then, if things came to their worst aspect, there was still the alternative of striking a new course of our own back to the Deep-Water. I knew the direction in which it lay, and I felt certain that we would at some point intersect the old route; but I was likewise fully aware of the toil and delay which such a last resort would involve, with subsequent developments that might actually prove serious.

Although I said nothing of my alarms to the girl, I am sure she divined a hint of them from my gloomy and perplexed face, for while we were preparing supper she made an obvious effort to talk of other things, as much probably for the purpose of taking her own mind off her thoughts of home as to divert mine.

"I am a little bit puzzled about you," she told me. "You are a guide, you say, and yet somehow you don't seem anything like the idea I had formed of guides."

"How?" I asked.

"Well, you seem to be—educated."

"Oh, I know some fairly well educated guides," I laughed. "*Bona-fide* guides, too. They're a bit rough, perhaps, but you'd be surprised at some of the things they know."

"Still," she said, "somehow I don't think you always did this, or always intend to do it."

"Because of this?" I asked, putting my finger on a little fraternity pin that was fastened to my leather belt.

"Partly," she nodded.

"Well, to tell the truth, this isn't my ultimate career, I suppose. It's more of a whim or an indulgence, just at present. The fact is, I'm lazy. Also, I'm not uncomfortably inflicted with ambition, and manage to keep fairly happy by following my fancies."

"Tell me," she said.

So I gave her some idea of my life,

thinking as I did so how odd it was that not until now had she asked me a single question about myself. It might easily have been one of her first anxieties to learn what sort of a person she had been cast into association with in this wilderness; but her mind until now had been crowded to overflowing with wonderment at her own past and yearning for the home from which she had stolen forth in the thick mists of her former mental state.

"Aren't you foolish," she remarked, "to waste your good years when there is real work that you have been trained to do?"

"Perhaps," I answered. "That is, if I am wasting the good years. What are a man's good years, anyhow. They may not necessarily be his young years."

"Oh, but they are!" she exclaimed. "You cannot understand as I do. But, oh, what if you had lost five of those years—utterly lost them beyond recall, without even a memory of them?"

"That, I suppose, makes a difference."

"A difference! I never knew the value of years until I found I had lost them. And the young years, too. For two days I've been trying to live them over again in my mind, but it's useless. They're gone! Oh, believe me, it is the young years that count. I never knew then, but I know now. I've been cheated—robbed. And it seems all so useless and cruel."

"But you're still very young," I assured her, for I could see there was real grief in her voice.

"Twenty-six!"

"And that's not bad. I'd like to be twenty-six again myself, but I'm not losing sleep over it."

"Because you have the memory of all that has passed," she answered. "But think of having no memory!"

"Try to look at it another way," I suggested. "Had you never been Jane Boyce you would have lived your five years as you lived all the others."

In all probability you would still be the delicate girl you say you were then. But Jane underwent all the hardship for you, took all the toil and struggle on her own shoulders; and now she has gone, leaving you health and strength and a constitution that will carry you far beyond the five poor years that she claimed to make a real woman of you."

"I suppose I ought to think of that," she said slowly, her eyes involuntarily scanning her own person and again showing the wonder that she seemed to find in it. "But it seems hard to have lost them, just the same."

"They were probably not all pleasant ones, either," I added.

"I want to talk about something else," she said, with a little shudder.

"Then let's go fishing. Did you ever fish, Molly?"

"Never!" she exclaimed, rising to her feet. "I'd love to try."

I did not tell her of Jane's unsportsmanlike prowess with the rod, because just then we were trying to forget Jane. There was still an hour of daylight, so I made the canoe ready, got the tackle out, seated Molly in the bow facing me, and began paddling slowly around our island. Never shall I forget her when that first bass rose to the troll. In an instant she was aroused from pensiveness to animation, her eyes sparkling and her cheeks flushing with the excitement.

"What shall I do with it?" she cried, as the fish leaped clear of the water fifty feet astern and dived back with that splash which puts a thrill in the heart of the true fisherman.

"Give him time. Careful!" I exclaimed, as she showed the haste of every novice to get his first fish into the boat in the shortest possible space of time. The bass gave us a fine fight, and he brought it to an abrupt close by winning it, for in one of his splendid thrashes he managed to cast loose the hook.

The dismay and disappointment in Molly's face were pretty to watch.

"How stupid of me!" she cried, frowning.

"Rather, how wise of the bass," I said, laughing. "That's the fine thing about those fellows. They keep you guessing. I wouldn't give a cent to fish if I landed every one I hooked. Try again."

It was some fifteen minutes before we had another strike, and then it was a big, brawny fellow who took the bait with a hungry rush. Molly was getting into the spirit of the game, and her face was alight with sheer joy as the battle fared on. This time the victory went to her, but her rapid breathing and little exclamations of astonishment and apprehension were a tribute to the valiant foe. I landed him with the net and lifted him dripping and struggling into the canoe, while she clapped her hands in delight. And then a moment later she turned away her head while I mercifully put an end to him with my knife. I learned then as I did frequently afterward that she hated to see things suffer and die.

But to me, in those first few days, the most wonderful thing about Molly Hope was that she talked. That sounds like a small matter to wonder about, yet after two and a half weeks of almost utter silence it not only came as a surprise but as a Heaven-sent blessing. I could hardly realize at first that the transformation had been accomplished. My own tongue seemed to have been loosened from captivity, and the sound of my words, flowing now without restraint, was strange to me. It was as if an obsession that I was never to be privileged to talk to a human being again had been suddenly lifted, and my liberty bewildered me.

Molly did not know and could not have understood how strange her own conversation sounded to my ears. She had been to me the grim incarnation of silence for so many days that her voice came almost as a shock. She never understood the ordeal through which

I had passed with Jane, just as she could not understand the sudden boon which her transformation into a woman who could talk had conferred upon me.

Conversation became a new kind of dissipation with me. I fairly chattered at her, I fear; yet I am not naturally garrulous. It was merely the reflex following long restraint.

We took another fish and, as darkness was approaching, I headed back toward the camp. The breeze of the day had fallen away to nothing and the lake was glassy, so that the somber outlines of the islands and hills were cut as sharply on its surface as the image on a photographic negative. Molly leaned back against the thwart, watching the panorama half dreamily.

"The islands are so pretty by day and so solemn and mysterious by night," she said as we drifted close to our own.

"It's curious how there is something about an island that attracts us as nothing on the mainland can," I commented.

"They're beautiful here," she nodded. "But down the lake they seem to be even more beautiful."

"In which direction?" I asked idly. She pointed toward the south.

"While you were looking over the hills this afternoon, after we had climbed to the top," she explained, "I was watching the lake. There are so many more islands down below that we cannot see from here. And they seem so strange."

"How—strange?"

"Why, there are so many of them; and they are all of a size, and so regularly placed. They look just like the dots on a piece of goods."

I stopped paddling and stared at her. "And they're so beautifully green and fresh looking," she added. "Not rocky or harsh, like these."

"You saw islands—like that—in this lake?" I asked slowly.

"Why, yes. Is it unusual?" she asked, noticing my amazement.

"You are sure it was in this lake? You didn't see another lake?"

"No; I am certain of it. There was water all the way to them. Oh, it was this lake beyond a doubt!"

"No strip of land in between?" I asked eagerly.

She shook her head positively. The wild hope that her first description had raised in me began to fade again. The islands in the strange lake where Jane had blindfolded me she had described to a nicety. But she was sure that they were in this lake.

The thing was impossible. I had been taken through a narrow, dark, passageway, I knew for a certainty—from one water into another. When my eyes had been unbound they had looked upon a scene utterly changed in every detail and characteristic. One lake was as different from another as black from white. And yet—

What Molly had told me puzzled me beyond measure. She could not have imagined the islands of that other lake. Neither could she have seen their duplicate in this, for I would have gambled that nowhere else in the north woods did their like exist. They were unique in the regularity of their arrangement and the uniformity of their size and contour. Yet it was evident the girl had seen something to which I had not given a glance. I had paid not the slightest attention to our own sheet of water and its reaches to the southward. My eyes had been roving eastward, northward, westward, looking for the lake that seemed to have vanished.

Now I was vexed with myself that I had thus limited my scrutiny from the hilltop. Not that it was possible the islands she described were really in our own lake, for where then was the cool, dark, and narrow passage? But it was barely possible that she had actually looked upon the water for which I was searching, and that the barrier which lay between it and us had escaped her notice.

Over and over again I questioned

her on this point, but she was uniformly positive she had not made a mistake; everything she had seen lay within our own lake. Her certainty discouraged me. At first I thought she had chanced upon a discovery of the utmost importance. Now it seemed that she had merely sighted a group of islands which, if not really like those through which Jane had piloted me, at least had some strong points of resemblance.

"Do you think I saw anything that will help us?" she asked.

"I can't tell," I answered, musing. "It's all very strange. What you say about the islands raises my hopes to the highest notch, but when you tell me they are in our own lake my hopes fall to the bottom again."

"I'm sorry," she said. "But they really are in this lake. It was careless of me not to call your attention to them, but I thought of course you had noticed them."

"At any rate," I declared, "I've got to have a look at them. If they are really what I'm hoping for, I may be able to discover the barrier in between."

"You won't find it," she replied rather sadly. "I wish you could, but you won't. I am very positive that it was just as I have told you."

Nevertheless, I cherished a secret hope that Molly was wrong in some of her details. I prayed that she was wrong about her identification of the lake, yet right in her discovery of the islands. It was impossible to reconcile both.

There was nothing to be done before morning, anyhow, and this irked me, for I felt that perhaps time that was valuable had slipped away from us. As soon as daylight came again I was going over to the west shore and up the cliff again, for I had a wild desire to solve the riddle of the islands.

The new camp-fire companionship which had come with the disappearance of Jane Boyce fulfilled such a craving that I fear I kept Molly out of

her tent that evening long after she was sleepy and ready for rest. We talked much about ourselves and about her family. Not often did we speak of the strange creature she had been; at night it seemed to make her shudder to think of Jane.

We watched the stars grow more numerous in the darkening sky, charting themselves in the still water at our feet. We saw the moon rising slowly through the tree-tops on the eastern hills, until it swung high and white and brilliant over the lake. And off in the distance came the deep, dusky notes of a moose calling to his mate. The sound startled her, and led us into a new avenue of thought that kept us out of our blankets until nearly midnight.

"Will you take me up the cliff again in the morning?" she asked as she rose to go to her tent.

"If you're awake at daylight," I promised. "But I'm going to make an early start."

The lake was half veiled in the morning mist when I crawled out of my tent and felt a damp, cool, southerly breeze on my cheeks. Molly had not arisen, and I thought it useless to awaken her merely to take her on another toilsome climb. I slid the canoe quietly into the water and set off for the west shore with long, swift strokes, my mind active and eager with speculation over the islands of which she had told me the night before.

So anxious was I to hurry up the steep ascent that I came near losing my life when about half-way to the top. An insecure stone turned under my foot, and but for a stout little tree that was within the grasp of one hand I should certainly have ricocheted down the precipitous rocks, clear to the bottom. I gave a gasp of fright as I swung myself to safety. I had no desire to lose my own life. More than that, I had a sudden vision of a girl left helpless in a wilderness. It required no effort after that for me to put a curb upon my impatience, and I made the rest of the ascent cautiously.

The morning sun and breeze had banished much of the mist as I reached the top of the cliff, and I turned toward the south, where the lake stretched off to its greatest length. And there I saw the islands of which Molly had spoken.

They were the islands of Jane Boyce!

I would have known them anywhere, as far as I could have distinguished the outlines of land and water. With the same singular, almost unnatural regularity, they lay there in the rising mists.

Slowly I studied them, resolutely forcing back an impulse to shout. I wanted to be utterly sure. I wanted my reason as well as my instinct to tell me that I was looking upon the lost and sought for place. But there was no mistake about it. They were there, beautiful, green, and quiet in the early sunlight, as mysterious as the day I had first seen them.

And they were in this lake!

The expanse of water was unbroken, save by scattered islands that lay between me and the tiny archipelago beyond. Molly was right again. Where, then, was the narrow passage through which Jane had driven the canoe? There was not the slightest sign of it, no visible spot in the landscape that could possibly contain it. I began to wonder if I had fallen asleep as I lay blindfolded that day and dreamed an experience that was a mere fiction of the brain. But no; I was sure of the passage, sure of my own wakefulness.

For some time I stood there, trying to reconcile the situation in my mind. The effort was futile. Once more before I descended I carefully surveyed the islands, making a map of them in my brain. To reach them was so easy that it seemed almost untrue. And beyond them lay the trail home.

With feverish strokes I drove the canoe back to our camp, after a cautious descent of the cliff. I cared nothing about the discovery of the passage now; it was non-essential. The road was open at last. I could take Molly home.

She was standing close to the water

as I swung into the little cove at the foot of our camp.

"You went without me," she said reproachfully. "I was afraid when I found I was alone."

"You needn't be afraid any more!" I shouted as I leaped out of the canoe.

"You mean that—"

"Those *are* the islands!" I cried. "You found them! They *are* in this lake!"

"And the passage?"

"Hang the passage! It's disappeared. But we don't need it now. Molly, you've found the road!"

"The road—"

"The road home!"

Her eyes filled with tears, and there was an eager, tremulous smile on her lips.

"I shall see my mother again," she murmured. "Oh, Ben!"

She gave me her hands for an instant, then shook her head as if to throw aside the weakness of tears, and turned quickly toward the camp.

"Let's hurry," she said.

CHAPTER XIV.

The Islands of Jane.

SUCH was her anxiety to begin the long journey back to the Deep-Water that without protest I allowed Molly to perform what I would have considered to be Jane's share of the camp work, but not hers. It was she who got the breakfast, while I busied myself rolling our blankets into packs, taking down the tents and hunting around for the articles that invariably get to lying loose, even in the most methodical camp. It was not a bad breakfast, either; I have eaten both better and worse in the woods of my own cooking. She worked without the facility or the speed of Jane, and I could see that things came unhandy to her; yet it saved me a lot of time that she should even be able to do that much.

I was no less impatient to start than she. We were now out three weeks

from our starting-point, and we were provisioned for only six. It was not to be expected that Molly would travel as rapidly as Jane; I was allowing a difference of at least four days, which meant we would be exceedingly short, if not actually out of grub, by the time we reached the Deep-Water. Another reason for my impatience was a desire to solve the mystery of the dark, cool passage which, despite the surprising discoveries of the early morning, I was not yet willing to concede was merely a thing of the imagination.

Molly washed up the dishes and put the tins and cooking utensils into their bag, while I loaded the canoe with the heavier duffel. After that I collected the litter that had resulted from three or four days of camping and burned it. This was a useless procedure, off in that lonely wild, I admit, yet it grew out of habit. No man who has consideration either for nature or for the camper who may follow him will leave behind him a trashy camp. I hate to walk into one, and I don't want anybody to be inflicted with one of my own making. And then, when we were ready to set out, I poured a few pailfuls of water over the smoking ashes in our fireplace, which is the last and never-to-be-neglected ceremony in any camp, and joined Molly in the canoe.

It was her first voyage when we were fully laden, and for a time she was plainly nervous over the fact that our gunwale was several inches nearer to the water than when she made her trial trips in the canoe. But when she grasped the fact that we had greater stability, even if less freeboard and speed, her timidity subsided and she began to give an eye to things about her.

Here, of course, she was utterly different from Jane Boyce, who saw nothing but the road ahead, and who cared nothing for some beauty that might be almost at her elbow. Molly's interest in the things that bordered our path was one factor that cost us time. It was all a wonderland to her; she was

like a little child wandering through a dream-garden. Added was the fact that she could not ply a paddle as had Jane. This was the thing that attracted my notice more strongly. She crouched on her knees as did Jane, and—in figure, at least—she was the same splendid athlete; but she neither possessed the unconscious skill nor the dogged perseverance of the woman who had disappeared. Her paddle would falter as her eyes wandered to some new vista abeam, and sometimes it would cease altogether. I made no attempt to urge her to steady effort, but merely increased my own exertions to overcome the difference.

I lay our course southward in the direction of the magic islands. Those among which we were passing now were typical of the ordinary lake in the north country, and it was still almost impossible to believe they lay within the same sheet of water that contained the curious little archipelago at which I had marveled several days before. In fact, although with my own eyes I had seen it from the hilltop, I was still reluctant to admit the absence of a hidden channel through which we must pass. I had a vague sensation that, after all, we might be pursuing a mere mirage.

Our route I kept near the middle of the lake, and in a few minutes we cleared the island group that lay at the north end. Two miles or more beyond us was now visible the green allurements of the Islands of Jane. Between them and our canoe lay a solitary island which we would pass close on the left hand if we held our course. It was apparently small when I first sighted it, somewhat rugged, and not well favored with shrubbery or trees; but as we drew nearer I perceived that it lay pointed toward us, like a needle, and possessed considerable length. We were giving it a berth of a couple of hundred yards as we reached a point abreast of it, when some idle curiosity impelled me to swing the canoe almost at a right angle and head toward it.

Molly stopped paddling and watched the nearing rocks.

"Are we to stop here?" she asked.

"No, indeed," I answered. "We're only beginning the day's work. But I just wanted to have a look at the place."

We were now within a few yards of the northern point, and I started to swing the canoe along the western shore when she asked:

"Can we go down the other side instead of this?"

"Yes, if you wish to. Why?"

"The sun feels so comfortable on my shoulders," she replied, "and we're getting into the shadow here."

"Right," I said, turning the canoe and clearing the point so that we could follow the eastern shore. As we were crossing to the other side her paddle paused again.

"What a queer looking place," she commented.

"What?" I asked, busy with the task of keeping us moving onward.

She pointed with her paddle toward the end of the island, and I looked. There was a narrow cove between the two points that jutted into the lake, and its furthestmost recess apparently became lost in a cave-like aperture that retreated into the face of the high rocks. Mechanically I stopped the canoe to study the place.

"It looks just like a cave," she said.

For answer I swung the canoe into the cove and approached the dark opening slowly. As we drew nearly opposite to it, it became evident that it was not a cave, but rather a crevice, for the rocks were open at the top, although they hung closer to each other than at the water's edge. Again I stopped the canoe, when we were within a few yards of the opening. A premonition that speedily developed into a conviction seized me.

Molly looked around with a little shiver.

"It looks spooky," she said.

"It looks like an explanation," I answered, sending the canoe forward again.

"Of what?"

"Of the passage."

Molly was wide-eyed as she turned from me and again examined the ragged, gray rocks.

"You mean—"

"That I believe Jane played a trick on me," I finished for her. "It's extraordinary, but it won't take long to find out whether I'm right about it."

The canoe had reached the jaws of the cleft, and as I looked upward I could see a strip of sky, stretching in front of us like a bright, blue ribbon. The passage, as far as I could penetrate the gloom with my eyes, seemed to be straight, although its rocky walls were irregular in contour. The channel was perhaps a dozen feet wide at its greatest breadth, narrowing gradually as it receded from us.

Here was the explanation of the mystery of the passage. I had not been wrong after all. But who would have dreamed of such a channel through an island? Never before had I seen such a curious phenomenon in the north country. The island itself, I remembered having viewed from the summit of the west cliff, but from that distance there was nothing that suggested the existence of a passageway, even had I thought of looking for it there. The grain of the rock ran almost perpendicularly, as if the original deposit had been upended by some convulsion so purely local in its character as not to affect the surrounding islands, which revealed no characteristics of this kind.

The island was apparently split from end to end, through its greatest length, as though a monster wedge had been used to make the clearance. To what depth it was split I had no way of judging, nor any apparatus for sounding the channel. That the rocks had not divided in an absolutely straight line was obvious, else there would have been a vista of open water at the farther end. Some scant shrubbery overhung the top of the cleft.

I urged the canoe slowly forward for a length or two into the passage,

and then paused again to puzzle over this geologic oddity. It was very cool and still between those walls of solid stone, which ran to a height of perhaps thirty feet from the water's edge at the entrance and were evidently still higher toward the center of the island.

But it was not the island itself at which I marveled most. It was at the cunning of Jane. Nothing could have more completely deceived me into the belief that I had been taken from one lake into another than the method she employed. She knew, of course, better than I, the utterly different characteristics presented by the north and south ends of the lake, and this dark cleft in an island that lay midway furnished her the means of bewildering me. Once at our camp, she had planned to leave me a prisoner each day, so I would have no opportunity to solve the riddle.

I had no doubt whatever that Jane intended to take me back under the same conditions, so that I would never have known or suspected the ruse to which she had resorted. Even now I believe she intentionally neglected to place a gag in my mouth, so I would speak aloud and confirm in my own mind the impression that I was being conducted through a dark, narrow passage. Her remark, when we reached camp, that she should have gagged me, was merely another step in the deception.

Constantly, since the transformation, I had been watching Molly for some sign of memory, even though it might be subconscious, of the days when she had been the woman prospector. Little incidents of the day's routine, the doing of things which were a second nature to Jane, I thought might arouse in her a recollection. But I had watched in vain.

Now I was observing her closely again, for it seemed that if anything would awaken memory it would be some grim, fantastic thing like this cleft in the island. It was always with a certain apprehension that I looked for such manifestations; so, too, I always felt a

sense of satisfaction at each confirmation of the fact that Jane was wholly gone from her. I wanted Molly to forget; I wanted no more of the strange creature who had made such an uncanny impression upon me that she had almost succeeded in changing me from a normal being into one as abnormal as herself, which I believe she verily would have done had she not so suddenly vanished.

Molly turned to me with a shudder as we lay motionless just inside the entrance.

"Must we go this way?" she whispered. Even the whisper sounded hollow, and there was a faint echo that startled her.

"I'm curious to see the thing through," I answered. "Unless you really object we'll go ahead."

"Suppose," she said, with a glance upward at the strip of sky, "the rocks should close in on us."

"I believe there's no fear of it. But, if it alarms you, we'll back out and go around the island."

"No; never mind," she said. "Only don't let's talk while we're in here; it sounds so unearthly."

She placed her paddle in the canoe, drew her sweater over her shoulders, and crouched down in her place while I began the trip through Blindfold Passage, as we afterward named it. There was something awe inspiring about this waterway through the cleft, and, although I felt it to be quite without danger, I shared something of her feelings.

As we penetrated nearer to the heart of the island the channel turned slightly to the left and became narrower, while a glance upward showed me that the height of the walls had nearly doubled. For a few minutes each day there was probably a little sunlight in here, but the orb was not yet high enough to afford that as we slowly went forward. There was a sort of half-light in the place that seemed to throw no shadows.

I remembered that at one point on the voyage with Jane the canoe had

scraped slightly, and I was watching for this evidently very narrow spot. The explanation of the incident came in a moment. We turned again to the right and I beheld a few feet ahead of us an immense boulder, which seemed at first glance to completely block the passage. It was a rock that had fallen from above, wedging itself between the cliffs before it touched the water. As I examined the obstruction I perceived that at one side there was about three feet of head room, with even less than that of width between boulder and cliff. Molly crouched lower as I gently urged the canoe forward, and I, myself, had to stoop in order to clear the overhanging rock. It was not a pleasant experience. While we were underneath this great stone I could not help wondering what would happen if the cliffs should open but a few inches more, instead of closing, as Molly had seemed to fear.

There was only about twenty feet of this overhung passage, a chill, dark place where there was no room to handle a paddle, and where I kept the canoe moving by placing my hands against the damp rocks and pushing us forward. Once or twice we scraped, just as we had done when Jane was the pilot and I the blindfolded passenger. I think Molly breathed a sigh of relief as we got out from under the boulder; I know that I did.

Another slight turn in the channel and the farther end was visible. The walls began to spread away from each other, and in the roomier space I picked up my paddle again and drove us forward quickly. To tell the truth, I wanted to get out of the place. Some foolish apprehension even caused me to glance over my shoulder, as if I expected to see the passage closing after us, like the dark and fearsome paths we sometimes tread in nightmares, always with the leaden feet which cannot carry us away from a danger that threatens. A moment more and we emerged into the sunlight. Beyond an unbroken stretch of calm, shining water lay the islands of Jane Boyce.

Molly threw off her sweater and stretched her arms wide, as if to throw off some burden.

"Did I—did Jane actually take you through that place?" she asked with an involuntary shudder, as she turned to look back at the entrance.

"Jane did," I nodded. "But I don't hanker after it much."

"It frightens me just to think of it!" she exclaimed. "But it frightens me more to think of her."

"There are your islands," I said, pointing. "They look pleasanter. Shall we go on?"

For answer she took her paddle and buried the blade with a deep, strong stroke. There was more than half an hour of traveling before we reached the nearest of the islands, and I headed directly for the center of the group. Had I possessed any serious doubt of my ability to follow a fairly straight course among them I should have skirted either the west or the east shore, which would inevitably bring us to the stream through which Jane and I had entered the lake. But I felt certain, from the conformation of the hills that I could see beyond, that the inlet was almost due south of us, and that the islands lay directly in our path.

As we swept into the first of the narrow channels that separated one from another, Molly paused in her paddling again and uttered an exclamation of delight.

"It's like something in a fairy-story," she said. "We have left the ogre and his den behind us."

Truly, those islands are one of the pleasant places of earth. The sun was getting hot now, and we ran close to shady shores, where the trees sheltered us from its rays. The green gentleness of these curiously regular bits of land invited us to linger and almost caused Molly and I to falter in our resolution to push the return journey swiftly. But I shook off the spell and kept the prow steadily southward, as nearly as the winding channels would permit.

As we finally emerged from the last

placid channel, Molly looked back with a sigh of regret at the scene we were leaving behind us. I put the canoe about and headed for the nearest island.

"We're at least justified in stopping for lunch," I said.

"Thank you for that," she answered. "I hate to see them go—and yet I want to get home, too."

While we ate a hasty meal we began the business of naming things in this virgin country. Very likely the Indians had named these places centuries before; it may even have been that Jane Boyce had christened them anew, though if she did she kept her nomenclature to herself. But by right of rediscovery, Molly and I made free to disregard all names that may have been given in the days past.

She demurred when I insisted that the curious water we were about to quit should be called Molly Lake, but she was willing that the place where our camp had been should be named Waking Island. It was there she had awakened from the long years when her mind slumbered, and when Jane had been in possession of her body. As I have already told, we called the narrow cleft through which we had come, Blindfold Passage; the island itself we christened The Barrier. This was in memory of the idea which Jane had instilled in my mind by her subtle strategy. The green islands I associated so vividly with Jane that she finally let me have my way; I told her that the Woman Prospector at least should possess the privilege of having her name buried with her in the wilderness.

So we called them The Islands of Jane. Incongruous it was, perhaps, for in all things they were different from Jane; yet they were what we hoped Jane might become in whatever strange place to which her disembodied spirit may have journeyed. The cliff we had scaled became Discovery Hill, in honor of its service in pointing the road.

From the island where we halted I could see the mouth of the little river down which Jane and I had come on

our last day's journey together. The current was sluggish, and I knew that we could follow the stream for many miles, even against it, before the hard toil of portaging would come. As we entered its channel—Mitchell River it is on my own crude map, so christened by Molly—both of us turned by a common impulse to take a last look at the lake and The Islands of Jane.

To Molly this was the setting of one of the strangest scenes of her life; and I think, despite her longing to return to her people, she had a vague feeling of regret as we left it behind. I know that I did. The lake, with all the curious things it contained, had cast a spell of fascination upon me. I felt that I was leaving buried there a being who had played a brief but extraordinary part in my own life, where her strange spirit would sleep forever, somewhere among the stalwart hills, the gentle islands, the still, shining waters, and the waving pines.

"Good-by, Jane!" I called softly, as we swung around a bend in the river, and the lake was shut from our sight.

Molly turned and looked at me, then bowed her head for an instant and passed her hand across her forehead.

"Good-by, Jane," she murmured, as she resumed her paddle.

I did not care to urge the girl too far on her first day of travel, and we camped before sundown on the riverbank, a few miles below a rapid where I feared we would have to portage the following forenoon. She was eager to do her share of the camp work, and I showed her how to pitch her tent and gather balsam-boughs for a bed. Purposely I had avoided a camping spot where Jane and I had remained for a night, as I did not wish to halt in an environment which would awaken memories in me or a period of brooding in Molly.

We sat talking for a while after supper was over, and from my rough chart I showed her the course we would follow on the way to the Deep-Water. I gave her some idea of the hardships

of the journey, too, for I did not wish her to think that it would be all so speedy and pleasant as the first day.

She was not dismayed by the prospect; but, on the contrary, anxious to come to grips with the real work. The bulk of it, of course, I intended should fall upon my own shoulders; for she was not only unfamiliar with it, but the wound over her temple was not yet sufficiently healed to permit of her placing the head-strap of a tumpline across it. Part of the time we talked about her home and herself, and I told her stories about mining and some of the frontier places where I had been.

Not once did we talk of Jane's bag of gold. It lay in my tent, tossed into a corner where it would be out of the way. It seemed to hold no interest for either of us.

CHAPTER XV.

On the Back Trail.

CAMP-FIRE talks were giving me a glimpse into the mind of Molly Hope. Into the mind of Jane neither I nor any other person, I believe, had ever looked; it was a dungeon, barred against intrusion or egress. But into Molly's mind the sunlight shone, the doors and windows were thrown wide, and there was no dark or hidden thing there that feared the eye or shrank from the voice.

Sadness dwelt there now, and wistfulness; but they did not shun the visitor. They were merely wayfarers, abiding until the message from home bid them to resume their journey. They breathed an air of sweetness that robbed their presence of unwelcome or gloom. They represented the home ties that had not been severed, but merely tangled during the lost years.

There was optimism in Molly that was deep-rooted and inherent, for even now it triumphed over her fears. She began to look forward to the meeting with her people confidently; she pictured her mother, her father, and her

brother waiting for her. As she had lived, she expected to find them alive. I encouraged her in this, simply for her own sake; there was no way of reasoning to a conclusion, for it was purely a matter of faith.

I found the girl to be a mixture of grave and gay; sometimes there were quick flashes of humor in her that astonished me, when I remembered the burden of anxiety she was bearing. Often she would look at me swiftly after one of these revelations, her face again serious, and her mind apparently wondering if I judged her to be heartless because of a sudden flood of merriment. I think that I never misunderstood her. It was but human nature that sometimes there should be a breaking of the clouds. Always I laughed with her, for my own nature is buoyant, and it had long been in bondage under the black magic of Jane.

From things she told me, from her speech, and from the whole trend of her thoughts, I found Molly to possess a breadth of view and a sympathy so utterly unlike the woman who had disappeared that for a time it seemed impossible to realize the fact. Her parents had given her the opportunities for education, rather than educated her; she had followed the bent of an independent and receptive mind. She was ever willing to learn even the simplest things. The life into which she had awakened was all new, and a virgin field for her study. At every turn she found wonders in it that fascinated her eager brain. She brought a freshness of vision to bear upon things which had become commonplace to me, and that I envied her. It was like walking through a new childhood for Molly.

Often we wondered together whether the missing years would ever be reconstructed; but Jane, in her secrecy, had left scarcely a clue. The first year we puzzled over most. It must have been the period of preparation for her new life, but it had not been spent in the Deep-Water country. Where, then? Evidently somewhere on the frontier

of man's conquest of the land; but where? She had come to the Deep-Water, not a tenderfoot, but a woman already half broken to the life.

Our attempts to make a history for her were often fantastic, always without basis; we were as unhampered with the consideration of facts as the teller of a fairy story or the painter of an ideal picture. But in the camp hours the plotting out of a past for Jane Boyce frequently occupied us. Her winters away from the Deep-Water were a series of mysteries. Molly liked to think that she had gone back to the States, perhaps hovering somewhere near the beloved family. She even speculated as to whether Jane had ever seen her mother as she wandered along her solitary path. My own belief was that Jane probably did not go beyond the borders of the nearest Canadian city; I pictured her as a creature unwilling to stray farther from the place of her ambitions than necessity decreed. Yet, here I realized my reasoning to be faulty; for Jane, had she chosen, could as easily have spent her winters in the Deep-Water country as in the more luxurious surroundings of a town.

The thing that baffled us beyond all attempts at progress, however, was the trend of Jane's mind. Time and again I questioned Molly to learn if, even in fleeting moments, she ever had impulses which in any manner suggested the career the Woman Prospector had carved for herself. She could recall none. She had neither experience of the woods nor an interest in them. She had no thirst for riches, and she needed none. Her family, I learned, while not wealthy according to the modern standards, could give her every luxury and pleasure that a gently bred and normal-minded girl craves.

There seemed to be absolutely nothing in her life to serve as a basis for the narrow but highly concentrated ambitions of Jane. Most dreams have their suggestion in some thought that has come into the waking mind. Jane's

life was a dream that had no origin in the mind of Molly. Had Jane, in becoming another woman, chosen some pursuit within the experience or knowledge of her past, the thing would not have been so amazing, even though she had remembered nothing of the years gone before; but to turn abruptly into a path of which Molly had never so much as thought was as inexplicable to us as the amazing effect of the two accidents to her head.

I have said that Molly viewed the physical changes which had been wrought in her with astonishment. But she also discovered a delight in them she could not conceal. I know that she longed for a large mirror; for I surprised her one day studying an image of herself in a glassy pool of water near our camp. She was leaning forward, turning from side to side to get new glimpses of the strong but charming figure that was her heritage from Jane. She turned quickly when she became aware of my scrutiny, with a laugh and a blush.

"I'm just a woman, after all," she said. "I want to look at myself."

"By no means an idle occupation," I observed, studying her in admiration.

The remark was perfectly harmless; but, somehow, I was sorry after I made it. I did not want Molly to think I was addicted to cheap flattery, nor to inflict on her the embarrassment of it; for I was satisfied she had no love of it. But if she felt I had struck a false note, she turned the conversation easily and without apparent notice.

"These clothes still astonish me," she said frankly. "I think I'm losing my self-consciousness, and, really, they're awfully comfortable. But when I happen to catch a glimpse of them it brings me up with a sort of start, and I wonder if I'm really awake. Oh, how I shall love to have a dress again! What sort of dresses did Jane have?"

I was obliged to confess an ignorance of Jane's wardrobe, beyond her possession of a heavy corduroy skirt

which I had seen her wear at the Moose Island post.

"Dreadful!" she exclaimed. "Do you think I shall be able to find anything to wear—before I reach a city?"

"They keep a very gaudy stock of calicoes at the post," I answered, smiling.

"Calico!" she said, with a little shudder. "I'll have to have a traveling-suit. Don't laugh at me, Ben. You know I can't go home this way."

"Why not?" I asked. "I went from the Deep-Water to Buffalo once in a rig like this, with no hat, and not even a coat, and walked into the swellest hotel I could find at the end of the journey."

"But you're a man, and men can do things like that. I'm a woman."

How different she was from Jane Boyce! Jane, I verily believe, would have gone to a king's coronation in her flannel shirt and breeches, and thought nothing of it, had the notion entered her head. But Molly was purely feminine, with all the instinct of adornment. It pleased me to see her that way; I had had my fill of woman freaks.

Another day I caught her singing. The notes were deep and rich and rounded, unspoiled by the training that teaches technique above all other things. She finished the verse and looked up at me from her seat by the fireplace.

"Do I sing well?" she asked.

"You sing very well," I answered, with a nod.

"Is my voice good?"

"It's one of the purest and most natural I ever heard," I replied truthfully.

"It's so queer," she said, after a pause. "I didn't ask because I wanted you to praise it. I really wanted to know. Before the accident happened—before Jane came—I used to sing, but it was with a very small sort of a voice that had no power or volume, and really not any sweetness in it. I sang correctly enough, I imagine, but it was just a commonplace, parlor voice, with-

out any individuality. But now, when I sing some of the old songs, I cannot help realizing that my voice is utterly new. It's bigger, for one thing, and I can use it so easily that it astonishes me. The noise of it almost frightened me at first; it seemed as if somebody else were singing."

"You're just beginning to appreciate how much Jane did for you," I told her.

"I suppose so," she answered thoughtfully. "How strange—to inherit a new voice. Did Jane sing?"

"Jane had no music in her," I said, shaking my head. "She merely had the voice. She never sang."

"Poor thing!" exclaimed Molly impulsively. "I am beginning to be sorry for Jane."

When we came to the first of the portages, on the trail back to the height of land, my opinion that our progress would be slower than upon the outward journey was confirmed. Nearly all of the heavy carrying fell upon me. Molly was willing, but she was hampered with her head, from which I had not yet removed the stitches, and she was also unfamiliar with the work.

Neither did she possess the stoicism of Jane, who I doubted not was often muscle-weary, yet who never gave a sign that the heavy labor annoyed her. Our mental attitude toward difficult physical tasks goes a long way toward making them a plague or a pleasure. While I think Jane never found pleasure in them, she was at least quite indifferent to them. Molly's attitude was unlike. She did not shirk, but the toil was of the mind as well as of the body.

I rigged up some light packs for her that she could carry with shoulder-straps, and with these on her back she would trudge over the portages while I sweated under the heavy loads. The overland transportation of the canoe astonished her; she told me that until she saw how the trick was done by balancing it on my shoulders she had wondered how in the world she would

ever be able to carry one end of it over a rough trail. On one short portage she begged me to let her try it; and inasmuch as it brought no strain upon her head, I consented; but I followed her closely and somewhat anxiously. I have seen a competent guide, through stumbling over a rough trail, damage a stout canoe seriously, and I had no desire that any such mishap should befall our only craft. She made the journey in safety, but it was only on the comparatively smooth paths that I ever trusted her to handle the canoe. I think she felt that I regarded her as less a woodsman than Jane, although I never would admit it when she questioned me.

The day we reached the rapid from which Jane had dragged me unconscious made a deep impression upon her. It was a long, weary portage around this stretch of swift, white water, and opposite the black rock where the canoe had come to grief we halted for lunch. I had told her something of the story before, but not until she viewed that angry rapid had she been able to visualize the scene with vividness. Now she made me go over it in infinite detail, and several times during the recital she shook her head, as if it were impossible to believe.

"But where were you, exactly, when I—when Jane dragged you out?" she asked as she stood at the edge of the hurrying stream.

"Somewhere down there," I answered, pointing. "I was unconscious. I knew nothing until she had me ashore."

"But how deep is it?"

"I don't know. Perhaps a couple of feet; Jane never told me."

"It's inconceivable," she murmured. "I don't see how anybody could stand for an instant in that water."

"Well, I wouldn't care to try it," I admitted. "But you must remember that Jane was an exception. She seemed to defy all laws."

"I never could do it!" exclaimed Molly, with an involuntary shiver.

"Perhaps you could if you thought you were losing an essential piece of baggage," I said.

"Is that the way Jane regarded you—as baggage?"

"Sometimes as baggage, sometimes as a pack-mule. Never in any other way, I think."

Molly pondered over that for a few seconds, and then gave me one of her frank glances.

"Nevertheless, I believe you admired Jane," she said.

"Why?"

"Because so many things you tell of her compel admiration. You could not have been insensible of it."

"Well, I did admire her," I admitted. "She was a better man than I in many ways."

I watched her as she mused over the admirable qualities of Jane and then burst out laughing at her.

"Nevertheless," I said, paraphrasing her remark, "I believe you are jealous of Jane's prowess."

"That's true," she said seriously, with a slight color in her cheeks. "I am. She must have been very wonderful."

"She was, indeed, Molly—wonderful."

"Was she attractive?"

"No; absolutely no."

"And you hated her, didn't you?"

"Oh, I wouldn't put it that way," I began. "You see, Jane—"

"But you did hate her?"

"I didn't like her, of course. She was unlikable. She—"

"You hated her," persisted Molly. "Didn't you, Ben?"

"Oh, all right," I said with a shrug. "I suppose I did."

"Say it."

"Yes—I hated her."

Molly gave a quick nod of her head in recognition of the statement she had been bound to force from me.

"Good!" she said. "I—I'm glad you hated her."

"And why should you be glad of that?" I exclaimed, astonished.

"I don't know," responded Molly, with prompt feminine logic. "I just am. She ought to have been hated."

"Poor Jane!" I commented.

"Pitied and hated," added Molly, as she turned back to where our duffel lay and began gathering up her burdens for the resumption of our journey.

It was not hard to realize that I was dealing with a woman now, not with a traveling machine. It seemed that Molly had her whims. Well, I was glad of it. She was very human. More than that, she was what Jane never had been nor never could have been—she was very charming. I used to think that clothes went a long way toward making a woman. Now I knew better. Jane, booted and trousered like a lumberman, was repellent. Molly, in the same rough garb, was attractive. But Jane had no soul, while Molly had. It was a difference more than physical. I have been cured of my illusions about clothes.

I had been wondering how long our fair weather would last, and the following day put a prompt and unpleasant end to my speculations. A drenching storm came out of the east, to add to the difficulties of the steady climb which now confronted us. For two days it poured almost without cessation, and the nights were chill and cheerless. I dared not linger on the trail, although I pitied Molly every time I saw her toiling onward in her soaking clothing. We were too short of provisions to warrant a halt until the return of fair weather; there was nothing to do but drive onward through the wet. When it seemed as if clear skies were coming again a new storm piled in upon the heels of the other. Our water-proof tents kept dry inside, and we managed to keep dry blankets, but it was rarely that either of us had a dry thing to wear.

There were no comfortable campfires at night. We crawled miserably into our tents after each evening meal, and lay there, listening to the rain spattering noisily on the taut balloon silk.

Breakfasts were damp and without cheer, and then would come the task of breaking camp in the downpour and taking up the day's struggle.

Molly bore it without a word of complaint, for she knew the necessity of making quick progress; but I could see that her spirit was affected by the hardship. The rain bothered her, worried her. To prevent her from acquiring too unfavorable an idea of a wet wilderness, I would tell her that rain was not so bad, provided you did not have to move camp and travel, and that I had often been quite comfortable in similar storms. She would smile and assure me that it was all right, and that she really did not mind it; but I knew better. For her own sake I could have wished for her a few days of the stony indifference of Jane.

We were close to the top of the big ridge when our week of bad weather finally came to an end, and as I look back upon that period of travel I am convinced that it was the worst I ever knew. Molly was wan and haggard, but always straightening herself bravely whenever I looked at her, and evidently fearful that I would notice the signs of strain in her face and in the droop of her shoulders.

I thought this was sheer weariness of body and spirit at first, but when the skies cleared, and the woods dried, and Molly still seemed under the same spell of languor I began to realize that something else was the matter. She had taken a cold some days back and developed a cough, which she had been unable to shake off. It seemed that with all her physique she had lost something of the resistance of Jane; she had become more sensitive to her environment. I gave her some medicine for the cough, but it did not seem to take hold or to give her much relief. Even now, however, she never uttered a syllable of protest against our rigorous routine of travel, but less and less was she able to do her share of the work.

One night her coughing in the adjoining tent awakened me, and I called

to her to learn if there was anything I could do for her; but she assured me that it was of no consequence, although for an hour after that I could hear her trying to control the paroxysms.

It was about noon of the following day that the climax came. Molly had scarcely touched a mouthful of breakfast, and had been faltering at her paddle all forenoon. Finally I saw her place her hand to her side and gasp. Without a word I put ashore at the nearest favorable spot and helped her out of the canoe.

"You're ill, Molly," I said.

"I don't think it's anything," she answered, smiling weakly at me.

Her face was flushed, and I placed my hand on her forehead, which I found to be burning.

"Is there a pain in your side where you put your hand?" I asked.

She nodded, and compressed her lips, and then another fit of coughing racked her.

I got the blankets out of the canoe quickly, made a temporary couch for her, and began pitching a hasty camp. My heart was heavy and anxious. The symptoms of the girl left me no room for doubt.

Molly had pneumonia.

CHAPTER XVI.

The Love Cure.

ONCE I had nursed a fellow camper through an attack of pneumonia, a few years before, and I had seen it in mining camps, where there was no physician to be had. I had seen men recover from it, and some die. But never had I been entrusted with the sole responsibility for a sufferer who was hopelessly cut off from medical aid, and who would have to make the fight with no other reliance than the weapons of nature. There was not even a comfort or a luxury I could offer Molly. We were a hundred miles from the nearest outpost of civilization. Her life was in the hands of her Creator.

The first thing I did was to fix a place for her. I wanted her to have air, all the air she could breathe; the weather seemed to have settled fair, and there was no need to shut her within the walls of a tent. So I took her tent and mine and made a sort of canopy of them, with the four sides open to the winds, and then I laid a deep pile of balsam boughs under it, so she could rest as easily as the rough facilities of the woods would permit.

After I had this rude open-air hospital ready for her I carried her to it, wrapped her well in the blankets, and hastened to see what I could do with rough and ready remedies. I did not put much faith in what medicine I carried in my kit, although there was a stimulant there in case it should become necessary. She had the customary chill while I was preparing her bed, and it was quickly followed by a heightening of the fever.

As soon as I had settled her as comfortably as the conditions would permit, I started a fire, mixed a batch of dough, got out the frying-pan, and began making a quantity of soggy flap-jacks. I had picked up the trick from a guide who was a sort of backwoods doctor, and had utilized it once with success. In the absence of other appliances, the hot cakes are applied to the patient's side, over the spot where the pain thrusts like a knife. Also, I heated flat stones in the fireplace I had hastily constructed, wrapped them in our sweaters, and made them do service as water-bottles.

I tried not to show any anxiety in the presence of Molly, who thanked me with her eyes more than with her lips for everything I sought to do for her, but in my heart I was frightened.

She was very ill. Her struggle to keep up the pace at which I had been driving her during the past few days had plainly weakened her; she was not at her best to combat a disease that attacks swiftly and mercilessly.

After a few hours she whispered to me that the pain was less, but her short,

dry cough was shaking her in pitiless fashion, and the fever was mounting. The little clinical thermometer I carried had been broken the day of our upset in the rapid, and I had no means of measuring her temperature; although this did not matter much now, for the mere record of the mercury would not have enabled me to do anything more for her. Her pulse had become swift and tumultuous, and the lungs were fighting for air.

In intervals of attendance upon her I set the camp to some sort of rights, for I realized that we were in for nothing short of a week's siege, and perhaps more, unless she made a quick convalescence. It seemed like selfishness to waste time in getting meals for myself, but I knew the absolute need of keeping my own strength up in this crisis, and could not neglect this irksome part of the camp routine.

Molly knew fully as well as I how seriously she was stricken, but her courage was splendid.

"Pneumonia?" she asked faintly, as I bent over her to change the hot stones that seemed to be giving her some relief from the pain.

"Perhaps," I answered. "But don't worry. It's nothing bad."

"I sha'n't worry," she whispered.

Her dark eyes were bright with the fever, and whenever I was near her they followed every movement I made. I prayed that the weather would stay fine; I did not care how cold the nights became, but I wanted no more rain while we were in our present plight.

Now, indeed, was the time for the magnificent constitution of Jane Boyce to do its work. There was so little I could do that most of the time I simply sat by Molly's side and watched the battle. Occasionally she dozed off into restless sleep, but the cough gave her little surcease from consciousness. Night came, the air began to cool and the breeze was stilled. I lighted a candle, placed it where the light would fall so that I could watch her face, and settled myself for a long vigil.

Our situation was not one calculated to inspire either hope or confidence. No travelers would come through this lonely track in the wild, and there was absolutely no method by which I could summon help for her. A hundred miles away were doctors aplenty; it is a saying around the Deep-Water that every third man you meet in the woods is a physician. But they were as remote from us as if they had been beyond the great seas. It was out of the question to move the girl. Had the remainder of our journey been along an uninterrupted watercourse I might have considered the attempt; I could have made her comfortable in the bottom of the canoe, and she would have been little the worse for traveling. But with portages to cross and rapids to shoot, the thing was impossible. The fight must be made where we were, with no help unless it should come almost as a miracle.

One of her hot, dry hands found its way from underneath the blankets, and I took it and held it. When the fits of coughing seized her her fingers clung convulsively to mine. She seldom spoke to me, but often her great dark eyes watched me. It seemed as though she were quieter and more content when her hand was lying in mine, so I sat there, never leaving her, save when she whispered for a drink of water or when I found it necessary to renew the hot applications.

It is curious how sympathy discovers in us emotions of which we may have been totally ignorant. My mind was filled with anxiety and pity for Molly, at first to the exclusion of everything else; now I began to think of what Molly meant to me. It was difficult to analyze, this sentiment for a woman I hated but a few short days ago. Jane Boyce never awakened anything but hot resentment or cold brooding in me; Molly Hope stirred my nature in a different way.

As I sat watching her came a realization that somehow Molly, unknown to myself, had become a part of all my

thoughts and plans; she had taken a place in my life as naturally and quietly as if the arrangement had been ordained long before. Everything I did or contemplated took into consideration the relation of Molly to it. Her existence had become a part of mine before I was aware of it.

I wanted her to live. There was an element of selfishness in the desire of which I was fully aware. I wanted Molly to live, not merely for her own sake, or for that of her people, who doubtless had long believed her dead; but I wanted her to live for my sake, too. It seemed as though I had some right in her. I had been the means of bringing her back into the flesh; she had no right to depart from me. The responsibility for her restoration had bred in me the notion that I was also responsible for her life thereafter.

All this vague, desultory thinking carried me through the first hours of the night as I huddled at her bedside, shivering now and then from the sharp chill of the air, but not daring to take from her so much as the single thickness of a blanket to throw over my shoulders.

To the next point in my discoveries of unsuspected desires I was carried swiftly by a simple incident. She indicated that she was thirsty again, and I brought her a cup of water, raising her by passing my arm under her shoulders so that she might drink. She swallowed a little, and then her head fell wearily back against my breast. Her eyes looked up at me slowly, her lips smiled faintly, and she murmured something in which I caught my name, but did not understand. Her burning hand groped for mine and held it as I placed her back among the blankets.

And then, just as plainly and calmly as though I had known it for days, I realized that I loved Molly Hope. It was the explanation of all the rest. And as she lay there fighting for breath, I seemed stabbed with the same pain that had stricken her; her suffering was now my suffering; her peril

was mine also. Whether Molly loved me was a matter to which I gave not the slightest thought; it was quite beside the question then. It was enough to know that I loved her; it accounted for the desire to possess, for all the pity and anxiety and fear.

Sometimes I dozed from sheer weariness, although I tried to fight off sleep. My eyes were closed and my head bent upon my breast when the first touch of sunlight awakened me. I bent quickly over and saw that Molly slept, not peacefully and normally, but apparently in utter exhaustion. Our hands were still clasped, and I disengaged mine gently, so as not to awaken her.

It was with difficulty that I arose and moved my cramped limbs to start the blood. And then a baffling sense of impotence and helplessness came over me as I looked down upon the sweet, feverish face of the woman who had taught me first to hate and then to love her. I could only watch and wait, and pray.

All that day, and the night that followed, Molly fought her fight bravely, never flinching when the pain racked her, never complaining when the fever burned fiercely. It was with a sinking heart that I watched the disease make inroads upon her strength, and as she became weaker there were periods when her mind wandered, and she talked without knowing what she said.

I would kneel close to her, bending my ear to catch the words, and sometimes it wrung my heart when she looked up at me with eyes that gave no sign of recognition. A new fear seized me and tortured me. What if Molly's mind should go upon another long, strange journey, perhaps never to return? What if Jane should steal back into her body? The body might live, but it would mean nothing to me without Molly; rather, it would be a mockery.

Hour by hour I listened to her muttered phrases. She was talking of her mother and her home; she was speaking to her brother Frank; she was

writing a letter to her father. Jane had not come. She laughed and chatted with some girl whose name I could not learn; they were going to a theater; they were going to drive; they were talking about dresses. Still Jane had not come. Then she was a little girl again, going to school, and I breathed a sigh of comfort, for Jane was very remote now.

And then, in broken sentences, she began to talk about the woods, and my heart almost stopped beating as I bent to catch the words. She was learning to use a paddle; she was toiling over a rough trail; she was climbing the steep face of Discovery Hill. Then she spoke of the green islands, and finally she was talking about our camp in Molly Lake. I longed to take her by the shoulders and awaken her, but I dared not. Some horrible fascination held me as I knelt there and heard her, step by step, going backward to the

turning point in her life, as remorselessly as though she were being drawn toward it by an unseen force. Would she pass again into the dark personality of Jane when she reached the meeting of the ways? I listened in an agony of suspense; I felt myself face to face with a mystery of some other world.

She called my name and began talking to me; first about the fish she had caught, and then about little trifles that I had forgotten.

"What a queer place. It frightens me. Must we go through there, Ben?"

She was in Blindfold Passage now, and I shuddered.

"I don't like it. It's cold and damp, and there is no sun. Must we go through? Then hurry."

I gritted my teeth and cursed myself for having taken her into the horrible place.

"And—I—I— Oh, Ben! She's coming! It's Jane!"

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

WHERE THIEVES BREAK IN

A SHORT STORY

BY SCAMMON LOCKWOOD

PARSONS, as usual, was spending his Sunday evening in the Lloyds' rather poor little flat.

At the tea-table a discussion had arisen. This had been the question: Supposing a man had a chance to steal a million dollars, but knew that he would be caught within thirty-six hours, where could he hide the money so that he would be absolutely sure of finding it after he had served his prison sentence of, say, ten years?

At first, they had approached the problem in a joking way, as a matter too simple to be taken seriously. Then they had seen that it wasn't so simple as it looked. Banks and safety-deposit vaults were, of course, out of the question.

A man would surely be traced to such places. In fact, a hiding-place in any sort of a building was out of the question. For what building is fire-proof? So finally they came to the unanimous agreement that the money would have to be buried somewhere.

But they couldn't agree that there was a place within a hundred miles of New York where a million dollars could be buried with the absolute certainty that that particular spot would remain undisturbed for ten years. Railroads, agriculture, canals, new towns, all seemed to suggest possibilities for upheavals on the face of nature.

True, they were remote chances, but all agreed that a man serving ten years in jail doesn't want to take any chances whatsoever of not getting his pay when he comes out.

They carried the idle discussion from the tea-table to the cramped living-room, and finally dropped it out of the window or into the waste-basket, without any definite conclusions, as people do with most purposeless arguments.

Presently Marjorie Lloyd rose.

"Well," she said, "to-morrow's blue Monday morning, and I'll have to be up to get Harry's breakfast. You'll excuse me, Mr. Parsons, won't you?"

"Of course," said Parsons, rising.

He never forgot any of the small amenities in Marjorie Lloyd's presence. Even the fact that she had to rise at six-thirty in the morning to prepare breakfast for a small-salaried bank-clerk did not detract from her charm for him.

"I'll be running along myself in a moment," he added.

"Don't keep Harry up too late. You know he's not exactly robust. I guess indoor work's bad for him. Good night." She went into her room and closed the door.

Parsons addressed himself to Lloyd:

"Harry, I've been waiting for the missis to vamoise, because I've got something mighty important to say to you."

"Another get-rich-quick scheme, I suppose?" said Lloyd.

"Yes, another one."

"I never knew you to talk of anything else after ten o'clock on a Sunday evening. I think the close prospect of Monday morning brings it on."

Parsons rose and began speaking, at first quietly, his voice gradually gaining intensity and earnestness.

"Yes, the prospect of a thousand Monday mornings brings it on; and a thousand Tuesdays, and a thousand Wednesdays, and a thousand Thursdays, and a thousand Fridays, and a thousand Saturdays when you're supposed to get off at twelve, but always have to stay for some reason or another."

"In the next twenty years there are just about a thousand weeks. When they're over you'll be fifty and I'll be fifty-three, and we'll be just as poor as we are now, and, to make our case worse, we'll have every particle of sand pounded out of us; we'll be all worked out, and good for nothing."

"I'll never last twenty years at this work," said Lloyd. "The doctor told me I must get out of it."

"Yes, that's another pleasant feature," continued Parsons. "And have you ever figured out how much we'll earn by all that toil, even supposing we do last? Just forty thousand dollars apiece, less than old Grassard makes in one flier on Wall Street with other people's money. The president of our bank gambles with his depositors' mazzuma, and makes more in a day than we can earn in twenty years. That's a strong incentive to honesty, isn't it?"

Parsons paused and planted himself squarely in front of the other man to make sure of his attention.

"Harry, would you take this kind of a chance—three chances of getting rich against one chance of going to jail for seven or eight, or perhaps ten years, with the absolute certainty that, even if you do go to jail, you'll be rich when you come out?"

"How rich?" said Lloyd, more curious than with the faintest idea of making himself liable to a prison term.

"Half a million," said Parsons.

Lloyd laughed. "When it comes to resisting temptations, I've got St. Anthony lashed to the lamp-post."

"You mean that you wouldn't do a

dishonest thing, no matter what there was in it?" asked Parsons.

"I'd try not to."

"Of course, you wouldn't take bread from orphans, or pennies from widows, though some of our most honored citizens and church members do so," continued Parsons. "But would you object to taking a million or so from people who would never feel its loss?"

"Yes, I think I would."

"Why?"

"Because it's wrong."

"There!" exclaimed Parsons. "I was hoping you'd say that. Why is it wrong?"

"Rats!" said Lloyd. "You know."

"I know what you're thinking. You think it's wrong because that is what you were taught when you were a kid. Well, if I show you that your teachers were all liars, perhaps you won't be so sure that they taught the truth. When we were kids we were told that honesty was the best policy. Well, now that we've grown up, we see that was a lie. It isn't the best policy. It's just Hobson's choice for the pikers. But for the man who can be dishonest and get away with it, honesty is just plain foolishness. At school we were told that if we were virtuous we would be happy. Now, we see plainly that that also was a lie. The world is just plumb full of honest and virtuous people who are poor and unhappy, and crooks and moral lepers who are rich and having one grand time of it. Well, the answer is that everything's going to be squared in the hereafter. But what do we know about a hereafter? They told us two lies when we were kids. Why, isn't this hereafter business another one? I tell you, Harry, you can say what you like about morality or honesty, or whatever you want to call it, but I'm pretty near ready for anything."

Lloyd sat silent a moment. He was seeking an answer to Parsons's sophistry. But he could find none. He knew in his heart that Parsons was wrong, but he didn't know how to make him

see it. Then his curiosity came to the top.

"What's the scheme?" he asked.

"We'll just steal the money, that's all."

"It's easy enough to steal it, any amount, the way they run things at the bank," said Lloyd. "But we're sure to be caught. There's no three-to-one chance about that."

"We'll make the three-to-one chance," replied Parsons. "There are times when we could walk away with a million dollars, aren't there?"

"Yes, but we couldn't walk far."

"Well, we won't need to. We will take half a million first, and speculate with it. We could cover that up for a few days. It's an even chance that we win or lose. If we win, all right. We put the original money back and keep our winnings. If we lose, we take all we can put our hands on. Then we toss up to see which one of us takes the blame and goes to jail. That's another even chance. See, each one of us has two even chances of escaping? That makes a three-to-one chance, doesn't it?"

"Yes, I guess so," said Lloyd. "But how'll the man who goes to jail be sure of his share when he comes out?"

"Easy," answered Parsons. "The man who goes to jail takes the money and hides it until his term is over."

"Oh, I see!" said Lloyd.

"Then," continued Parsons, "when his seven or eight, or ten years are up, he comes out and we divide the money, and each one has a million. Is it worth while?"

"How would you speculate with the first half million you take?"

"I'd buy Consolidated Wire. There's a corner in it. If the corner holds, we'll double our money in a week. If it breaks, we'll be wiped out. It's an even chance."

"Half a million's a lot to speculate with. It'll attract notice."

"Divided among twenty brokers it wouldn't; especially with a corner being run. They'd think some insider

was putting up the cash because he wanted to conceal his identity."

"That's true," said Lloyd. "Well, when would we draw lots to see who'd be the goat?"

"When the money is in the hands of the brokers. Then it would be too late for the fellow who lost to back out."

"We wouldn't trust each other any, would we?" smiled Lloyd.

"Not ten cents' worth," said Parsons grimly.

"You've certainly got it all figured out, haven't you?"

"I've been figuring on it for a long time."

Lloyd pondered a moment.

"Ha!" he finally laughed. "When you stop to think of it, it does seem foolish the way big banks leave millions lying around loose for almost any of the higher employees to walk off with."

"Harry, will you come in on this with me?" said Parsons suddenly.

Lloyd looked astonished, almost thunderstruck. He felt like a boy who has been talking about being a pirate suddenly confronted with the opportunity.

"Go on; you're kidding," he said, as a sort of a parry to gain time.

"No, I'm not kidding," answered Parsons emphatically. "I'm in dead earnest, and I want you to feel the same way. Remember, it's only one chance in three of having to go to jail, and absolute certainty of riches whether you go or not."

"But it's crooked," said Lloyd.

"Oh, hell, Harry!" returned Parsons. "Drop that Sunday-school stuff. I suppose it is crooked, but it isn't so crooked as selling fake mining stock to poor people, is it?"

Lloyd stroked his chin, and in so doing made the sign by which the weak, the irresolute, the vacillating man is at once known to his stronger, more purposeful brother.

The gesture encouraged Parsons more than an expression of determina-

tion would have done. It encouraged him as a clever prize-fighter is encouraged when he sees his opponent gasping for wind. He rose, came over to Lloyd, and put his hand upon his shoulder with almost a fatherly manner.

"Listen, old man," he said. "All you need is a little nerve. It requires nerve, a gambler's nerve, to take even a three-to-one chance like this. I'm going to make it easy for you. We'll call the deal closed and agreed to until you say it's off. If you don't call it off by eleven o'clock to-morrow, I'll take the coin and put it on Consolidated Wire among twenty brokers for our first chance. Remember it's only a three-to-one chance you're taking. Remember you're not really injuring any one. Remember that, even if you lose, ten years in jail with riches at the end is better than ten years in that jail of a bank, with nothing but the poorhouse to look forward to."

He rose, got his hat, and went to the door. Lloyd did not move. He sat with his head buried in his hands.

"It stands that way, then," said Parsons. "If you don't call it off by eleven to-morrow, it goes. Good night."

He quickly opened the door, went out, and closed it gently after him as if he was afraid that even a slamming door would disturb Lloyd's resolution.

Nearly two hours later, Lloyd rose and went wearily to his room like a man on whose shoulders some fearful load has just been piled. He slept hardly at all that night.

Parsons went to his own room, smoked a cigar, undressed, clambered into bed, and slept the calm and peaceful sleep of the just.

The Colonial National Bank was one of New York's newer financial institutions. Its creation had been sudden, and its rise a bit spectacular. Its president, J. R. Grassard, was known for a plunger who always won, and hence he was supposed to have some underground connections with the country's masters of capital.

On this particular Monday morning the bank was only seven years old, yet it had deposits aggregating more than half a billion dollars.

Lloyd was the "F" to "J" paying-teller, and Parsons had the cage next to him and paid to depositors whose names began with the letters from "K" to "O." Both had access to the vaults, though neither knew the combination. Any money taken would have to be taken during business hours; but Parsons had his plans carefully worked out.

He knew of packages of high-denomination treasury notes whose wrappings he could easily imitate, and of whose serial numbers the bank had no record. The first thing he did when he reached his desk was to prepare duplicates of these packages and assure himself that the real money was still undisturbed in the vaults.

How long it would remain undisturbed was a matter of doubt, and really the only weak place in his plans. A call for some large sum in currency might come at any time, but it was highly probable that it would not. The discovery of the dummy packages might not be made for a week.

All morning Lloyd was in an agony of nervous uncertainty. He was determined to tell Parsons to call the deal off, but he kept delaying action. He told himself that he wanted to consider every side of the question. In reality, he was only in the grasp of his native inhibition, the very quality which would have protected him had not Parsons so adroitly turned it to his own purposes.

During the night he had been over and over and over the reasons pro and con, and he knew that he did not want to do this thing. The hands of the clock loafed around to ten, and the stream of customers began at his window.

The hands of the clock fairly galloped to ten forty-five. He had fifteen minutes. He would tell Parsons at once; for he knew that if he didn't Parsons might walk out of the bank

that very morning with the money with which they were to speculate.

At ten-fifty he turned to go to Parsons's cage when one of the office boys came to him and said that Mr. Andrews, the first vice-president, wished to see him in his office.

Lloyd actually shuddered. His momentary panic was as great as though he had already stolen the money and was about to be accused and arrested. Then he recovered himself and, with a smile at the absurdity of his fears, stepped into Mr. Andrews's office. He knew it would only be a word that the first vice-president would want to say, and then he could tell Parsons to call the deal off.

But Mr. Andrews, for once at least, had considerable to say, and most of it concerned Lloyd and the fact that his work for some time past had not been at all satisfactory.

Lloyd excused himself with the plea that his health had been bad.

"Take a vacation," said Mr. Andrews. "We'll gladly arrange to let you off for a couple of months and hold your position open for you."

Lloyd knew it was useless to reply that he couldn't afford that, so he said he'd try to brace up for a week or so, and that if there wasn't any improvement he'd ask to be relieved for two or three months. Mr. Andrews said that that would be satisfactory, and indicated that the interview was at an end.

Lloyd walked out and looked at the clock. It was five minutes past eleven. Parsons's assistant was in his cage, and Parsons himself had gone.

"Oh, what in hell's the difference!" Lloyd half muttered to himself as he went to his own cage. On his desk he found a note from Parsons, appointing a rendezvous for one o'clock. He went through his work mechanically, and met Parsons at a small lunch-room which they both frequented. They got a table to themselves in a secluded corner.

"It's all right," said Parsons, as they sat down. "Twenty brokers each have

twenty-five thousand deposited under the name of Amos R. Cummings with orders to buy Consolidated Wire at the market. We're playing on a twenty-dollar margin. If the stock jumps twenty points, we double our money. If it drops twenty points, we'll be wiped out. It'll go one way or the other inside of two days."

"You'll be recognized," said Lloyd.

"Not in these," answered Parsons, showing the end of a false mustache and goatee which he had put in his pocket.

"What's to be done now?" asked Lloyd.

"Nothing much," said Parsons. "Only I wanted you to prepare a letter. Then, to-night, we'll meet and toss up to see who's to be the goat if Consolidated Wire goes down."

"What do you mean by a letter?" said Lloyd.

"I'll show you," said Parsons, taking a folded paper from his pocket and handing it over to Lloyd.

"Why, this is a complete and detailed confession of the whole business," said Lloyd, after reading.

"Sure it is," replied Parsons. "That's what we draw for. Do you get me?"

"I guess so."

"You see," continued Parsons, "if the money was missed, and there was nothing to show who took it, you and I, as well as the other tellers, would all be under suspicion, and they'd eventually trace the business to us. But if there's a definite confession from one man, there'll be no danger of any one else getting involved. Do you get that also?"

Lloyd nodded, and Parsons continued:

"Write your letter on the sort of stationery you usually use at home and date it—let's see, this is the sixth, we'll know about Consolidated Wire in three days; if we lose, one of us will take the money Saturday so as to have until Monday to hide it—date your letter Monday, the thirteenth."

Lloyd leaned over to Parsons as he helped himself to a piece of omelet.

"There's one little detail you haven't worked out yet. Where is the money to be hidden in case that becomes necessary?"

"I'll tell you that this evening," Parsons replied, "after we draw for the letters; that is, if you lose."

"Have you figured out how big a package a million will make?"

"I have," Parsons answered, taking out a memorandum-book. "In thousand-dollar bills, it will need a box six and one-quarter by seven and one-half by three inches. In mixed denominations, as we'll probably have to take it, it will require a little more space. But don't worry about that. I've got several boxes of different sizes."

"Tin?" inquired Lloyd.

"Nix," said Parsons. "See what a valuable partner in crime I am. Tin rusts. We want nothing that moth or rust can consume. I've had copper boxes made, and I've had 'em all made at different places and different times. And I've paid a plumber to teach me how to solder, and I've got a complete soldering outfit in my room right now. Oh, no, my boy, you'll find that your guardian angel hasn't overlooked one single little thing."

"Well," said Lloyd, as they rose and reached for their hats, "Consolidated Wire may go up."

"An even chance," said Parsons as they went out, neither one having eaten more than a mouthful. "You go ahead; we must not be seen returning together."

Though Parsons had not actually planned any crookedness in the drawing of lots, he was not in the least above it. He decided that he couldn't be sure of causing Lloyd to draw the jail sentence, but that he must keep on the alert, and if he saw an opportunity, make the most of it.

The whole business must be free from every taint of suspicion in Lloyd's mind at least, because if he lost and then backed out of doing his part,

it would simply mean that two would go to jail instead of one. And that would be foolish.

That evening he treated himself to a fine dinner at an expensive hotel, going even to the extravagance of a pint of champagne. If matters went well with him, the good things of life would henceforth be his portion. This hotel, overlooking the Rialto, would become a frequent recipient of his patronage. It would be just as well to get acquainted at once. If things went ill, there was no harm in having an evening's enjoyment while he could.

The dinner, the champagne, the fine music, the air of wealth, the obsequious behavior of the waiter to whom he gave a dollar tip, all combined to make him feel more prosperous, more sure of success than he had ever felt before.

When he made the appointment with Lloyd for that evening he knew that Marjorie Lloyd would not be at home, for on Sunday she had mentioned that she was to play cards with some friends.

So, as he rang Lloyd's bell, he was turning over in his mind just how they would decide the momentous question as to which one must take on his shoulders the onus and the punishment for what they were doing.

Lloyd opened the door. He was nervous and worried-looking. Clearly he had none of Parsons's natural coolness. The thought of what he was doing, sharing in, of the risk he ran, was taking possession of him and rapidly throwing him into a condition bordering on nervous prostration. His run-down physical condition, of course, reacted on his nerves.

Owing to his scanty lunch, he had been hungry at dinner and had eaten enormously. Now he felt a sort of a nervous nausea. This, added to his nervous apprehension, rendered him a really pitiable sight.

"Have you got your letter ready?" said Parsons.

Lloyd nodded and produced a square

envelope. They walked into the living-room, and Parsons continued:

"Well, thought of the best way to settle things?"

"Cut the cards," said Lloyd timidly, fearing that Parsons might not approve. An hour before he had bent and torn off a corner of the ace of diamonds in the only pack of cards he owned. He knew in his own heart that it was a clumsy device, and he wondered if the clever Parsons would not see through it at once. But Parsons was feeling particularly unsuspicious.

"All right," he said, "put the letters together. Here's mine. Read it and see that it's all right, while I read yours."

"It's all right," said Lloyd.

"Now, the fellow who wins the cut keeps both letters, see?" said Parsons. Lloyd nodded.

The two men sat at the ungainly mission center-table. Lloyd opened a drawer and pulled out the cards. They felt familiar in his hands. He had been practising to cut the ace of diamonds for nearly an hour. He realized that he could not be certain of doing it, but he knew the chances were very much in his favor.

"Shall we make it one cut?" said Parsons, figuring to himself that one cut would give him a better chance to cheat than if several were required to win.

"All right," answered Lloyd.

"Ace high?" asked Parsons.

"Of course," replied Lloyd, feeling astonished that Parsons should happen to propose exactly the things he wished. "Do you want to riffle them?"

He handed the pack to Parsons, who shuffled and cut them in all ways known to card-players. Lloyd watched his every move.

Parsons saw aces and kings and queens flit by as the cards slipped through his hands, but he could think of no way of making it certain that he would cut one. Finally he handed the cards back to Lloyd, who gave them a perfunctory shuffle and laid them on

the table. As he faced them the broken corner of the ace of diamonds was at his left. The thumb of his right hand would cover it perfectly.

Parsons cut the cards once and straightened them out. Still Lloyd's ace was in the proper position. But Parsons had nicked a queen with his finger-nail, and now he saw the nick near the bottom of the pack. He spoke:

"Go ahead."

Lloyd reached out in an apparently careless manner and picked up perhaps twenty cards.

Parsons picked up the same number. They both held the cards face down.

"All right?" said Lloyd, feeling certain that he had his ace.

"Sure," said Parsons, happy in the thought that he had been able to cut the queen.

Both men turned up their cards.

"Well," said Parsons, tossing his on the table, "I lose; here's the letters." And he pushed them toward Lloyd, who threw down his cards and put the two envelopes into his pocket. Then he opened the drawer of the table and raked the cards into it pell-mell. He wanted to get his ace with the broken corner out of sight as quickly as possible.

"Well, Harry," said Parsons, trying to be game, "I congratulate you. There's nothing for me now but to hope that Consolidated Wire will go up."

"I hope so, too," Lloyd replied. "It would certainly be the easiest way out of things for both of us. Is there anything more to be done?"

"Not for you, Harry; but I've got a lot of things to plan, so I must hurry along."

"I have to call for Marjorie in half an hour," answered Lloyd. "I'll go out with you."

"Well," exclaimed Parsons as they reached the street, "it's raining."

"I'll lend you an umbrella," Lloyd quickly answered, and ran up-stairs before Parsons could interpose an objection.

It gave him a feeling of relief to do something for Parsons, even so small a thing as lend an umbrella.

"Where's yours?" asked Parsons, seeing that Lloyd had brought down only one.

"Oh, I've only got a step or two."

Parsons thanked him, took the umbrella, and went his way. That night he took his turn at lying awake.

Lloyd felt as if he must walk for leagues and leagues before he met his wife. He had lied in telling Parsons that he had to call for her in half an hour. He was really not due for nearly two hours, and he spent the entire time in walking aimlessly in every direction. He had no umbrella, but he forgot that it rained.

His clothing became soaked to his very skin, and he was chilled to the marrow, yet he walked on and on. He was nearly an hour late in calling for his wife, and when she saw his damp condition she hurried him home without asking any questions, and urged him to get out of his wet clothing and into his bed.

Lloyd slept well, but woke in the morning with a heavy cold. He worked all day in alternating chills and fever, and went home a very sick man.

Consolidated Wire had opened a point under the price at which Parsons had bought it, so there was nothing to do but wait. During the day it dropped another point. The activity in this stock which Parsons had expected, and which had been predicted by most of the financial writers, seemed to be holding off.

On Wednesday morning, about five o'clock, Lloyd awoke. In the semi-consciousness of sleep's borderland he wondered why he had so much difficulty in breathing. As more of his faculties resumed their functions he became convinced that some practical joking cooper had drawn a steel barrel hoop tightly about his chest. He could only take in a mere pinch of air before something that at least felt like a steel hoop stopped him.

He tried to call his wife, who slept in the next room, but he found that he could barely whisper. So he lay, gasping, for nearly two hours until Marjorie came in to wake him, as she always did about seven o'clock.

She saw at once that he was seriously ill, and immediately telephoned for their doctor. He came, heard about Lloyd's run-down condition, his upset stomach, the wetting and chill of Monday evening, and told Mrs. Lloyd that her husband had a dangerous attack of pneumonia; that she must order a trained nurse and a tank of oxygen and begin a vigorous attack on the disease before it was too late.

That morning Parsons noticed that Lloyd did not appear, and wondered at it. All day Consolidated Wire was steady, with little trading, though the stock-wise gossips in the cafés and on the street corners said that it was the quiet before the storm. But no one was agreed on what the storm would do. Some said Consolidated Wire would collapse; others that before the inevitable crash came it would go up one hundred points, in which event Lloyd and Parsons would win exactly two and one-half million dollars.

Parsons made a mental memorandum to call Lloyd up in the evening to see what the trouble was, though he supposed it to be merely an aggravation of the cold he had on Tuesday.

But some friends asked him to dinner, and after dinner they went to a musical show, and after the show they had something more to eat and drink. Parsons forgot all about calling Lloyd up.

Thursday morning he heard from one of the other tellers that Lloyd was not expected to live. Half an hour later the news circulated through the bank that Lloyd was dead. At almost the same hour the crash came in Consolidated Wire, the stock dropped forty points in about as many minutes, and the holdings of Parsons and Lloyd, under the name of Amos R. Cummings, were wiped out.

Parsons's first thought was that Lloyd's death solved one problem for him very nicely. It provided an easy means for hiding the money until his jail term was over. His plan had always been to bury the money in some cemetery, because a cemetery is almost the only place not subject to condemnation proceedings, and therefore practically certain to remain undisturbed for an indefinite length of time. Lloyd's death would save him the trouble of even digging a hole in the ground. He would merely sneak the money into Lloyd's coffin and let them bury it with him.

But then suddenly, like a flash, Parsons saw that it was not going to be necessary to hide the money anywhere. Lloyd was dead. Why not take what money he could and fasten the whole business upon the dead man? And then there was Marjorie Lloyd. The suddenness of his good fortune almost stunned him. He was a man of destiny. Men even died when necessary that his pathway might be clear.

Then he saw that he must get the two letters for which he and Lloyd had cut the cards on Monday evening. Where were they? Beyond a shadow of doubt, in Lloyd's pocket. There was small possibility that they had been disturbed. Still, the time to see was right now. And the time to take what money he could was right now, so that the belief that Lloyd had taken it would be more plausible.

Parsons left the bank that afternoon with packages of money amounting to nearly a million dollars distributed about his person. He went straight to his room and locked himself in. Then he got out his copper boxes and selected the one which the money fitted exactly. It was about the size of a three-pound box of candy, only a trifle wider and shorter.

He packed the money in tightly, keeping out only a few bills of small denomination, and got out his soldering kit. He had a small Bunsen burner with a rubber hose, which he attached

to his gas fixture. He scraped the edges of the box, applied the acid, and then drew a gleaming line of hot solder along the joints. He had practised this many times, and he made a perfect job of it.

He did up his box of money in ordinary wrapping-paper, and took the Subway for the Lloyds' flat.

The undertaker had been there and done his work. Lloyd reposed in a simple casket in the bedroom in which he had died.

Mrs. Lloyd, her mother, and one or two near relatives were in the front room. Mrs. Lloyd greeted Parsons naturally, and, after a word or two of thanks for his conventional expressions of condolence, suggested that he might like to step in and look at his dead friend.

He went in and stood over the coffin a moment, his hat and his precious package in one hand.

His eye calculated the space under the coffin lid. Yes, there was no doubt but what he could slip the box of currency under there, easily, and probably push it back as far as the dead man's knees, where there would be not the slightest danger of discovery.

He turned to make some ordinary remark to Mrs. Lloyd, but found that she had not followed him into the room. She had gone back to the front room and left him alone.

It was too easy. He had not expected such luck as this. Again, he saluted the star which ruled his destiny. He looked about. Yes, there, just inside the closet door, was the very coat that Lloyd had worn all day Tuesday at the bank. Parsons recognized it at once, because he had been present when Lloyd ordered the suit.

He glided over to the closet door and put his hand in the coat-pocket. He felt some papers, he drew them out. Yes, there were the letters. He put them quietly in his own pocket and resumed his place at the head of the coffin. He waited a moment and then went into the living-room.

Mrs. Lloyd asked him if he would act as one of the pall-bearers, and he answered that he would gladly do so.

He went to his room, changed the date on Lloyd's letter from the thirteenth to the seventh, then went out to dinner, returned, and went to bed.

He found a box containing a million stolen dollars an uneasy roommate. As the night advanced, he heard numbers of mysterious noises. A dozen times he got up and put the box in a different hiding-place.

He told himself a hundred times that there was no sense in feeling nervous or worried. He convinced his own reason that the noises he heard were the same noises that had passed unnoticed night after night ever since he had occupied this room.

He tried to read. But he could not fasten his mind on anything. He smoked innumerable cigarettes. Finally, he shaved, bathed, dressed, and sat up, waiting for morning. It came on leaden feet; he went to breakfast and to the bank, arriving there, as he intended, considerably before any of the others.

Lloyd's desk was undisturbed. Parsons put the letter in a wire basket containing a lot of miscellaneous papers. It was addressed to Mr. Andrews, the first vice-president, and would undoubtedly be seen and delivered as soon as the inevitable clean-up of Lloyd's desk took place; probably that very day.

At one o'clock Parsons went out to lunch, but could eat nothing. On the street, while returning to the bank, the idea came to him that he was being shadowed. At first he scoffed at the notion and tried to tell himself that this was only another part of his foolish nervousness.

But the belief kept recurring, and, finally, he decided that the only thing to do was to prove absolutely that he was mistaken. So he walked deliberately to Broadway and Wall Street and stood there a moment as if waiting for a car. A Columbus Avenue rattler came along.

He waited until every one who appeared to want that car got aboard, and then he jumped on. The car started, and a man broke out of the crowd on the corner and boarded it. Parsons took a detailed mental photograph of him. If any one was following him, that was the man. He rode to Lisenard Street and got off. The man got off at Canal, or, at least, Parsons thought he saw him get off there, and he became panic-stricken at once. He hurried east, to the Subway, and took a train going north, making sure that no one got on after him. He went to his room, took his troublesome treasure and started for Lloyd's flat. He decided that if he was being shadowed, it proved that they had discovered the loss of the money and suspected him. He would put the money where it would be safe, until he wanted it, and then, come what might, he could always have ultimate riches to look forward to.

Before he reached Lloyd's flat he bought some flowers, and put his own precious parcel in the box with them.

When Mrs. Lloyd opened the door, he said: "I came back with some flowers. I just thought I'd like to arrange them myself. May I?"

"Oh, thank you, Mr. Parsons," she replied quietly. "Of course, go in."

He went into the room, unwrapped the flowers and arranged them over the foot of the coffin. While doing this he also managed to slip the box of money under the coffin-lid, and to push it back about eighteen or twenty inches. He fussed with the flowers for a moment longer and then came out. Mrs. Lloyd met him.

"I'm glad you brought those," she said. "I know Harry would be pleased to think that you remembered him."

"It's not very much we can do," he said, rather flatly.

He bowed and went out, feeling tremendously relieved. He now felt sure that the idea he had been shadowed was pure imagination. He hurried to the Subway and got back to the bank

without having been gone more than forty minutes over his allotted time.

At about five o'clock Mr. Andrews, the first vice-president, came out of his office, went to Lloyd's cage and began fumbling with some of the papers on the deserted desk. Parsons's heart raced like an auto-engine opened wide and running free.

He felt for a moment as if he must yell, tear his hair, throw ink-wells and sponge-cups and money in every direction, run amuck like a crazy negro or Indian. He felt the blood being forced by the violent action of his heart into every vein and artery and gland of his body.

But by a tremendous effort he compelled himself to remain quiet; to appear as though he was going on with his work in the regular way.

After a moment or two, Mr. Andrews came to Lloyd's letter. He glanced curiously at the superscription, picked up a paper-cutter, slit the envelope open, pulled out its contents, and began to read. Parsons saw his face set, saw him hurry through to the end, fold up the letter, hold it in one hand, and appear to fumble through some papers.

Presently he went back to his office and closed the door. Nothing more happened. Parsons waited as long as he felt that he could, without exciting comment, and left the bank. Again he was in a condition bordering on nervous collapse.

He had eaten practically no lunch, and now he could eat no dinner. He went to his room, worn out, and tried to sleep. But, though he was physically exhausted, his mind was a maelstrom. He could not lie still for two minutes. As he had done on the previous night, he rose, bathed, dressed, and tried to sit out the long hours. But even this he could not do.

He finally took his hat and left the house. He walked, rode in cars, sat on park benches, drank innumerable cups of coffee, and so passed the time until morning.

He bought the early newspaper editions. On the front page, under flaming head-lines, was the announcement of the bank's loss. He hardly dared to read it, for fear some one would see him and suspect his secret. He put the paper in his pocket, bought all the other papers, and went back to his room. Then he devoured every word of the story.

He was astonished that the bank had permitted the thing to get into the newspapers at all. He had felt sure that they would exhaust every device to keep the theft a secret, for a loss like this might even have the effect of starting a run. But here was Lloyd's letter published in full. Here were interviews with some of the brokers who had taken the money to be put on Consolidated Wire.

They all said that there was much secret trading in stock of this sort, especially when a corner was being engineered, and that they had taken the money in perfectly good faith. They had supposed some one in the corner was dealing in the stock and wanted to hide his identity.

The article said that the bank officials had so far accounted for only part of the missing money, but that doubtless Lloyd had distributed it among a great number of brokers under several names, and that many of them would never know just how much of his money they actually had handled.

There were interviews with other bankers and financiers, the trend of which was that the theft would be impossible in any properly managed bank, and there was an editorial to the effect that these extraordinary things were always said to be impossible—until after they had happened. The loss of the Titanic was referred to as a case in point.

Some criticized the Colonial National Bank for lax system, and others excused it on the plea that it had grown so rapidly that its methods of handling money had not been able to keep pace with the increase of its deposits.

Although Parsons could not understand why the bank had not kept the thing out of the papers, the fact that Lloyd's letter was clearly accepted as the one explanation of where the money had gone, partly restored his composure. Where an hour before he had felt that it would be easier to walk into a police station and confess than to go to the bank, he now felt that he could put on a fair enough face to meet any one.

When he reached the bank there was a big crowd standing in the street and on the sidewalk. The doors were closed, and a policeman was preventing any one but employees from entering. Parsons gave his name and was immediately admitted.

He went to his desk, and had hardly opened it before a boy told him that Mr. Andrews wanted to see him in the directors' room. He shuddered, then braced himself. After all, probably every teller was being questioned. That would be no more than natural. And, besides, come what might, the money was safe, and he would, at least, be rich in ten or twelve years.

The president and several of the directors were in the room and one stranger, a short, rather thick-set, gray-haired individual, whom Parsons supposed was a detective or a lawyer.

"Good morning, Parsons; you've seen the papers?" was Mr. Andrews's greeting.

"Yes, of course," said Parsons.

"What do you think of it?"

"Why, I was amazed."

"Yes, of course; but do you think that Lloyd speculated with all of that money?"

"Why, I can't possibly say—why, I have no idea."

"You knew him fairly well, didn't you?"

"Intimately."

"Do you think his wife knew what he was doing?"

"No, I think probably not."

"He wasn't dissipated in any way, was he?"

"Not that I know of."

"There's nothing else you can think of that would throw any light on the matter, is there?"

"Not a thing; it was simply stunning to me."

"I suppose you'd like to go to the funeral?"

"Why—er—yes, I was intending to do so. I've promised to be one of the pall-bearers."

"That's all right, you're excused for the morning. Come back this afternoon. We may work late to-night."

"All right; thank you," said Parsons, feeling much relieved, and left the room.

It was only about nine o'clock, so he fussed around a few minutes, exchanged expressions of astonishment with other employees, and started uptown at about ten. He rode a station beyond the Lloyds' and walked back, so as not to be too early.

He kept reviewing in his mind the interview with Mr. Andrews in the directors' room. It seemed to him the most aimless, purposeless performance imaginable. It was only further evidence of the stupidity and bad management that had made the enormous theft possible.

At first he also wondered why they permitted the funeral to proceed without interruption. But then he reflected that nothing could be gained by keeping a dead man unburied. There was not the slightest question about Lloyd having died a perfectly natural death.

On the whole, despite his fearful fatigue and growing nervousness, he felt easier in his mind than he had felt since the previous Monday evening when he and Lloyd had cut the cards.

The door of the Lloyds' flat was opened by the short, rather thick-set, gray-haired man whom Parsons had seen in the directors' room and supposed a detective or lawyer. This latter surmise now appeared to be correct, for Marjorie Lloyd came forward and introduced him as Mr. Decker, her lawyer, and explained that he had been at

the bank that morning on her husband's behalf.

"The whole business is perfectly amazing to me," said Parsons. "I can't believe it. There must be some horrible mistake somewhere. Don't you feel that way?"

"You must excuse me, Mr. Parsons, I can't talk about it at all," replied Mrs. Lloyd. Parsons thought her manner queer, but he attributed it to the exposure of her husband's enormous theft.

"Oh, of course, I understand perfectly," said Parsons, glad to be relieved of the necessity for making up banalities. "Oh, I forgot to ask, where is the burial to be?"

"Burial?" said Mrs. Lloyd. "I thought you understood."

"Understood what?" stammered Parsons, completely mystified.

"There's to be no burial."

"No burial! What do you mean?"

"Why, Harry is to be cremated."

"Cremated!" Parsons almost shrieked.

"Yes, it was his dying request."

"But you mustn't do that!" exclaimed Parsons, forgetting himself utterly in his terror.

"Why not?"

"Why, because—because—because it's not Christian." Parsons had a dim recollection of having heard that cremation was a pagan practise, and he jumped desperately at the converse of that fact.

"I'm afraid none of us have been very good Christians," answered Mrs. Lloyd sadly.

"Well, now is the very best time to turn over a new leaf," said Parsons with hypocritical piety.

"By disregarding a death-bed request?"

"Such a request as that, by all means."

"Oh, but he was out of his mind, Mr. Decker," Parsons included the lawyer in his plea. "Surely you will join your voice with mine in an appeal to Mrs. Lloyd not to allow this."

"I can't agree with you," was the imperturbable reply. "To me it seems an excellent sanitary measure."

"Ever since Harry saw his mother buried, he has had a horror of graves," Mrs. Lloyd added.

"And so you substitute a worse horror! Oh, I won't be able to bear it!" Parsons almost raved. "Why, I can't see the body of my friend put in a furnace and consumed like a piece of garbage!"

He had gone too far. Both Marjorie and Mr. Decker were beginning to look at him queerly, Parsons thought, and, for a moment, this checked his tirade. Then others came in, among them the minister at whose church the Lloyds had nominally worshiped.

Parsons looked into the room where Lloyd's body lay. The panel over the head was still open. Was there yet chance for him to extract his treasure? There was absolutely none. Several people were in the room, and the minister was even then preparing to begin the short services.

Presently there was a hush, and then came the familiar opening words of the burial ritual: "I am the resurrection and the life."

Parsons heard nothing beyond this but the hum of the minister's voice. He cursed his folly in putting the money in Lloyd's coffin. He cursed Lloyd for suddenly taking this odd notion. He raged at the idea that all his mental sufferings were to go for naught, that all his plans, so perfect, and until now working so smoothly, were to be upset by this one unforeseen contingency. It must be stopped!

He would stop it! He couldn't stand by, supine, and see a million dollars, his million dollars, reduced to ashes. But, no, perhaps they would take the body out of the coffin. They would find the box, and, of course, give it to Mrs. Lloyd. Then he would quietly explain things to her and offer to share the spoils. This hope restored him momentarily.

The minister's voice died out, the

undertaker stepped forward and closed the slide of the coffin.

Parsons was one of the pall-bearers. There were five others, two men from the bank and three relatives of Lloyd's whom Parsons knew slightly.

The undertaker touched him on the shoulder to indicate that all was ready. He rose mechanically and grasped one of the handles. The actual physical labor of carrying the casket downstairs seemed to steady him momentarily.

Four of the pall-bearers got into one carriage, Parsons and one of the men from the bank into another. Mrs. Lloyd's lawyer, Mr. Decker, and one of Lloyd's cousins filled the other two seats.

During the ride to the cemetery, in which the crematory was located, Parsons again burst out in a tirade against what was to be done. He knew that he should not, that it was to no purpose, but he simply couldn't keep still. Mr. Decker, it developed, had quite an extensive knowledge of cremation, and Parsons learned to his further agony that the body was not to be removed from the casket, that they merely unscrewed the metal plate and handles and put casket and all into the retort, and that the heat was supposed to reach about twenty-five hundred degrees Fahrenheit.

At the cemetery there was no further formality. The incinerator was heated and ready. The casket was taken out, placed on iron wheels which rested on rails running into the retort. The metal parts were unscrewed, the doors of the retort opened, a volcanic blast for an instant burst forth, the casket was pushed in, and the doors closed.

Then every one turned and went back to the carriages—every one except Parsons. He seemed unable to tear himself away, and no one paid any attention to him.

"How long does it take?" he asked an attendant.

"Between three and four hours, but we usually allow four."

A dozen times Parsons started away, and a dozen times was drawn back fascinated.

After, perhaps half an hour, he saw Mr. Decker returning. He wondered what brought him back.

As Decker approached, Parsons saw him take a package from a man who accompanied him and tear off the wrapping.

For the last time hope bounded in Parsons's breast. Decker had his box of money! His reason had no time to go further.

"That what worried you?" said Decker, holding up the box.

"Yes!" shouted Parsons. "Where did you get it?"

"In your room," said Decker, and then Parsons saw that it was not the box of money, but one of the others he had had made and neglected to dispose of.

"Put the nippers on him, Myers," added Decker, showing a detective's star.

"What for?" demanded Parsons.


"No use bluffing, Parsons," said Decker, as together they handcuffed him and led him toward a patrol-wagon which stood a little distance off. "We've got a clear case. We were not sure that Lloyd's letter was genuine, so we let the story go into the papers to put the guilty man at ease. We, of course, searched Lloyd's house. The casket was an obvious hiding-place for the money if Mrs. Lloyd was implicated. When we found it, we were not sure that she had put it there, so we let things take their course, in the mean time sending men to search your room. But your behavior, and the stuff we found, gave you dead away and cleared her completely."

Parsons sank back on the seat of the wagon. Decker's voice became dim and droning in his ears. A feeling of joy surged through him. Wherever they were taking him, he would get rest and food at least, and the agonizing suspense of the past hours was over.

TROUSERS AND THE MAN

A SHORT STORY

BY MARY RIDER MECHTOLD

HE front door opened noisily, then slammed with a bang. They all knew it was George entering.

"Hello, mom!" he called out in his exuberant, boyish way.

"Hello, son. I was beginning to wonder—" before his mother had finished he had tossed a box on the front stair, plunged into the library, and made straight for the pop-corn bowl.

"George, what do you mean by being out so late?"

For reply, George gave his sister Elizabeth a look of pitying contempt. Since her return from college she had altogether too many fancy notions as to what he should or shouldn't do, and being thirteen and a half, he considered himself capable of attending to his own affairs.

"Nine o'clock isn't late, is it, mom?"

He bent over the back of the big easy chair and kissed his mother.

Marcy, at the opposite side of the big, round library table, looked up from

her book—"Softie," she said, "you girls must stop teasing your brother."

The mother patted his cheek and gave him a look that only came into her eyes when he was near. Not that she did not love her three girls, or was not proud of them, as she had every reason to be, but her life seemed to center in this only boy, who happened along eight years after the rest of the group. And of late she had had a peculiar choking feeling whenever he came bursting into the room, for she began to realize that he was no longer a baby.

From a handsome, well-proportioned, light-haired, blue-eyed boy, he had become an uncouth cub. His hair had grown tawny and stubborn; his hands, feet, nose, and ears were large enough for a six-foot-two man; and the slender, slightly stooped body was trying hard to grow up to the extremities. He was almost as tall as his father.

"I suppose that you have been to Virginia's?" Elizabeth's critical look was promptly returned.

"Sure. I went down to the train to meet Mrs. Scott and Virginia, and walked up to their house with them. Virginia's prettier than ever, mama, and she has some beautiful new furs. They had a fine time at her grandmother's. Mrs. Scott looks lots better," he added in the little old-fashioned way he had gained from listening to his mother and Aunt Nell talk.

"I hope you didn't go in while they ate their supper."

"I did, Marcy, for Mrs. Scott asked me to"—he gave a tantalizing pull at one of Marcy's carefully arranged puffs—"false hair—ugh!"

"Mother—make him stop!"

"George, don't be rough with your sisters."

"Gee—they make me tired." Then he purposely tripped over Elizabeth's feet as he passed her—"but I love Betty, angel-face, just the same." The gorillalike arms were about her neck.

"Let go of me at once, George!" commanded the dignified freshman.

"All right, Betty!" His voice cracked more than usual, so Elizabeth contented herself with exclaiming: "Such a voice!"

"Down at Scott's no one ever says anything mean to me;" he was fishing for a rise, and he got it from Marcy.

"You'd better move down there—might as well. Really, George, it's disgraceful the way you hang around with the girls."

The mother looked at Marcy reprovingly, then turned to the boy. "It's all right, George, you go to see Virginia whenever her mother says that you may. She is a nice little girl."

"You bet she is—and she can do things, and talk about things that are interesting. She isn't silly like most girls." His sisters, to his disappointment, disregarded the thrust.

"But, say, honestly, Mr. Scott is an awful grouch. Don't see why Mrs. Scott ever married him. Why, tonight, when Virginia said to bring Cliff in because it was so cold out, and they'd feed him in the kitchen, Mr. Scott made an awful row. Said he wouldn't have any dog in his house. Didn't have no chickens or dogs of his own, because he hated them, and was getting tired of chasing the neighbors' animals out of his yard. Going to put a stop to it. Mrs. Scott felt awful bad at his talk—you could tell, and Virginia kind of cried when she went to the door with me to put Cliff out; she's awful fond of Cliff. He's a cute dog, all right, and he's smart, too."

"Did you put him in the barn?" asked Marcy. She had been ill and unable to go to college as the two other sisters had, so she had expended her force in loving the birds and beasts, as well as all of the neighbors in this interior town of twenty thousand.

"No? Why, isn't Cliff home? I sent him, when Virginia and I put him out. I didn't expect him to really go—he always waits for me—but he wasn't there when I came out."

George dashed to one of the windows that looked out on the front

porch. The windows reached to the floor and were of the same generous proportion as the rest of the house, with its huge double parlors on one side, and library and lounging-room on the other; and a big, wide hall between reaching back to the dining-room that ran crosswise through the house and welcomed the morning and afternoon sun, through opposing conservatories.

"It's funny Cliff isn't here." The boy was plainly worried. "He generally puts his nose up against the window and cries to get in."

"Yes, and in consequence the windows and porch are a disgrace. I agree with Mr. Scott," added Mrs. Peaslee. "Dogs are a nuisance in town. I wish your father would send him to one of the farms."

"Why, mother!" Six pairs of indignant eyes were turned upon her, and the mother had to meet the united disapproval of her offspring.

"Of course, Cliff is a nice dog," she added to conciliate them.

"You bet, and you like him as much as any of us, doesn't she, girls? Why, when pop told me to feed him bread and milk during the hunting season, I used to see you pour cream into his milk." The mother laughingly resumed her sewing. "I'll whistle for Cliff."

Before he reached the door the voices in the parlor, across the hall, attracted his attention, and he returned for information.

"Who's Bun's beau to-night?"

"Hush, George—he might hear." Elizabeth had a feeling of sympathy for the older sister across the hall.

"It's Mr. Minor. Say good evening to him if you wish, then go to bed. Now, mind mother."

"Is Bun going to marry him?"

There was a dead silence—but it didn't abash George. "Slug Wilson said he heard his mother tell his father that it looked like the Peaslees would finally have a wedding in the family."

"George!" admonished the mother.

"Well, I wish one of the girls would

marry and live in some other town, so I'd have some place to visit. Say, Betsy, if Bun marries Grant Minor, will I have to give back the knife Howard Kellog, her other beau, gave me? I don't see why she don't marry Howard—I like him. Grant Minor's a stiff; why, he's never given me a thing."

Boys of thirteen aren't psychic, but they know when the atmosphere is too laden with deadly waves of disapproval. George made for the door, and whistled for his dog before attempting to further express his views.

"I don't want any one coming to my room, not till I call, mom, after I'm in bed. Oh, mom," he came back and whispered in her ear, "Virginia brought me a lovely present. I'll show it to you when you come up—but don't tell the girls."

"Tootsie, wootsie," teased Marcy. "Honestly, George, you're a regular girl; and yet you're always pretending you're grown up, want long trousers."

"I'm going to have them. Pop says I'm big enough."

"You certainly would look better with a little draping over that long expanse of stockinged bone," murmured Elizabeth.

"Come to mother, George, and all of you stop this talk about long trousers—it's absurd. Why, George is nothing but a baby." She tried to hold him in her lap. The extra lengths of arms and legs doubled about her and the chair, and the boy joined his sisters in peals of laughter at the picture he made—as an infant.

"You are nothing but a baby," the mother reasserted, "and if you put on long trousers every one will expect as much of you as of a man. They all expect too much now."

He returned his mother's caress by rubbing his cheek against hers—then bounded to the door.

"You make me laugh, mom. Marcy, call me when Cliff comes."

"I'll put him to bed," Marcy answered good-naturedly. "George, there's a piece of chocolate-cake left—

what have you in that box?" She had glanced in the hall on the way to the book-case, and saw him pick up the long box from the stair.

"It isn't anything for you—though I may show you if you're good." He was half up the stairs when Bun struck a chord on the piano—it seemed to awaken a flood of mischief in him. He stole down the stairs quietly and stepped in the doorway of the front parlor.

"Good evening." Bun was at the piano in the further room, Grant unnecessarily near, turning some music.

He seemed to startle them—they turned toward him with anything but a welcoming look. But he didn't notice; he was too busy looking to see if there was a box of candy within reach. He located it far away on the piano; so to get even for this piece of bad luck he put his hand upon the electric switch and turned out the lights. "Now's your chance, Grant!" he called, then made for his own room and locked the door.

Of course, Bun would tell on him, and he'd get an awful scolding in the morning, but for the next few minutes he was too busy to borrow trouble.

After removing his blouse and knickerbockers, he disdainfully threw them in a corner, and dressed himself in the clothes from the flat box. When the new suit was on, he started toward the mirror, then stopped and returned to the old clothes in the corner.

From the pockets he took the knife Howard Kellog had given him and a small package, done up in tissue-paper and tied with blue ribbon.

"That's just like a girl, to tie it all up fussy. In most things Virginia has good sense," he thought, and a look of disgust swept over his face as he looked at her gift. "Well, she must think I'm a kid—that's a bow-tie for a boy!"

Then he strode to the glass to behold himself for the first time in long trousers. His face was smiling and triumphant when he first looked in, but

as he took himself in, he suddenly blushed, flew over to his bed and buried his face in a pillow.

When steps sounded in the hall he started up guiltily and began tearing off his new clothes; when they sounded on the stairway again, he rebuttoned his vest and stole toward the mirror. This time his reflection seemed more pleasing, so he took some long steps and watched the effect. It felt as if his lower legs were tied to his knees by strings; but they looked stable.

Then he got out his best hat and practised tipping it. This proving satisfactory, he gingerly attempted to sit down. After he had practised pulling his trousers legs up and down, so they wouldn't bag at the knees, he felt quite brave, and determined to walk into the library and give them all a surprise. At the top step Marcy's voice threw him into a panic.

"George—"

"Yes"—he managed to reply.

"Can you come down?"

"No!" he screamed and dived for his door.

"Cliff's home—but acts very strange; he moans and will not come when I call him."

"He's cut his foot again, I'll bet." The boy forgot his trousers, and, with a bound, was down the steps and out the door. The dog was crouched on the first step of the porch.

"Cliff! Cliff!" The dog crept toward him and tried to wag his tail.

"Why, Cliffie, what's the matter?" His cry brought the entire family and young Minor with them. "He doesn't seem to be cut."

Young Minor gave the dog one look. "He's poisoned! Get some milk—quick—coax your dog to the barn, George, and we'll see if we can save him." Bun gave Grant's hand a grateful squeeze and ran for the milk.

George disappeared around the corner of the house, half carrying his dog and whispering endearing terms. The rest of the family went through the house and out the back way to the

barn, taking with them hot-water bags, mustard, milk, and blankets. At the door of the barn Grant asked them to go back. "George and I can do better alone." Marcy burst into tears, as she heard George repeating from within.

"Now, you're going to be all right, Cliffie; we won't let you die."

Bun loitered behind the others. "Can't I do anything, Grant? You'll help George?"

"Help him—it was through him I got that kiss in the dark—you forgive me now?"

"Why, of course"—and in the excitement held up her face as if always used to his kisses—and he vaguely wondered why she had kept him in despair for two long years. "I'll get father on the phone and tell him about Cliff," she called as she ran back to the house.

Grant and George had worked unceasingly for an hour when the judge joined them.

"It's no use, boys—Cliff's done for."

George burst into tears and turned away.

A little later when the three returned to the library, Marcy met them at the door. "Is he dead?" he asked.

"Don't talk about it," sobbed the boy, "I can't bear it—I want Cliff back—I could kill the person who poisoned him. I will, too."

"This will never do"—the father kindly but firmly put his hand on the boy's shoulder. "You must act like a man to live up to those long trousers."

For the first time the family noticed them, he seemed to loom above his father and Grant.

"Oh, George!" gasped his mother.

"I don't want ever to be a man!" he cried, and buried his face in his mother's lap.

When George came to the breakfast-table the next morning his face was swollen and his eyes red. He wore his knickerbockers.

"I tell you," he exclaimed, "I'm going to find the murderer of Cliff."

"I wouldn't," advised the father. "Stirring up things in a neighborhood only leads to unhappiness. We've all had enough."

"But I know who did it; it was Doc—"

"No, you don't know." It was the judge rather than the father who spoke now. "Never act on impulse or allow yourself to be carried away by suspicion. And, George, I don't want to hear you say so and so did it unless you have absolute evidence to prove it."

"Well, if I go about it quietly and don't talk about my suspicions, can't I find out who did it? Mayor Barrett will let the police help me, I know, for his boys have a dog and they wouldn't want it poisoned. They thought a lot of Cliff. And Hank Stanmetz won't want his dog poisoned. His dog was Cliff's best friend. I tell you, pop, I owe it to all the other boys who've got dogs to find out the sneak in this neighborhood."

"All right, my boy, but you'll be sorry. Where are the long trousers you begged me to get for you?"

"If I wore them, the boys would guy me, and I don't feel like fighting just now." He suddenly choked out an "Excuse me, mom," and left the table.

"The child only ate one cake," exclaimed his mother. He usually ate twelve.

And so George went to work to find out who poisoned his dog. Grant had the stomach analyzed and found that cyanid of potassium had been used. Mayor Barrett agreed to have the police get a record of all poisons sold at the drug-stores within the past month. Another friend who comforted him greatly was the policeman on his beat. He filled his head with detective stories, and their methods of procedure. But Virginia was his mainstay.

"We must trace every movement Cliff made from the moment we put him out of our door, until he came home," she advised. It wasn't so simple to do.

The Roses had seen him on Scott's porch about seven-thirty. Then the Warrens remembered that, as they were passing a little later than that, they had seen Mr. Scott come out of his front door, stumble over a dog, and heard him swear. But they couldn't say the dog was Cliff. But Scott's maid dropped a piece of information toward the end of the week that gave George a start.

That night before eight, Mr. Scott, with his hat and coat on, had come into the kitchen and taken something from the ice-box. Sofie wasn't sure, but thought it was meat. George didn't tell Virginia that. He was sure it had no connection with his case and didn't want to worry her. Each clue was sifted down. Guilt pointed strongly toward Doc Bates, who lived just back of them, for he had been loudest in denouncing the dogs of the neighborhood. Besides, he was naturally mean. George was only waiting now to get a list from the drug-stores to end his suspicion.

A week passed before Mike Brass, the police detective, sent him word that he'd be up with the list of poisoners and new evidence. In his excitement George confided to Virginia, who immediately made her mother promise to take her up to the Peaslees' for a while, after supper, that night. Virginia arrived just as Mike rounded the corner. George was waiting on the steps.

"Hello, Virginia, I'm awfully glad you came up. I'll see you when I get through with Mike. Go right in, Mrs. Scott; mother's in the library," said the boy, opening the front door for his guests.

"You've promised to tell me first, George," whispered Virginia.

"I will," he answered quickly, "and if it is Doc Bates, I'll have him arrested and put in jail. I certainly will. We'll stop the killing of dogs in this town."

George joined the policeman and Virginia followed her mother into the library. She chose a chair near the

door leading into the hall, where she could watch for George's return.

"I'm very glad to see you, Virginia," said Mrs. Peaslee cordially; "you're getting so big. You'll soon be a young lady."

"Oh, Mrs. Peaslee, don't suggest her growing up, I feel"—and Mrs. Scott stopped to control the twitching of her mouth—"as if she was all I had in the world, and I want to keep her a while longer."

"I understand," responded the other mother.

"Have some candy, Virginia? No? Well!—" Bun had entered the room.

"I want you to come into the parlor with me, and meet Mr. Minor," she went on. "He's too shy to come in here, where there are so many people, but he wants to see George's girl!"

"Oh, I'm not George's girl, am I, mother?" Her hands flew to the rescue of her flushed face. She and George had played together as children, and she had never thought of feeling shy where he was concerned. "I just came up to hear about the dog poisoner. George is gone a long time."

Just then George's voice sounded from over the banister.

"Grant!"

"George must have come in the back way," said his mother.

"What do you want, George?" asked his prospective brother-in-law as he joined him at the top of the stairs. "What's the matter, kid? Are you sick?" The boy was standing perfectly rigid and was as white as the paper which he clenched in his hand.

"No—I'm not sick," he replied with an effort. "I slipped in because"—his mouth was so dry and his lips so parched he couldn't go on till he had swallowed hard and moistened them—"well, because I couldn't stand it."

No tears came to relieve his pent-up feelings as upon the night of his dog's death—the quivering lip, the twitching face, the quickening breath, were the only signs of his consuming rage.

"The sneak, the hound—he's not fit

to shoot—but I'll do it; I'll get even with him for killing Cliff, if I—"

"Steady, old man—buck up—you're hit hard." Grant put his arm about the youngster's shoulder.

"Yes, and some one else will be hit," he answered, throwing off the restraining arm.

"George." It was Virginia calling from below. At the sound of her voice he stopped as if suddenly turned into stone—the convulsive breathing ceased. When she called the second time, the perspiration broke out on his forehead, and he groped for the support of the banister.

It was Grant who finally called out: "We'll be down in a minute." Then in a low tone: "Is that the list of poison-purchasers that the policeman gave you?"

He indicated the folded paper that George still clutched in his hand.

"Yes"—George gulped hard—"and Mike told me some other things when he gave me this." He handed the paper to Grant, then looked steadily in the distance, as if dazed.

Grant took the list and ran hastily down the column. After the name Scott was the word "cyanid." He dropped the paper with a gasp. "You don't mean that he poisoned Cliff—not Mr. Scott—Virginia's father?"

"Don't," was all George could say. The older boy turned away; he couldn't

bear to see such grim despair in a youngster. "She isn't to blame."

George unsteadily reached out his hand, took the paper, and tore it into tiny pieces. As he started to put them in his pocket he became conscious that he had on his new suit of clothes.

"I put them on right after supper—to surprise Virg—" He stopped, unable to finish her name. Then he looked at his long trousers without either interest or embarrassment, and followed Grant down the stair.

The silence was unbroken until they had almost reached the bottom step.

"Grant, I'm sorry I ever called you a stiff; and I'm glad you're going to be my brother," he said.

"So am I, old fellow," the other replied, and he patted him encouragingly.

Virginia spied him first; she rushed over to her mother and grasped her hand excitedly.

"Oh, mother, see George in long trousers. He looks just like a man!"

Then, remembering her mission, she asked eagerly:

"George, did you find out who was mean enough to kill Cliff?"

The boy leaned against Grant heavily for just an instant, then he caught his breath and drew himself up in the doorway.

"No—that is, I'm not sure—so I can't tell!"

FOR YOUR THREE BEST FRIENDS

HERE IS AN IDEA

Send me the names and addresses of three of your friends whom you think will be interested in the stories in *THE CAVALIER*, and I will send them sample copies direct from this office. You might, if you wish, to prepare them for the coming of the magazine, write to them as well, and say that sample copies of *THE CAVALIER* are being sent them at your request.

This is just a suggestion. If it is too much trouble, don't do it, but I will appreciate it if you do, and you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you have let your friends in on a good thing.

EDITOR, *THE CAVALIER*, Flatiron Building, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York

GETTING BILLY'S GOAT

A SHORT STORY

BY JACK BRANT

OOTBALL, at Buckeye College was no afternoon pink tea. If you apologized for putting a hob-nailed shoe in the face

of your best friend, the coach was likely to light on your neck the next minute because of your ladylike manners. Temper played a big part in picking the team, and those of us who didn't have any originally had had it developed. The one exception was Billy Gordon, the big guard.

Billy was so good-natured that it oozed out all over him. No one, not even the coaches, could even ruffle him. Even if one did pick a scrap, he was so big that it didn't do any good. He would put out his right hand, which was about as heavy and greatly resembled a full-sized ham; and if any one got in front of it he would be brushed away like a fly, leaving Billy as serene and good-natured as ever.

As for hurting him into a fit of temper, you could run races up and down the back of his spine and he wouldn't know you were there. He weighed two fifty stripped, and all vulnerable parts were protected by the latest six-inch kick-proof flesh armor-plating.

A man like that can get a place in the line on any football team in the country. But Tom Burns, head coach of Buckeye, wanted more than an automaton of defense; he wanted a whirlwind of attack and destruction. He used to sit up whole nights trying to think of schemes to make Billy mad.

His theory was that every man had a temper stored away somewhere, and it only needed a touch on the hidden

spring to start it off. I guess he was right, for he'd found it on everybody else on the team. I've gone into a game so mad that I've tried to shake men in my teeth and growl.

But Tom was pretty well stumped trying to discover the combination that fitted Billy.

Two weeks before the big final game with Kenyon College, our main rival, the situation began to get desperate. Tom Burns called a meeting of the whole team, minus Billy, and explained that, no matter how furious the rest of us got, if we didn't get a good mad out of Billy, we stood as much chance of winning that game as of growing wings on earth. He admitted that he was up against it, or he wouldn't have called on a lot of sapheads like us to do a man's thinking.

What he wanted was to get Billy angry just before the game, and have the cause of his anger so far out of his reach that he couldn't get at it, and would take his wrath out on the Kenyon team.

The reason that his previous experiments had failed was because Billy had always succeeded in coming down solid with his two hundred and fifty pounds on the object that was supposed to work the charm, and the instant and complete crushing of that object always had the effect of immediately restoring any particles that might have started to stray from Billy's good nature.

This set us all thinking; and that night, as I jumped into bed, I found the solution. That solution was Miss Pink.

Miss Pink was the queen of the

co-eds, and the prettiest girl in two States. It was secretly surmised among a choice few who were in on the game that she was as good as engaged to Head-coach Tom Burns. Billy, who didn't dance, and therefore didn't think much of girls, was not one of the few who were in on the game.

Considering Tom's feelings in that direction, I didn't have any trouble in convincing him that all Miss Pink had to do was to smile once or twice on a man and his peace of mind would begin jumping around like a squirrel in a rat-trap.

My plan was to get her to cast a few of those smiles on Billy. It's a well-known axiom that a fellow in love is particularly susceptible to the grouch germ, and it's just a step from a good blue grouch to a tearing rage.

I predicted that in two weeks we could get the thing so well under way that on the day of the final game all we would have to do would be to light the fusee, and then run like the mischief to get far enough away before the explosion.

The end that I outlined to Tom was to have Miss Pink come up to Billy just as he was leaving the locker-building in his football clothes, and reach out and slap him on the face, preferably on each side of his face.

She could throw in some words at the same time, like "liar" and "cheat," or whatever the ladylike phrases were that would convey the same meaning. This, I reasoned, would rouse the temper of a mummy. And, of course, as Billy couldn't hit a girl, he would go into the game and begin tearing the clothes off of the Kenyon team.

Tom agreed that the basis of the plot wasn't bad. But he didn't think that quite so much action in the final play would suit Miss Pink. He said I had the right idea, but that if I'd ever been in love I would realize that it wouldn't take as much as that to make a man eat granite.

According to his views, the best way to get Billy's goat would be to have the

lady of his choice suddenly announce on the day of the game that she was engaged to another man.

I wasn't born yesterday; and I saw right away that Tom thought this might be a good method to clear up his own difficulties and at the same time rouse the sleeping lion in Billy. So I played into his hand.

"I guess you're right," I said. "It sure would give Billy a jolt if Miss Pink should tell him that she was engaged to you, when he was thinking that he was the king-pin. Do you think you stand in strong enough to pull the trick off at the proper moment?"

It was a fool question for me to ask. If there was one line where Tom considered that he was strong, it was with the ladies. He wasn't far wrong, either; for he was no end of a hero, and girls like that kind. But I had an idea that he was having harder work bringing Miss Pink to terms than he liked to admit.

This seemed tough on Tom, for it was plain as day that she was the one girl he had ever met whom he was head over heels in love with. I don't understand girls, because I have red hair; but I shouldn't have been surprised if it was just because she didn't fall down in front of him that made him so keen about her.

"Well," said Tom, looking a little fussed, "you certainly have got a lot of nerve. But if you can keep a secret, I'll tell you something. I'm not engaged to Miss Pink yet, but I hope to be. And I think that for the good of the college I can get her to play her part, and we'll let Billy know of our engagement at the right moment to win that game."

The next day Tom was beaming. So, after practise, I asked him how things were progressing. And because he wanted to talk to somebody and because he had started in to make a confidant of me, he told me all about it.

It seems that when he had first suggested the plan, she had refused absolutely to have anything to do with it.

But after he had made a strong appeal to her college spirit, and explained how necessary temper was to football, and that unless she helped we would lose the big game, she came around conditionally.

The conditions were that she reserved the right to drop out at any moment, and that if any engagement was announced, she was to be the one to do the announcing. And Tom assured me that she wasn't the kind of a girl that would back out, and that she would do her best for Buckeye. He was going to take Billy to walk that night and meet her accidentally, and had an excuse all fixed up to leave them together.

Now that everything was arranged, I began to feel a little uneasy in my conscience. I liked Billy, as did everybody else, and it seemed to me that we were playing him a pretty low-down trick.

I'd never been in love, and had no idea how easy a thing it was to get over. But I reasoned that Miss Pink and Tom knew what they were doing; and that if they considered it harmless, why they ought to know, and tried to think no more about it.

Things began to turn out beautifully, just as we had planned. I guess a mere man doesn't stand much chance when a girl really sets her cap for him. Billy fell like a lamb, and even took to writing poetry. His whole manner changed, and he carried around his two hundred and fifty pounds as if they were barely enough ballast to keep him connected with the earth.

Tom gave him a clear field, for the good of the team; and when he wasn't at practise or attending lectures you could be pretty sure he was with Miss Pink, or waiting for her somewhere. Everybody noticed it, and smiled at it, and liked Billy and Miss Pink all the better for it.

This went on for two weeks, right up to the afternoon of the final game. Then came the explosion. It was bigger than we had expected—so big that Tom got caught in it.

A few of us were walking down to the field with Tom. He was very nervous, not listening to anything we said, and I knew it wasn't all caused by the game. Right in front of us were Miss Pink and Billy, waiting on the corner. As we passed Billy called to Tom, and he joined them. We went on.

I heard later that Tom tried to get away, but she wouldn't let him.

"Please stay, Mr. Burns," she said. "You have both been such good friends to me that I want you to be the first to hear a secret. I'm engaged—but don't tell, because it isn't out yet. Richard Randolph is a distant cousin, and I am so anxious to have you meet him."

She smiled up at them with those big, round, trusting eyes of hers; she was so confident they would be delighted, and so absolutely unconscious that she was causing the slightest uneasiness to either of them.

They tried to say the right thing, and left her to wait for her girl friends who were going with her to the game. And when they joined us at the locker-room they were like two full-sized hurricanes done up in quart bottles.

Nobody but I knew what the trouble was, and I didn't guess but half of it. Tom sailed into us in true football style, and the talk he gave us was a lyric. I've never heard nor read of a speech before a battle that could touch it. It put fire into us as if he was pouring it in with a dipper, and we ran out on that field ready to consume all that we touched.

That game will live forever in the history of Buckeye College. Kenyon came on the field with a heavier team and the idea that they were going to have a cinch. They found ten furies and one demon, and there was as much chance of stopping Buckeye as stopping the north wind.

Billy was the demon. From a quiet, peace-loving Hercules of an hour before he had changed into an avenging torrent of wrath. Four men couldn't hold him, and his path when he ran down the field was lined with cripples,

with one or two of the bravest, who courted death, clinging to him.

The odds turned right around in the first ten minutes, and the college in the bleachers went wild with delight as we dashed on to victory. The score at the end was twenty-nine to nothing, and there was lots of fight still left in us. Two men fought even as the cheering under-grads carried them twice around the field on their shoulders. These two were Tom Burns and Billy.

There was a big bonfire on the campus that night, and everybody, co-eds and all, attended. At about the middle of it there was a cry for an ax; and as I vaguely remembered having seen one around the corner of the grand stand where the carpenters had been working, I went for it.

I made plenty of noise coming, but there were two people around there in the dark that didn't hear me. They

were Miss Pink and Billy. I was near enough to hear what they were saying when I stopped, and I couldn't help listening. Miss Pink was talking.

"I—I said it for a joke," she was saying. "There isn't any Richard Randolph. I'm sorry I did it. I would never have done it if—if I had thought you would get so angry with me."

"I wasn't angry with you—or any one!" said Billy, stubborn as a barn full of mules.

"Oh, but you were! You were very, very angry, indeed. And it was splendid, and—and—I love you for it!"

It always pays not to argue with a woman, and there are some times when it pays better than others.

I hurried away as fast as I could, but I couldn't get away fast enough not to notice that Billy realized this was one of the times that called for action, not words.

F A L L

By Keith Ryan

THERE'S sighing in the spruces,
A smell of early rain;
A patch of sky,
An eagle high,
The fall has come again.

The maple ridge is yellow,
The leaves drop zigzag down;
A chipmunk hurries,
Stops, scurries
Rustling in the brown.

The muskrat's work is finished.
From out the lake, his home,
Just appearing,
Freshets clearing,
Shows its reedy dome.

Toiling is the beaver.
The squirrel's store is told.
A partridge drums,
A rabbit runs;
The early nights are cold.

Over the quiet marshes
The wild geese homeward fly,
A feather falls;
Fainter their calls,
Lonely the empty sky.

There's sighing in the spruces,
A smell of early rain;
The morning frost
At noon is lost,
The fall has come again.

HEART TO HEART TALKS

BY THE EDITOR



SURELY THE CAVALIER made hay this summer, and now we are about to gather a banner crop. From far and near, from every clime, by land and sea, we are now receiving advance information of a great harvest. Every mail brings us new subscriptions, new friends, and splendid applause.

In less than one year THE CAVALIER, the first all-fiction weekly to be printed in any language, has jumped into the front ranks.

"Give the people what the people want, and give it to them at a right price."

That is the slogan under which THE CAVALIER has been put forth.

We have made our readers and we have held them, and we shall make more and hold them, and, by the beginning of the year, we will have a battery of presses hurling CAVALIERS from our press room out over the broad land.

THE CAVALIER has been run not by a single, narrow-minded editor, but by CAVALIER readers themselves. Your opinions have been solicited, and, thank Heaven, the communications that have come to this desk have been frank and honest in every sense of the word, and because of them the magazine is better in every respect.

When THE CAVALIER was first inaugurated, we ran six or seven serials, sometimes eight, in a number. The subscribers and readers of the magazine told us very plainly that we were running too many serials, that the instalments were too short, and that instead of giving them great variety we were simply offering great confusion. Well, it did not take us long to change this order of things. The response in the shape of subscriptions and applause was instantaneous. The demand for longer instalments and less serials had the weight of a doctrine, and we accepted it as final.

There were certain kinds of stories that were universally disapproved.

"How do you like these particular things?" I asked.

"We don't like them at all," was the reply.

"Very well, you have seen the last of them."

And so, with the help of our readers, we have finally gotten THE CAVALIER about where it pleases the majority of them, and now you can look forward to the greatest harvest of good story writing and feast of fiction that has ever been known.

In the next issue you shall have another story in the Semi Dual series, entitled

THE PURPLE LIGHT

BY J. U. GIESY AND J. B. SMITH

That Giesy and Smith are popular with the readers of THE CAVALIER there is no longer any doubt, and the announcement of their next story will exhilarate everybody.

Like all of the Semi Dual stories, "THE PURPLE LIGHT" is a mystery—a mystery that surrounds the death of a Mrs. Greenig, a woman of means, who resided in a fashionable metropolitan apartment. Her body was found under unusual circumstances. A vein had been torn open in her left forearm, presumably with her own penknife which was found near at hand. However, suspicion, which is the backbone of most good mysteries, falls upon a trained nurse, because the deceased had recently disinherited a spendthrift nephew and named this particular nurse as a legatee. Incidentally, suspicion falls upon the nephew, and this suspicion is accentuated by the fact that a latch-key to his aunt's apartment is found in his possession. Furthermore, the aunt contemplated a third will, reinstating the nephew.

You will gather from this that Messrs. Giesy and Smith have braided a plot together that only Semi Dual himself can unravel. He succeeds in a most magnifi-

cent manner, in three instalments, in setting the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth before you.

And now we will proceed to the next big feature—a novelette entitled

GALATEA THE SECOND

BY FRED JACKSON

Those of you who have not forgotten your classics will recall the story of the sculptor Pygmalion, who fashioned a beautiful statue, fell in love with his own handiwork, and, through the depth of that love, gave her life. Many a marble heart has been assaulted nowadays with the same intention, but not with the same results.

Fred Jackson, in his story, has improved upon the ancient Galatea and practically set Pygmalion back a couple of centuries.

When it comes to a really high-class, sympathetic love-story, the old-timers have got nothing on Fred.

"FAIRER THAN LOVE OF A WOMAN."

Is there a college man in the world who does not know whence cometh that line? You do not have to be an alumnus of Yale to know its origin. Brevard M. Connor has made it the central idea of a football yarn.

In this story a man who has never had a chance for his "Y" gets it in the final game. How he conducts himself when the opportunity comes makes a vivid and thrilling picture. Connor, himself a Yale man and a regular contributor to *THE CAVALIER*, has turned out no better story than this.

John D. Swain is home again with a story entitled "LAYING A NEST-EGG."

A certain rich man, living in an exclusive neighborhood, awakes one morning and discovers that a certain colored ge'man, who has purchased the lot next to his, is calmly building a rather lavish domicile upon it. The rich white trash proceeds to throw a series of fits that makes epilepsy look like paralysis. Immediately he resorts to his dollars, and, in turn, the son of Ham makes what he considers the right move. The climax of

this story will make you forget the tax collector, your mother-in-law, and the last witticism of your neighbor's favorite child.

Every reader of *THE CAVALIER* knows that Eleanor M. Ingram is a gifted writer. Having established this fact, I call your attention to "LADY IMPOS-SIBLE," a very charming story about a conventional male aristocrat and a poor little girl who is frightfully rich and who dresses in the most deplorable taste. The scene is at a fashionable hotel, where the other guests snub the pathetic little Western girl until she is about distracted. Then the man comes to the rescue. Just how you must read and learn.

Do not make the mistake of snubbing clothes. There might be something in them after all!

Frank Condon will be found at his best in "THE GRAND (STREET) PASSION." I do not dare even hint what it is about, except that an East Side girl spotted a swell cloak in a Grand Street show-window which her very soul craved. Therefore, she went in and bought it. The clerk happened to be a sweetheart of hers. What she paid for it is one thing, and what the cloak was worth is another. Anyhow, somebody discovered that the cloak was worth a nice bunch of money and went out and hocked it, after which an effort was made to buy another one just like it, and—

Well, go and see the newsdealer and find out what happened. It is worth 10c of anybody's money to have a look-in on this finish. It's a corker.

Allan Updegraff, author of "THE WHITE-LIGHT LIAR," which appeared in the issue of August 31, contributes a short story under the title of "THAT MELODY DIVINE."

In this particular instance the melody was hypnotic, overpowering, irresistible. Nobody could escape the charm of its mellow chord. It was the limit, and its soothing power far-reaching. When some of the victims came out of its thrall, certain remarks were made that I do not care to repeat. If Mr. Updegraff wants to record these circumstances, that is his business. A true artist like Updegraff

can do almost anything he wants with the English language and get away with it. But I have my limitations, and stand helpless in the presence of this dramatic situation. It's up to Allan.

Read "LEARNING FROM LIZZIE," by Johnston McCulley. It is a love-story, pure and simple, dividing its tragedy and its joy and its pathos. It is a story for people who work with their

hands, think with their brains, and feel with their hearts. I defy anybody to beat that combination in an effort to awaken human interest.

There are other short stories in this same issue, but the few I have touched upon are sufficient for the present.

The issue for October 5 is a splendid number, rich in plot, power, and performance.

THE DEPARTMENT OF LETTERS

COVERS IN COLORS

Some of the readers of *THE CAVALIER* are of the opinion that our covers are a little too melodramatic. Other readers are attracted by the covers.

I beg to take extracts from a letter received from the Lambs Club, New York City:

In reference to the cover question: It strikes me that any one who hasn't the courage of his convictions is not worth consideration from normal people. Why, then, be ashamed to be discovered reading something one really likes? People misjudging one's choice of literature from outside appearances are only showing their own consummate ignorance and smallness. Why join such a class?

In the six months I have known your magazine, the covers have always caught my eye. They are well drawn, well executed, and mean something.

My hat off to you, sir, if you stick to your colors—no matter how daring they are, so long as they are real. My hat off to you, in any case, for your responsibility in a magazine of such worth and stimulus.

Frankly, I have never subscribed—because I am too impatient to wait for delivery. I couldn't get by the first news-stand empty-handed.

Sincerely,

EFFINGTON PINTO.

Mr. Pinto is rather emphatic about his conclusions.

Here is another letter, from Germantown, Pa., in which the subject of covers is touched upon:

I noticed in this week's issue of *THE CAVALIER* (September 7) a letter in which the writer says the covers are too loud. Well, only this evening, when I bought it, I made the remark that some of the drawings are as good as the stories. I think your judgment is just about right.

I could not wait to get home to finish "The Cradle of the Deep," but sat down in the store and read it through.

This praise is not "hot air," as I never was better pleased for so little money in all my life.

ROBERT G. DOLE.

A lady writing from Rochester, N. Y., with the request that her signature be withheld, says:

The covers are sensational, and careless onlookers, in the home or traveling, note the picture and judge the contents by the cover, then judge you by what they think is your literary trend. "Give a dog a bad name," etc. Now, could not flowers, fruits, landscapes, animals, children's faces, and the like be used?

I do not quite agree with the lady, and I am not prepared to admit that the covers on *THE CAVALIER* are sensational. These pictures are taken from actual scenes in the stories themselves. The fact that they are vital and full of animation and life, to say nothing of an occasional tragic pose, should not, in any measure, diminish their worth. The people of the United States are asking for a red-blooded magazine. They want life as it is, and, from all accounts, the fiction in *THE CAVALIER* pleases a larger majority of people than the fiction in any other magazine.

This cover issue is a big one with us. We do not want to disturb any individual sense of delicacy or proportion. We want to please the majority without offending the minority.

Mr. Orr, who made the first objection to our covers, is entitled to his honest convictions, and we will go a long way before we will wantonly offend him. Perhaps in the forthcoming issues of *THE CAVALIER* he will find a compromise that, while not weakening the pictorial end of our covers, will be more agreeable to him.

"THE CRADLE OF THE DEEP"

Jacob Fisher's story, "THE CRADLE OF THE DEEP," which ran from August 17 to September 7, made a pro-

found impression upon the readers of this magazine. I beg to offer some letters on the subject.

Will you permit me to express my sentiments in favor of *THE CAVALIER*? I have bought it regularly since its transformation into a weekly. I take several other magazines, and if I had to give any up, *THE CAVALIER* would be the last one to go.

The serial just concluded, "The Cradle of the Deep," I consider, next to "Darkness and Dawn," the best you have yet published.

By the way, where is that long-promised sequel to "Darkness and Dawn"? You promised it to us some time ago, and it has not yet appeared.

WM. W. WASHBURN.

In answer to Mr. Washburn's query concerning the sequel to "DARKNESS AND DAWN": It is now complete, and, under the title of "BEYOND THE GREAT OBLIVION," will shortly be put to press.

The following succinct summing up of the whole situation appeared on a post-card posted at Sea Gate:

I am reading with breathless interest the story, "The Cradle of the Deep," and before I have finished it I must write you just a word to say that that story is a marvel. Stories like that will be the making of *THE CAVALIER*. It is already a wonderful magazine, although in its infancy.

A MOTHER.

For a certainty, this mother possesses enough discrimination and intelligence to inculcate her children with a taste for good literature.

LIKES TOM GALLON

A Wall Street reader, who modestly requests that his name be withheld, makes some pertinent suggestions with reference to Tom Gallon's "AS HE WAS BORN." For his information, we have been trying, for some time, to get a sequel to this story. But, according to Tom Gallon, there does not appear to be any sequel. Perhaps later he will see the whole thing in a different light—who knows? We shall do the best we can to rouse him.

I have read many thousand stories and take six magazines each month, foremost of which I deem *THE CAVALIER*; but never in my twenty-five years of reading have I read a story that pleased me more than "As He Was Born," by Tom Gallon. If possible, let us hear more of Felix and Ninetta and the alderman and his wife. They were characters as good as any in

"Dickens" and far more realistic and lifelike. I relished this story like a starving man surrounded by doughnuts galore would relish a series of roast fowl nicely done to a turn. *THE CAVALIER* really seems dull these last few weeks without a portion of that story to look forward to. Can't Mr. Gallon start a bit more trouble to separate them for a short time, just to give us a few more laughs and heart-throbs for dessert? Say a flaw in the will or some legal tangle or something to bring them back to us. I guess I am not alone in this desire. You might bring Uncle Mapletuft back to life to enjoy the pair's happiness.

Wishing you many future successes and much prosperity, I am,

Very respectfully yours,

PROFESSIONAL SELECTION

Up in Springfield, Massachusetts, the population is very discriminating, particularly in the office of the Springfield *Union*. You must excuse me for quoting the following letter. It is praise from Sir Herbert, so to speak.

A dozen copies of *THE CAVALIER* are bought by members of the Springfield *Union* staff each week, although copies of the so-called standard magazines may be had from the exchange editor for the asking. It takes a mighty good magazine to interest a newspaperman, and among the few that succeed, *THE CAVALIER* holds first place.

LAWRENCE DANIEL FOGG,

Exchange Editor, *The Union*.

Springfield, Massachusetts.

COULDN'T IMPROVE IT

I have been reading *THE CAVALIER* since December, 1911, and I must say that it is better than any other magazine I have ever read. One thing: you never have any stories that are all impossible and that are so foolish that one has to laugh at the writer and wonder why any magazine will publish them. And during all the time that I have read *THE CAVALIER* I have never read a punk short story, serial, novel, or novelette. The poetry by Faith Baldwin is fine, and the last novelette, "Hermo the Handsome," is delightful. It makes a fellow feel good to read that kind of a story. I am sure I don't know where you could improve *THE CAVALIER*, as it is good enough now.

RAYMOND G. HALL.


COMING—LOUIS JOSEPH VANCE

At last it is finished—his new novel, "THE DAY OF DAYS," which will positively appear in *THE CAVALIER* beginning November 9. It is a New York adventure story, and considered by Vance himself as his best and finest romance-adventure.

LOVE THAT PASSES UNDERSTANDING

A SHORT STORY

BY ADRIANA SPADONI

 "ARE yuh sure, Mirah? Ruth ain't never been light, not even giddy like other girls. There ain't never been no shaller women in our family."

"I seen her. They was standin' there together—lookin' out into the blackness. There weren't nothin' to see, just the blackness, an' the stream was roarin'. I was settin' in the rocker after I'd finished fixin' fur the mornin', an' I guess I fell asleep. I woke with the cold on my legs. I thought the wind must have blowed the door open. It was blowin' hard, like it had blowed everything out of the world and was the only thing in it. I was gettin' up to shut the door when—I—seen 'em. I set down again like some one knocked me. They was standin' there lookin' out into the wind. He—he—" A dull, brickish red crept up under the woman's smooth, sallow skin. "He had his arms round her and her head was against him."

"I—want—to—know."

The thin hands of the ancient man in the dim corner beside the stove fluttered helplessly. They fell on his thin, cinnamon-colored knees like dead, whitish leaves.

The color in the woman's face deepened. Her eyes were ashamed, but she forced herself to go on. She did it as if she were used to forcing herself to do things.

"Then he kissed her." She bent

down and shot the big, white pie into the black cavern of the oven. "I thought she was goin' to faint, she was so still and white there against him. I guess I made some noise. Anyhow they turned. Ruth looked at me as if I was a ghost."

"I—want—to—know." The ancient's gentle, dim eyes peered from the shadows. "She must have been powerful feared and 'shamed, Mirah?"

The woman hunched down on her knees before the oven.

"She weren't, father. She jes stood there—they both did—lookin' at me. Then she started to say something, but he stopped her. 'Go, Ruth,' he says, awful quiet, 'an' I'll explain it.'"

"I—want—to know." It was like the faint buzz of some weakened insect.

"I knew then. It weren't the first time he had kissed her—the way she went. Then he began to talk." The woman got up heavily and sat down in the chair by the table. "He didn't look no more 'shamed than her. He jes talked like he was talkin' about the weather—like there was no two ways of thinkin' about it."

The ancient drew farther into the warmth of the stove corner as if the woman's words chilled him.

"I guess you see how it is with me and Ruth, Mrs. Sanders," he says—like he was sayin' the potatoes showed good. "We love each other, and we want to be together always like other married peo-

ple. But—' Then I got my voice. It came up ag'in from my toes like water in a pipe. 'You know—you can't marry Ruth,' I says; 'you know you can't marry a woman that's married already.' I said it straight up into his eyes. His face went red like the words had slapped him, and I seen the veins in his neck jumpin'."

" 'There ain't a court in the country wouldn't free her from that brute,' he begun, but I stopped him. 'There ain't no court in the country can separate what God has joined,' I says, 'and there ain't no man—no man in the world that can stand up and say them wicked things to me.' "

The ancient unclasped his knees. He straightened them slowly like the blades of a knife. When they were straightened he stood up. His leaflike hands trembled.

" 'Them were godless words he spoke, Mirah, and God will jedge him. I don't stand fur nothin' like that. It's in the Good Book plain—a child can understand.' "

" I told him so. I told him no matter what Abner done he was Ruth's husband, and she couldn't be no other man's.

" 'Then I told him to get out of the house and never come in it no more. He's paid up till the end of the week, an' I'll give him back his money. But—'

The ancient nodded. "You done right, Mirah," he said.

"He didn't say nothin' for a minute, then he jes looked at me and says he guessed the rest was something for him and Ruth to settle, and he walked right passed me. Then I went up to Ruth's room, but she wouldn't let me in. She was cryin' under the bedclothes. I pretended to go away, but I come back and listened, and I heard her. Put another piece of wood in the fire, father—the pie'll be soggy."

The ancient lifted the lid and thrust a thick stick in. The flames shot up, lighting his wrinkled face. His gentle, blue eyes blinked. When he had re-

placed the lid he held his thin hands over the red-hot iron.

" 'There ain't never been nothin' like this in our family, Mirah. I wonder where she took it?' "

For a moment the woman's eyes wandered to the rocker in the corner. Her motherly shoulders hunched. Something seemed to go out of her.

" 'I never seen nothin' in her like him,' she answered. "I tried to bring her up right. I stayed on till the end. No one ever knew. I never went round lettin' folks see—"

" 'You was a good, dutiful wife, Mirah, like you been a daughter. You done your duty by Peter like you done by me. You'll git your reward. The Lord don't furgit.' "

The woman got up wearily and went over to the oven.

" 'There weren't no joy in it, like they talk about bein' their right. The only joy was the children. I've took a powerful comfort out of Ruth. And then when her marriage turned out bad like mine, I was glad that I could help her bear it. It seemed to me like I see for the first time the Lord's reason in givin' me my cross—jes so I could help her.' "

" 'She ought to be awful grateful, Mirah. You didn't have no one all them years. She ought to be grateful.' "

" 'She says I was foolish.' " The woman drew the golden pie from the oven. "I shouldn't hev stood it. It weren't right."

The ancient blinked.

" 'It weren't right? What weren't? To stay and do the duty the Lord had laid on yuh? Ain't the Good Book got it plain enough—Love them that spitefully use you? Forgive seventy times seven?' "

The woman looked up from wiping the bottom of the pie-plate.

" 'Some folks,' she began, and then stopped suddenly. " 'There's Ruth comin' now. Don't say nothin'—not yit. Maybe she's been over to Martha's. I kinder hoped she would when she started. Martha'll see somethin'

was wrong and git it out of her in a minute. She'd know what to tell her—there ain't anybody's had more trouble to stand by than Martha."

The next moment a tall, slim figure blocked the fading light for a moment as it passed the window. Then the door opened and Ruth came in. She took off her sweater and threw it into a chair.

"Most supper-time, isn't it? What shall I do?"

Without waiting for an answer she went straight to the pantry and brought out a platter of cold meat and potatoes. She began hashing them, standing at the far end of the sink-board. At all times she was strangely like a young pine, something strong and slender and apart. Now she seemed distinctly separate, encased in an almost palpable atmosphere of defiant pride and reserve. In her short skirt and white, middy blouse, she looked many years younger than thirty. Her six years of marriage had left no mark in her eyes. Only when she was tired the lines about her mouth showed.

"How's Martha?"

The forced assurance in her mother's voice annoyed her.

"I don't know. I didn't get over," she answered shortly. The dead silence waited like a cavern for her to fill it. "We went down to the crossroads and back."

"That's a tolerable walk." The ancient spoke kindly. "Did you give Captain fresh water?"

"Oh, I forgot. I'll—"

"No, no, I'll go."

The ancient got up stiffly, and wrapping a gray woolen muffler about him, went out. The dull little taps of her chopping-knife were the only sounds that broke the stillness. The girl looked at her mother. She was standing with her back to the sink. The girl saw the bent, patient back; the half-dozen golden pies; the big batch of bread; the kettle of preserves waiting to be bottled. Her eyes filled, but she forced the tears back.

"Ain't Abner back yet?"

"No. He went down to the station right after dinner."

"Did he say when he was comin'?"

"He said he'd be back by supper."

The girl glanced at the clock. Then she put down the knife and patted the meat into little cakes. When the last cake was patted she went into the pantry. From the shelf under the small window she brought two geraniums and a wax-plant with delicate, pink blossoms. She tended them silently, carefully clipping the dead leaves, lightly turning up the mold. As she pottered with the plants the hard line about her lips softened.

"The locusts are all in bloom back of the Campbell place," she said, and then closed her lips tightly as if she would have shut the words back in again.

Her mother turned quickly.

"You've—been—over to the Campbell place?"

"Yes."

"Ain't yuh got no pride at all?"

A deep red crept under the girl's tanned skin, but she did not answer.

"I suppose they all seen yuh."

"I don't care if they did!"

"But I do. And I tell you once fur all, I won't stand fur it. Do yuh hear? If yuh ain't got no pride the rest of us hev. I've turned him out of this house and I ain't goin' to hev you makin' yourself cheap runnin' after him."

Ruth breathed quickly, but went on wiping the outside of the pots.

"I ain't goin' to stand fur no such wickedness—"

"Wicked?" The girl flared. "It ain't wicked. It can't be wicked to love a good man like I love—"

"Watch out! You're a married woman, Ruth. You—"

"Don't I know it? Do you think I ever forget it for a minute, day or night? Do you think I can now I know—what—life might be? Now—"

"You're crazy. You're talkin' like a mad woman."

"Now I know that it ain't all there

is in life to smother and starve and go without things. We was meant to be happy. If it ain't that way why does the sun shine, and the birds sing, and the flowers grow? Why does the moon shine and the wind make you think things you can't find the words fur? Why—"

"You're mad. The sun and trees and the wind a talkin'. If you'd listen to the still, small voice inside yuh you'd have no time to hear the trees talkin'."

The girl stood sullenly.

"He won't even let me keep these where I can git the joy of 'em. What's wicked about a flower? I didn't even take his money to buy 'em. They was slips Martha threw out."

The older woman sighed.

"I know. I guess he was made that way. He's always been closer than the bark on a tree, and the drink's made him worse. They're hard things to stand. I know. For—thirty years—"

"He's a devil!" the girl burst out. "He hates any one to be happy. He wants to hurt—hurt!"

Mirah Sanders opened her mouth and then closed it. Glancing out of the window she turned quickly.

"You'd better put 'em away, Ruth, he's comin', an his—hat's on crooked."

For a moment the girl hesitated. Then she picked up the plants and carried them back to the pantry.

As soon as the supper things were cleared away, Ruth took the lamp and went to her own room. She locked the door quietly and turned out the light. Close by the window she sat, looking out into the night.

Under the rising moon she could just see the top of the white flag-pole on the new Campbell place. Down-stairs the men were laughing and talking. From time to time some one played an air on the graphophone. In three weeks it would all be over. The men would have gone. Tom would have gone. She would be alone with her mother and the old man and Abner. Ruth shivered.

At last the noise down-stairs stopped.

The men went off in groups. She heard her mother's tired, shuffling step setting the table for the early breakfast. Then the whole house rattled. It was the dining-room door shutting. It was perfectly still. The girl sat where she was listening.

In a few moments a heavy, uncertain tread came up the stairs. Her husband stopped outside the door and tried the handle, mumbling. Trembling, she scarcely breathed. He stood there mumbling for several moments, then lurched across the hall to the spare room. Ruth heard him tumble heavily onto the spare bed. Very soon he snored loudly.

Ruth opened the door and crept softly down the stairs. The wind had come up again, and its moaning voice covered the creaking of the old door as she slipped out into the night.

She walked rapidly through the thick, warm dust until she came to the deserted farmhouse a quarter of a mile up the road. She turned quickly in through the broken gate and cut across the neglected orchard toward the red farmhouse that was slowly tumbling to pieces, like some old person who has lost all energy and self-respect, even the memory of better days.

From the tangled hop-vine over the back porch Tom Dillon stepped forward. Ruth went straight to him, and his arms closed about her. He held her close, stroking her hair. His big hand trembled, and the girl felt his heart beating heavily.

She looked up, running her fingers lightly over his face.

"I was afraid, perhaps, you couldn't git out." His voice shook.

"I said I'd come."

The man's arms closed more tightly.

"I know, but I was afraid he—"

"Oh!" Ruth shuddered. "He's drunk. Dead asleep—in the front room."

The man led her to the shelter of the porch, and they sat down, the girl on the lower step with her head against him. They sat silent.

In the shelter the wind came as a soft breeze, lightly moving the leaves. The silence, the darkness, the cool stillness shut them into a world of their own. The peace, like a soft touch, soothed Ruth. The tangle of her life straightened to primitive simplicity. A sensuous, physical content crept over her. Close to him, with his hand passing lightly over her face and neck, as if to assure himself of her reality, nothing mattered.

"Ruth, what are we going to do?"

With an effort the girl drew her mind away from the darkness beyond where it was drifting lazily back and forth with the moving leaves. "Do? I—don't know—dear. What can we do?"

The man stopped stroking her hair.

"We—we—can't go—on like this, Ruth. We can't go sneaking round—to meet each other. We ain't goin' to live like rats in a hole—afraid of the daylight."

The girl shifted her head a little on his breast. "Hear the leaves, Tom; ain't they happy? They sound like babies laughin'."

"Ruth—I love you so."

He buried his face in her hair. Her mood made him clumsy, inarticulate, filled him with a tenderness that hurt.

"No—we can't go—on—but I can't seem to think of nothin', Tom. I been tryin' to all day." She came slowly back.

"Ruth—you do love me?"

She reached up and drew his face to her and kissed him.

"And you believe I love you?"

She laughed softly. "I ain't—so—sure."

He bent her head back into the hollow of his arm and kissed her. "Now, do you believe it?"

They laughed irresponsibly, childishly.

"There's only one thing we kin do."

He looked away from the girl into the blackness with set face. "You must come with me. We'll go away anywhere you like. Somewhere where there's lots of sun and flowers, all you

want, and you can forget. I kin make you fergit, dear."

She did not move.

"Ruth—will you come?" His voice shook beyond his control. "We ain't called to kill the best thing in the world. Dear—"

"Go away—and live—together—without being married?"

"Yes." In the long silence a ground toad plumped heavily. "He'll free you then—he'll have to."

The girl shook her head.

"No—he won't. He'll never free me. I asked him once—a long time ago—when he first began drinkin'—they don't know it—and he—he—"

"What—did—he—"

The girl looked away.

"It was a long time ago. I fergit what he said exactly."

"Will—you—come?" The man moved a little away as if instinctively leaving her quite alone to make her decision.

She did not answer. She sat half-turned, looking into the night. Her face was white, and he could see her whole body trembling lightly.

"It ain't wicked. It ain't." I'd kill any one that says it is. We love each other. If there was any other way, God knows— If you didn't love me I'd go away."

She bent slightly to him as if drawn unconsciously.

"You do. I know it. You don't belong to him. You never did." He seized her suddenly by the shoulders and turned her round. "Did you ever kiss him—like you kissed me just now—did you?"

The girl's eyes dropped, and even in the darkness a faint red spread over her face and neck.

"It's him that it's wicked to live with—not me."

She was looking back into the darkness again.

"I ain't goin' to live with him ag'in—never—"

"Sweetheart." The man caught her to him. "You will come. We'll go

anywhere—somewhere where it's big and wide and clean. We'll go out West where the land ain't all shut in with these damned little fences—and the people don't care as long as you're honest. We'll go out and live with the God they're all so afraid of. I ain't afraid He won't understand."

The girl stared silent into the darkness.

"Ruth—you ain't ever been happy. You don't know what it is to be glad and happy every minute you're alive. You—"

She turned swiftly. "I—do—now," she said.

"This? This isn't happiness. It's—hell!" Before the sudden fierce passion the girl shrank back. The man stood up. "I can't stand it, Ruth—I can't. I can't go on livin' near you, sneakin' out to meet you. I want you all the time. I want to make you happy. I can't live and see that brute go by and not want to kill him. If I stayed, I believe I'd do it."

"Ain't—I—told—you, I don't love—him?"

"My God, don't he live in the same house with you? Can't he see you whenever he wants? What's to keep you apart? Nothin' but your will. And if that ain't strong enough to bring you to me—how do I know—" His face was white.

"Tom—" The trembling hands went out beseechingly.

"Ruth." It was a sob. "I don't want to hurt. I don't, dear, but there ain't no other way. I'll come over and tell them—I'll tell him—we'll have it square and above board. We—"

A light passed behind her eyes and went out.

"They—wouldn't—understand. You—ain't—afraid of God—and other folks—"

"No." He made no effort to take her groping hands. "I ain't afraid of nothing but myself. But you—"

"I'm not—I'm not—I'm not afraid." Before the unyielding hardness of his throttled passion the girl shrank back.

"But—but—" She groped blindly for the words. "It'd—kill—her."

"And me?"

The girl's arms dropped helplessly. Her strength crumpled.

He stood looking out beyond her. Then he came and took her hands gently. The hardness and courage had gone from him. "Come, little girl," he said softly, "I guess we'd better be goin'."

She clung to him.

"Tom," she whispered, "I do love you. I do."

Her yielding body invited his caresses, but he only patted her shoulder comfortingly.

"Sure, honey—I know it. I guess it's we're made different. There ain't nothin' in heaven or earth could keep me away from you." As he looked down at the head against him his face aged. "Come," he repeated.

They went out through the gnarled trees and down the road in silence. At the gate he bent and kissed her quietly.

"Good night, Ruth. I won't come—over—again—unless you send for me. I'll stay on the job till the end of the week, and Tim can finish."

Before she could answer he had gone. She stood where she was until he was lost in the blackness of the road. Then she turned slowly toward the house. She made no effort to walk lightly. The sagging porch creaked as she crossed it. The door rattled as she forced it closed.

Mirah Sanders sat up in bed. Above her pink flannel nightgown her white face quivered.

"She—couldn't hev done it—not—Ruth—gone—out to—meet him—at night." Two big tears rolled down her cheeks.

Mirah Sanders wiped the perspiration from her face as she stood above the hot stove stirring the bubbling fruit. Ruth sat in the open doorway, a dishpan in her lap, peeling from a basket of peaches.

Outside in the warm stillness the

high, thin voice of the old man piped happily to the chickens. From time to time Ruth's hands dropped idle, and she sat looking out over the fields.

Tom had her note. He had had it since early morning. But he was going on with his work, directing the men as he did every day, just as she was going on with her work, sitting there peeling the peaches. Behind it was the knowledge that she had never really peeled peaches before.

She had never sat there in the hot, familiar kitchen. She had never heard the old man piping to the chickens. She had never seen her mother moving heavily about, wiping her face on her sleeve, testing the golding sirup with the dripping granite spoon.

It was all new and strange. But she was not afraid. She was not even afraid now, as she had been at first. She had stepped out of her old self as if it had been a garment. She could almost see it lying on the floor where she had left it.

In a few hours she would be under the hop-vine with Tom. The last three days stretched behind her like years. She went back along them as if she were walking along an unknown road into an unknown country. Her mother's sharp call for more fruit brought her back with a start. She began slicing quickly. Her mother watched her for a moment, and then pushed the preserving kettle to a place where it wouldn't burn, and sat down, looking at Ruth.

"It ain't any use pretendin'," she said quietly. "You ain't got the least notion what you're doin'. You're slicin' for marmalade, an' I'm puttin' up in halves."

Ruth looked up and smiled. There was no answering smile. The two women sat looking at each other.

"It ain't no use, Ruth—we might jes as well have it out!"

Ruth dropped the peeling knife into the peaches. Her hands shook, but she said nothing.

"You ain't had the least idea of

what you're doing," she repeated it slowly, "not since—two—nights ago—when you—went chasin' out—to meet—that man."

The girl said nothing.

"You ain't got no pride. I know—that—now. But ain't—you got no sense of wrong and right?"

"It—ain't—wrong. I wouldn't have done—it—if I thought—it was wrong."

"That ain't true. You'd hev done it anyhow. I kin see it in your eyes. For the last three days you've been goin' about like a body asleep. You act like you didn't know what you was a doin'. If the devil ever entered into anybody, he's in you, Ruth. But I tell you"—for the first time the woman's voice rose in fierce conviction—"I won't stand fur it. I—"

Ruth stood up. The pan of peaches fell to the floor.

"Stop it?" she said slowly. "There ain't nobody or anything in heaven or earth can stop a love like ours. Wicked? It's wicked to live like you've lived all your life—like I was livin' till—he—taught me—all hungry and starved and dead inside. God didn't mean we was to live—"

"Stop!" Mirah Sanders's trembling hands seized her daughter's arm. She shook her. "Stop! Don't you take the name of God in this wicked business. He—"

Ruth drew back. Her eyes were gentle.

"Mother—wasn't there never any man—in all them long, black years you was tied to father—that made you feel that you wanted—to thank God—that He hadn't let you die?"

"Stop!" It was barely a whisper. "Stop before God strikes you there with the wicked words in your throat. Git down on your knees and pray He'll send some shame into you. That you'll see what's right—"

"I—do—see—it now." The low words ran into the simmering bubble of the fruit. "And I'm—goin' to—do it."

Mirah Sanders leaned against the table. "You—you—"

Ruth's eyes answered her.

"I've—got—to, mother—there ain't no other way."

Mirah Sanders's face went gray.

"You—won't—never—do it—never. *He*—won't let—you. Before that—"

The ancient came up the steps piping gently to the sick hen under his arm. Ruth turned and went quickly out of the room. The old man looked from the scattered peaches to his daughter's face.

"What is it, Mirah?" His dim, sweet eyes peered anxiously.

Suddenly the woman began to cry helplessly. The old man put the chicken on the table and came round to her.

"There, there, Mirah; you're a mite tired with the heat. Been hevin' it a bit hard with Ruth mebbe?" He crooned, patting her shoulder.

The woman clung to him as if she were a child.

"I'm afraid, father; I'm afraid. She—says—she's—going—with him."

The kindly look in the old face died. It grew stern.

"Mirah—there ain't no need to be feared. He won't hold no sich cup to your lips. Trust Him, daughter."

The woman choked back her sobs.

"She—ain't—like my own—somehow— It's like—as if I was—looking at her a long—ways off. I—can't—touch her, somehow."

"But *He* can, daughter. He's got her in the hollow of *His* hand."

He picked up the sick chicken and carried it to his place by the stove.

"You've been a faithful servant, daughter, an' *His* love passeth understanding."

As Ruth left the house behind the tumult in her grew madder. For two days she had lived in a frozen calm, outside herself, thinking, thinking. All her inherited traditions had risen up and fought against her. Her longing to see Tom, to be near him, to make

him happy, to be comforted—had beaten them down one by one.

The picture of her mother had been the last to go. Again and again it had come back through the night, when she lay trying to think calmly, the stout figure with the heavy rounded shoulders going silently about the tasks that had been hers. With cutting sharpness she saw her, the pink calico blown about her by the breeze, catching the little chickens for the night, harnessing the horse on village days, taking in the clean white clothes.

The pictures were gone now. She thought no more. She could only feel. As she neared the deserted farm she began to run. She smiled at her own eagerness. She was half an hour earlier than she had said in her note. She had a fierce joy in getting there first, in letting Tom see her willingness.

As she walked quickly round to the porch she was glad to see that it was empty. She sat down, leaning against the rail. She took a deep breath of the cool night and smiled. The little breeze played softly about her face. *It* was as gentle as the touch of Tom's fingers.

She blushed and, knowing that she blushed, laughed aloud. She felt young and drunkenly happy. While she waited she let her thoughts run on down the future. There were no clear pictures in her. She seemed to float on something that wrapped her softly, warmly about.

At last she heard him coming. As the steps neared the gate they broke into a run. With a sudden, new shyness Ruth drew far back into the shadow. She waited, both hands clasped tightly. She heard him breathing quickly as he rounded the house. The next moment—Tim Carson stood at the foot of the steps!

"Oh—I—was afraid you—wouldn't be here—yet!" the boy panted, trying to speak calmly.

Ruth did not move. She stood staring at him.

"I—say—don't look like that. Don't get—frightened. He—"

Ruth bent and fastened her hands like claws into his shoulders.

"What—tell—me—"

"There was an accident. He had to go to the village this afternoon, and he was on the trolley. It was making time, and it smashed into the north-bound at the station. One man was killed, and Tom—was—"

Ruth passed him. Several yards beyond the house he caught up.

"He—ain't—so terrible—hurt—I don't think—" They were running swiftly side by side.

"Haven't—you—been—for the doctor?" She spoke without slackened speed.

"He—wouldn't—let me. He said—I—wasn't to—if you wasn't there."

"Oh, Tom!" Ruth spoke to herself, forgetting the boy.

At the crossroads she stopped for a moment. "Go—as fast as you can, and tell him to hurry; bring him—soon."

"Tom's in the coachman's room—in the stable. He's been living there—since—since—" Ruth had passed beyond hearing.

Tom was lying with his face to the door. As Ruth dropped to her knees beside him, he tried to put his arms about her, but the pain made him cry out. As she felt him weak in her clasp a great courage came to her. She stroked his face gently and whispered softly. She forced a smile into her eyes. Tom tried to smile back.

"I—guess—I'm pretty—badly—hurt, little girl—but—"

By a physical effort Ruth kept the fear out of her voice.

"Hush, dear; don't try to talk. The doctor will be here soon."

For a moment the man obeyed, lying heavily in her arms. Then he opened his eyes. "There—was one—poor devil—killed, Ruth—he was on the front—but—it might—have be-e-n—me, and then I—would never—have known—"

The girl laid her cheek against his. "I was there half an hour too soon, Tommy."

The man's fingers closed on hers.

He did not speak again till the crunching of the doctor's buggy-wheels broke the stillness.

"Maybe—you'd—better wait—some place else."

"Hush, dear!"

She saw old Dr. Phillips stop for a moment in the door, and she felt the hot blood flame up under the surprise in his eyes. Then his professional manner masked his astonishment, and he came forward quickly. When he had finished his examination he nodded to Ruth, and she followed him out.

"He's pretty badly hurt, but it's not fatal. With good care—"

Ruth's shoulders, that had been braced as if for a physical blow, drooped.

"I'll send a nurse over as soon—"

"No—doctor." Ruth looked straight into his eyes. "Don't send any one. I shall stay."

The old man opened his lips and then closed them. They looked steadily at each other. Then he took her hand kindly. "Anything—I can do, Ruth?"

"Yes."

She was silent such a long time that the doctor asked again.

"Yes. If you—would—just—go up and tell mother—that I'm here and that—I'm going—to stay. I don't—want her—to worry."

"I'll tell her, Ruthie." The doctor took both her hands in his.

As the old doctor drove slowly up the road to the Sanders farm, he nodded thoughtfully.

"I suppose Mirah Sanders will get some kind of comfort out of Tom Dillon's being hurt in the same wreck that smashed that drunken lout of a son-in-law to bits, but"—Dr. Phillips sat up and jerked the reins with a vicious pull—"I'll be dog-goned if she interferes with Ruthie now!"

The last faint scrape of the wheels was dead in the stillness before Mirah Sanders closed the door. As she pushed it heavily in its sunken frame the door on the right of the hall opened. The

gentle face of the ancient peered out, his dim eyes dazed with sleep.

"What is it, Mirah? I thought I heard something. Yuh ain't sick, are yuh?"

"No! No!" she exclaimed. "It warn't nothin', father. I thought I heard Captain loose. Go back, dear; you'll git cold."

The ancient man obeyed.

The woman went on to her own room. She did not get into bed, but sat huddled forward in a chair by the

window, staring into the blackness of the apple-trees outside.

"I might—hev known—He—wouldn't desert me. I ought to hev trusted Him better."

Suddenly she began to cry softly. "Poor Abner—he weren't no way ready—to face his Lord—but the love of God passeth all understanding. It ain't—fur—us—to jedge him now. And—it was hard—I stood it—fur thirty years—and God knows—it weren't—easy."

THE CLOAK OF LIFE

AN ALLEGORY

BY GLEN VISSCHER



WOMAN-CHILD was born into the World. As the years passed she grew up straight and fair, and the World loved her, and She loved it.

"Dear, beautiful World," she would cry, holding her arms out, as if to embrace it, "I love you!"

When the Woman was young, if the Winds blew roughly, she would laugh for joy—and why not?—for they tossed her long, golden hair, and she was admired, and Admiration gives warmth, and warmth gives Life.

Besides, she lived in a Sunlit Land, and her heart was glad, just because the Birds sang, the Waves danced, the Sun shone, and the People looked at her golden hair.

But the years passed, and the Woman grew older.

Her hair was not so thick nor so golden now, and many who had looked, passed by. Her path led away from the Sunlit Land, and she saw no more the Dancing Waves.

Now, great Mountain Peaks frowned upon her. The Birds sang not at all, or in solemn notes, full of warning of Winter Storms. The Mists on the Mountainsides were gray, Bleak Winds blew, and the Woman's heart grew cold.

She looked out on the World again, and it seemed so far from her. She was alone, except for her Dreams and Memories—of the Sea, the Sunlit Dancing Waves, the Happy, Singing Birds, and the Long Days of Golden Sunlight in a Land so far away—and even these treasured memories could not fill the Woman's barren heart.

She was cold from the Realities of Life, and longed for the warm Illusions of Beauty and Happiness.

Then it was that she cried to the Gods for a Cloak—a warm, long cloak, that its heavy folds might keep the chills of Disappointment from entering her heart.

Suddenly a Shape stood before her, and said:

"I come in answer to thy prayer, for

the Gods are just. Thou shalt have two Cloaks to choose from. Look well, therefore, and use Wisdom in thy choice, for it is not given to Mortals to wear both."

The Woman answered:

"Let me see them, that I may consider."

In one hand the Shape held up a long, gray cape of the color of mists at sea, and in the other a gorgeous garment, a mantle that flashed changing colors of every rainbow hue.

The Woman's fingers eagerly plucked at this one, and she clasped it at her neck. Its ample folds draped her tall form with elegance and grace.

"Oh, let me wear this one!" she cried passionately. "It is so beautiful, I shall always be happy now!" Then she asked:

"What is it called?"

"It is the Cloak of Life," answered the Shape, "which is woven in many different Patterns."

"But this one—tell me, what does its beautiful border of crimson roses mean?"

"They are the Roses of Romance," answered the Shape, smiling, for the Woman was very innocent. "The brilliant thread with which they are woven is dyed with the scarlet of Courage and Passion. No Romance is real without it. Closely interwoven, in the shadows, is the purple of Royal Giving, and at the heart of each flower, is a center made of a thread of Pure Gold—the thread of Imagination and Hope, that runs through even the darkest places in the web of the Cloth of Life."

"Then this is the Cloak of Romance?" said the Woman, dreamily, as she folded it closely about her, her eyes on the distant World.

"Yes," again answered the Shape.

"Oh, I am so glad, so happy, for I am hungry for Romance! How good you are, to give me such a beautiful, beautiful Cloak! I shall never be cold again," the Woman said gratefully, her face aglow with joy and pride.

"Be careful of the Cloak," said the

Shape, warningly. "It is beautiful, one of the most lovely of all the cloaks Life has to give, but its gold is easily tarnished, and its threads are not strong. Beware, you will get cold again, if the fabric is torn."

Then the Shape vanished.

The Woman wore the Cloak, and the envious passers-by said:

"Look at the beautiful mantle that Woman wears! Its wonderful colors are so skilfully interwoven that they seem to soften as well as brighten the pale beauty of her face. See! here gleams a great golden butterfly, and there crimson roses, with hearts of flame, and there—modest violets. Oh, the Weaver of that lovely Pattern was skilled, yet it must have been the work of years."

The Woman journeyed on. At first, her path led again into Green Valleys. She passed through Meadows, warm with the sun, and Gardens so full of flowers that their heavy perfume was stifling, and even the butterflies rested in the drowsy air.

Often the Woman slept, for sheer weariness of so much warmth and fragrance. In her sleep Strange Dreams came; some were happy, some frightful—all illusive. As she sought to grasp some beautiful flower, more beautiful than any she saw in the Garden, it faded before her eyes, or a stronger hand snatched it away. Sometimes she thought she heard jeering laughter, but she wasn't sure, so much of her life now was a Dream.

Once, a Black Butterfly alighted on the Woman's shoulder. At the same time, a cloud passed over the sun. The Woman shivered, for she thought it a bad omen—although it was warm, and her Cloak hung a heavy weight from her tired shoulders.

Then, on she went, through Forest glades, and at last, again into the Mountains. Her path was steep, and it grew rough and stony. Briars grew at each side of it that tore at the long folds of her Cloak.

One day, a Storm came up: it was

dark; lightning flashed; thunder rolled, and the wind blew in great gusts. It seemed a Demon-possessed Thing, that sought to tear the Woman's well-loved treasure from her, but she clung to the Cloak with cold-numbed fingers, and stumbling and bent, struggled on.

At last, she came upon a cave, rent in the mountain's side, and thought to take refuge there. The growl of a mother panther drove her on again. She raised her clenched hands to the dark, hurrying clouds, and suffering, wandered on.

The storm died away with distant mutterings, the sun shone again, and a rainbow spanned the sky—but the Woman's strength was spent.

Sadly, she looked down at the Cloak she had worn so long—that neither the warmth in the garden nor the tempest on the mountain's steep side had prevailed on her to part with.

Its beautiful colors were dimmed by the sun and the rains, and the winds had whipped it to tatters. Even so, the burden of it was too heavy now for her to bear.

Slowly she unloosened the clasp—it fell from her and lay, a heap of faded rags.

She sobbed and shivered, and clasping her arms about her naked shoulders, bent her head in despair.

Then she fell to her knees and prayed again to the Gods for a Cloak—a warm, new Cloak, one that would protect her from the Storms of Life; and again the Shining Shape stood before her.

"I come once more, O Mortal, in answer to thy prayers. Thou art favored of the Gods, for I am sent to bring thee another Cloak. What wilt thou choose this time?"

"Give to me, I pray thee," the Woman answered humbly, without raising her eyes, "the Cloak of the color of mists at sea."

The Shape shook out the soft, gray garment, and gently folded it about the kneeling woman's form. At her feet lay a white lily, with a golden heart.

"What is this called?" asked the Woman.

And the Shape answered:

"This is the Cloak of Renunciation. It is woven in the neutral tints of Life's commonplace Duties, but to brighten it, is the white thread of Purity, that forms the pattern of a lily. The golden cup in the heart of each flower is filled with Loyalty and Trust."

"But what is it that shines like silver and starlight?"

"That is the dew of Charity."

"Let me wear it," prayed the Woman, reverently, then asked fearfully, "If I am worthy?"

"Yea, thy desire has given it to thee. Go in peace."

The Woman walked her way, and the onlookers said:

"That Woman has a sad face, but her eyes speak of exaltation—and her Cloak is pretty! At a distance, it is merely the color of a fog at sea, but when she passes, it seems radiant, and flashes like star-dust, and see! it is woven in the Pattern of a Lily—the Lily of Purity—and her feet do not touch the ground. Strange Woman!"

The Woman walked among the Tired of Life, and everywhere some of the silver star-dust fell—and it lighted the paths of many.

She has passed out of sight, but her path now lies among the stars.

ALL IN THE DAY'S WORK

By Amy Juliet Rice

I KILLED a roaring lion to-day,
A most ferocious beast;
I built a house and entertained
Some fifty at a feast.

I married a sweet girl or two
And fought a duel, then—
Oh, don't get frightened; I'm not mad;
I did it with my pen.

TRENTON GEORGE'S WIDOW

A SHORT STORY

BY EUGENE A. VOGT

SHOULD your after-dinner cigar fail to please, you will not be apt to miss the mark if you blame Water Street, New York, restricting yourself, however, in justice to the rest of that thoroughfare, to the numbers ranging from eighty to two hundred. For it is on this little stretch of street that most of the tobacco used in the manufacture of cigars in this country is distributed.

Not only is this true to-day, but this has been the case for the past fifty years. For the most part, too, the same old buildings still serve for the transaction of this trade, and in that yellow-front, four-story veteran with the reddish-brown iron shutters and the brave, dark-green pillars, in which to-day—but never mind to-day, for our story deals with those who lived and labored there fifty years ago.

Into this building, then, stepped Carl Dorn, young and lusty, with a face God had made to look pleasant, but which now was so incongruously sad and troubled that Max Plinsky, the owner of the establishment, gasped involuntarily when he saw it. But, quickly recovering, he greeted his visitor with his usual heartiness:

"Hello, Carl! Vot brings you ofer here?"

"Me?" replied Dorn lugubriously; "all vot I wish is I would of chumped in der river on der way ofer, Max."

"Hoonbook!" retorted Max, with a deprecating wave of his hairy hand. "Sit down and tell me vot iss."

Carl plumped down on a chair and

nervously twisted his hat out of shape, while Max, with the discretion of the experienced business man, waited quietly until the young man should be ready to tell his story. And at last it came—a few broken, spluttering, choking sounds:

"Max, Riegler & Dorn is bursted!"

The dealer still said nothing, but his face asked for details. Presently Dorn gained sufficient control of himself to proceed:

"Riegler spent all der money mit cards and womens ofer here in New York, while I sweated and worried ofer there."

Carl jerked his thumb toward Europe, but Max knew he meant the little town of Williamsburg just across the river. The tobacco dealer placed his hand on Carl's knee, and his keen black eyes bored into the young man's distorted face, but his expression was kindly and sympathetic.

"Now, don't get so excited right away efery time you open der mout," he said soothingly. "Tell me vot happened, and how."

After Carl had told him all he knew about the causes that led to the disaster, and had summed up the meager assets of the firm, the merchant stared very hard at a picture of Abraham Lincoln hanging on the wall over his desk and blew dense volumes of smoke at it.

Carl scrutinized the other's absorbed expression very much like a convicted man regards the judge about to sentence him, and gave a sigh of relief when Max finally turned to him with an air of positive settlement.

"Carl," he said brusquely, "you look like der whole world collapsed inside itself mit you in der middle, when all vot really did happen is a heldy, honest, hard-working young man finds himself six hundred dollars in debt."

"Ain't that enough?"

"No, it ain't enough!" snapped Max. "Now ain't no time to lay down, neither; now is it the time to get up and hustle. Lissen me, now! I tell you vot you do. You go back home, and I send you ofer a case of wrapper, a case of binder, and five bales Havana, like you had, and you go to work, and as you get it, so you pay it. Y' understand?"

"I understand, Max," replied Carl, with grateful tears in his voice. "You are a good friend from me. But I can't do it—I can't do it; I haf no more courage. I'll go to work for Tom, and you get efery cent I owes you, but—"

Max argued and raved, and called his young friend many bad names and made uncomplimentary references to the other's mental capacity; but Carl had the firmness of despair, and nothing could budge him.

That night Carl went to his Lieder-kranz and tried to sing with them, as usual; but they all noticed that he was not the same old, quietly jovial Carl Dorn, and after the rehearsal Hermann Schulz dragged him into a quiet corner for a serious talk.

"Der Jews haf got you; that is vot is the matter," declared the old man violently.

"No, that is not vot is the matter, Mr. Schulz."

"Well, vot is the matter, then? You are not yourself, Carl; any one can see that."

"Yes, that is true; I am not *meinself*. My bartner schwindled me out of all I had and left me with six hundred dollars debts, so I haf decided to go ofer to New York and work at mein old chob, and save and pay the debt."

"For why should you do that?" indignantly demanded Schulz. "Ain't all your friends here? Ain't Hermann Schulz here yet? Now, I tell you vot

you do: To-morrow morning you come by my blace, and I will give you one t'ousand dollars at six per cent for as long as you want it. You understand?"

"I understand, but—"

Hermann Schulz fared no better than had Max, and acted even worse about it.

The very next day Carl left his beloved Williamsburg to live and labor in the great city across the river. Then his friends discovered the true reason why the young man had declined all offers of help. Richter, the owner of Die Deutsche Heimath, Williamsburg's most prosperous saloon and boarding-house, told every one who would listen, and every one told everybody else.

It was a matter of fatherly pride with Richter; he wanted the community to know what a sensible girl his Tillie was. The little village had made up its collective mind that Carl and Tillie some day would marry each other, a conclusion fully justified by the openly friendly relations of these two young people.

But when Carl advised Tillie of his business reverses, and confidently asked her to wait until he could mend his shattered fortunes, she rejected the proposition with scorn. She was a wonderful girl, proclaimed Richter; a marvel of common sense. Which she was! She knew her father's ideas as to her marriage, and simply avoided trouble by settling the matter herself.

For two years Carl worked steadily in the big shop in New York, lived frugally, and brought the bulk of his earnings to Max, who accepted the money with many disparaging and profane remarks. Carl grinned sheepishly while Max told him what an idiot he was to be working for another when any man of ability who started a cigar-shop at this time would be rich in ten years.

Max always wound up by insisting that he would send over a case of wrapper and all that went with it, but Carl still had the firmness of despair, and

quietly refused again to be lured into the fearsome maze of business.

At night, alone in his room, or on Sundays, when the weather was fair and balmy, reclining on the grass amid the solitudes of the inchoate Central Park, the exile would hum a song he knew, a simple, tender German ditty that he and Tillie used to sing together so often in the dear old days, the like of which his yearning heart hoped soon would come again. And these were the first two lines of that song of hope:

*Blau ist das Blümelein
Das heisst Vergiss-Nicht-Mein.*

Carl chuckled as he recalled how Tillie had laughed at his translation of the sentiment of these two lines:

Blue is the flower what
Has name forget-me-not.

The only dissipation Carl allowed himself was his single glass of beer each night in Dan McGorry's saloon. To McGorry this mild, unobtrusive young German was a curiosity. His quiet, broken answers to questions, his Gibraltarlike firmness in taking no more than one drink, and refusal to treat or be treated, and, above all, the long-drawn-out manner he had of imbibing these few swallows of that inane liquid simply caused Dan and his Hibernian help to stand still and stare in amazement.

Before Carl's coming they had never known that any one who drank at all could linger so long over one glass of insignificant beer and extract from its insipid depths so much joy and satisfaction.

At the end of these two years, having finally liquidated his indebtedness to Max, Carl began seriously to consider a visit to his beloved Williamsburg. But, in his supersensitiveness, he postponed the visit from week to week, realizing that each Saturday found him better financially fortified to face the community—and Tillie's father. And while he procrastinated, the matter was settled for him.

For, one Monday night, when Dorn

came into McGorry's place as usual, that born leader of men grabbed his arm and hustled him into a little private office in the rear of the establishment. When Carl emerged from that room he knew that he had met his master, and, in a dazed way, realized that the Perfection Cigar Company had been rushed into existence in those crisp ten minutes.

All that he remembered was that McGorry had fired a string of brogue at him and, occasionally stopping for breath, told Carl to say "Yes," and Carl said it. After the bewildered young German had repeated the monosyllable four times, McGorry rose, waved his huge hand, and announced that it was all settled.

He instructed Carl to meet him at nine the next morning, and they would drive over to Williamsburg and start things. Carl consumed two glasses of beer that night, and every one who saw it knew that something very unusual had happened.

That next day Carl never forgot as long as he lived. McGorry and he drove into Williamsburg at ten, and by eleven the whole town knew that the Perfection Cigar Company had been precipitated into its midst.

By that time—among other things—the Irishman had cursed the village for a living graveyard too many times to keep account of, almost started a row with Badenser Fritz, who, being summoned to fetch something to drink, had suggested that despised German abomination, beer; absorbed seven drinks of whisky in a fruitless effort to find any in the forsaken village fit to drink; rented a loft for the new shop; ordered a sign painted; almost burst a blood-vessel trying to make the editor of the local German paper understand what he wanted to say in a want advertisement for cigar-makers to be published in that journal, and was back in his buggy, flushed but smiling, with his dazed partner at his side, ready to drive over to Max to buy tobacco for the new enterprise.

That night, Carl, who throughout that whole strenuous day had longed for a chance to tell Tillie Richter of his great good luck, went to her father's house and asked to see her. Mr. Richter became frigid at once. Tillie? Yes, he *did* recall the name, but he had nothing to do with the person bearing it.

From other sources Carl learned that, one day, Tillie had disappeared, and that on the same day an itinerant barber also had vanished, and the community drew its own conclusions. The men were good-humored about it, the women indignant, the girls curious, Richter sullenly silent.

In two weeks the new factory was in full swing. McGorry came over every Sunday morning to look over and stir things up. On his fourth visit Carl timidly approached him in this fashion:

"Mr. McGorry, I—"

"Me name's Dan to me friends," interrupted McGorry sharply. "I've tould ye that *seveeral* times."

"Sure, I know," stammered his partner. "Well, Dan, I would like to haf a liddle money for meinself—about ten dollars."

"What for?" growled Dan.

"Well, to bay *mein* board and so, Mr.—Dan."

McGorry pawed through the cash-book for a few moments.

"Ye mean to tell me ye ain't drawed no salary?" he demanded finally.

"No, I didn't know there was none."

"Well, I must say, ye are a regular lamb fur inn'cence." He drew a fat wallet from his pocket, and handed Carl eighty dollars.

"There's four weeks' salary. Now, ye draw twenty dollars a week, d' ye hear? And I'm ready to come back to life once more." (Meaning that he was ready to go back to New York.)

After dinner, John Malby, who had been one of Carl's fellow workmen in the big shop in New York, came over to see him. John was out on a mission of charity. Trenton George, another shopmate, had died, leaving his widow and baby penniless, and the cigar-

makers were taking up a collection for her.

Would Carl contribute? He would. He handed the collector two dollars, with many misgivings as to their ultimate disposition; he knew Malby and the general run of his kind, and thought ruefully of the number of saloons the agent of charity would have to pass before he reached Trenton George's destitute widow and child.

Late that same Sunday night, Carl counted over his money in hand. His board was paid for the month, his wardrobe ample, and he knew his daily expenses would not aggregate over fifteen dollars a month. He now had a little over sixty dollars; to these he mentally added the twenty which McGorry would pay him every week, and stood amazed before the net monthly surplus his careful figures gave him.

Besides, there was his one-third of the profits of the Perfection Cigar Company at the end of the year—McGorry had said he would make him a millionaire. And now, there was no Tillie, and there never would be any one else.

How rich was he, and how poor Trenton George's widow and her helpless baby? He looked out of his window at the great, unsympathetic city across the river, and sighed for the forsaken woman whom he did not know.

The next day Carl opened a bank account with his hoard and sent his dead shopmate's widow a check for ten dollars. Three days later he was dazed by the following acknowledgment:

MY DEAR FRIEND CARL:

I received the ten dollars, and it feels like a knife stuck in me. But Mrs. Huber, the lady across the landing, says I must keep the money for my sick baby. I ain't mad, Carl, and I hope you ain't, but, one thing, I can't except any more money from you. But thank you for the ten dollars, anyways. Oh, I hope my baby gets better soon.

Your friend,

TILLIE WARNE.

Was Tillie Richter.

P. S.—Blue is the flower what has name forget-me-not. Remember, how we used to laugh?

Carl Dorn remembered. How they used to laugh.

And that day Carl argued with himself as to the propriety and opportuneness of an immediate call on Trenton George's widow. She had not invited him to do so, had not as much as intimated a desire to see him. She had, even, written that she could accept no more money from him, but she had also written that her baby was sick.

"Oh, I hope my baby gets better soon."

This cry of an anxious mother's heart appealed to the young man who read it, for he was worthy of his manhood. Not being sure of Tillie's ability to read German and dreading to entrust to his own weird conception of English orthography so important a document, Carl induced Johnny, the head stripper of the Perfection Cigar Company, to write a short, English note for him in which Tillie was advised that the fifty dollars enclosed were for the baby, and strongly intimating that "one of these fine Sundays" the sender would call on her in person.

Old Father Time went on his regular, unrelenting way. To some he brought tragedy, to others joy, to most of mankind nothing more than the humdrum incidents of the average daily life. But to Carl Dorn he brought the worst he can bestow—suspense. For, through all these anxious days and weeks, no answer from Tillie came.

And at last, when Dan McGorry came over to the shop in Williamsburg on the fourth Sunday after Carl had sent Tillie the fifty dollars, he found Carl's cousin Emil in charge. Emil prided himself on his fine English accent, but at that it took McGorry three-quarters of an hour to find out that his partner had gone to New York that morning. The Irishman was willing to bet Emil a new hat that Carl was over there gallivanting after some woman, but Carl's cousin refused to gamble.

Dan would have won his bet had Emil been foolish enough to take him up, for at that very moment Carl was

climbing four flights of stairs in one of New York's earliest tenement-houses; his nostrils filled with the reek of seven Sunday dinners, his legs weary from walking, his brain awlwhirl from seeking and inquiring, his neck uncomfortable in a tight collar, but his heart beating time to a joyful song of hope.

He knocked at the first door on the right side of the uppermost landing, and the portly woman who opened it gasped in astonishment at the well-dressed apparition that politely inquired for Trenton George's widow.

No one by that name lived there.

Carl hung his head, but recovered in an instant and looked up with a bright smile.

"Excuse me," he said, "but you are Mrs. Hoober?"

The lady sniffed, and remarked icily:

"No, sir; I'm Mrs. Yoober. Me husband's name is Hoober; but I ain't Dutch, I'll have ye know."

"Excuse me," repeated the bewildered young man, "but," and with a hopeful smile pointed to the door opposite, "lives there Tillie mit a baby?"

Mrs. Huber's eyes softened.

"No, Tillie's moved."

"Moofed?" gasped Carl.

"Yes—right after the baby's funeral."

Carl leaned heavily against the jamb, too stunned to speak.

"Yes, poor girl!" proceeded the woman. "Lost her husband first, though that was no great loss if the truth was told, and then her baby died. It's a hard world for us women—these tenements of New York."

Carl still leaned heavily against the jamb, his light-brown eyes veiled with the womanish tears his manhood was trying to suppress. Mrs. Huber continued nervously:

"Tillie gave the baby a grand funeral, she did. Said it was the last thing she could do for her, and that she needed no money for herself, being strong and able to work."

The woman paused, hoping the dazed man before her would speak, or groan, or cry out, or curse his God, or faint, or do *some* sane, human thing to relieve the tense agony that had made of his face a mask of senseless stone. But he said nothing, did nothing, save weakly nod his head and wreath his lips in the ghastly semblance of a smile. The woman shuddered and resumed:

"Of course, Warne left her without a cent, and the Cigar-makers' Association paid for his funeral and gave her fifteen dollars they had collected extra. Then the baby took sick, and Tillie spent the fifteen dollars; when that was gone somebody sent her ten dollars and she spent that for doctors and drugs. But the baby died, and that very morning she got fifty dollars from the same party. And she told me she'd spend the fifty dollars on the baby's funeral, and then she'd leave; said she was afraid the party that'd sent the money'd come over to see her, and she couldn't face him—you!"

"Me?" muttered the man, stroking his brow.

"So we laid away the baby, and Tillie left."

"Left!" repeated Carl inanely. Then he roused himself and asked entreatingly: "But you know where she is—you know where she is?"

Mrs. Huber sadly shook her head.

"No, I don't know where she is. She gave me an address, but when I went there Sunday before last she'd never been there at all; they didn't even know her."

Carl reeled as he turned to go, and the woman steadied him with her brawny, motherly arms. He grasped her hand and wrung it.

"Tell her," he stammered, "if you ever see her again she mustn't be 'frade from Carl—she mustn't be 'frade. I give you *mein* address, Mrs. Hoo—Yoober. Tell her—tell her you seen me, and she mustn't hide from me. You know how I mean it, Mrs. Yoober?"

The woman nodded, and gave his

hand a sympathetic, understanding squeeze.

The Perfection Cigar Company prospered, prospered in three years to such an extent that its principal owner decided to move its factory to New York. Besides, he installed an office manager, a nephew of his, Tim O'Connell. And this nephew had a sister Nora, bright-eyed and care-free, and the light of her soul penetrated the gloom that surrounded Carl Dorn, worked its way through it, slowly but relentlessly.

A great Saengerfest was to be held in New York, and Nora had consented to go with Carl, and he had made up his mind to ask her the fateful question that night; and, if Nora consented, he would destroy Tillie's picture and try to forget.

They sat side by side in that vast audience, and Nora, arrayed in dainty white, had never looked more entrancing, which is saying a great deal, for the like of Nora O'Connell never look less than entrancing at any time.

Carl threw sidelong glances at the beautiful face of the girl whom he hoped to love as he loved Tillie, and listened to the low, rich tones of her voice with a tender feeling in his heart that he had never deemed it capable of since he left Mrs. Huber standing on her landing three years ago.

At last he sighed hopefully; the ghost of Tillie, whom he had so diligently sought, was laid. And then the band struck up and the mass chorus of six hundred male voices sang "My Country, 'Tis of Thee."

After the applause had subsided the audience settled back in their chairs for the second number of the program. A famous German soprano was to sing "Ave Maria," by Schubert. The house grew still with fascination as the tender notes of the song fell from the singer's lips, and stayed still until the end. Then the mass of humanity arose and clapped and cheered. The smiling prima donna came out, bowed, and retired a dozen times.

The thirteenth time, however, she walked to the center of the stage, and stood erect while the tumult subsided. The leader of the orchestra raised his baton, and the orchestra played the first strains of the song she had chosen as an encore. A shiver ran through the stalwart frame of Carl Dorn, as if something which had been dead within him was suddenly come back to life. And then the soloist sang Tillie's song:

*Blau ist das Blümelein,
Das heisst Fergiss-Nicht-Mein.*

The next day Nora said to her brother with a well-simulated, careless laugh:

"What do you think of a dummy like that? There he sat, crying like a baby, all along of that little Dutch song the fat woman sung after they had clapped her out. And nary a word did he speak to me all the rest of the evening, just sat there like a paralyzed dummy."

From all of which may be inferred that Carl did not destroy Tillie's picture that night.

At the next meeting of the board of trustees of the New Yorker Liederkranz—the metropolis's leading German singing society—its members discussed the arrangements for that society's next grand concert, and it was unanimously agreed that the German soprano of the Saengerfest should be asked to sing on that occasion.

The duty of seeing the diva devolved on the chairman of the music committee, Mr. Carl Dorn, who was given *carte blanche* to secure the singer's services. Carl wrote the lady a letter, asking permission to call on her at her

hotel, and promptly received a very cordial invitation to do so. That evening he sent up his card to the lady's rooms, and the boy returned and escorted him to the door behind which the sacred presence lived.

Carl knocked at the door, his heart palpitating with trepidation at the high honor about to come to him.

A trim maid opened the door.

A few minutes later the prima donna called impatiently from an adjoining room:

"Tillie, why do you not bring the gentleman in?"

Something in her maid's agitated reply made the diva rise and enter the reception-hall. The singer was no longer young, but still not too old to understand the meaning of the scene before her. She smiled very pleasantly at the confused and trembling maid.

"Herr Dorn," she said, and her tone was exceedingly businesslike, "I received your letter. I am free on the night of your concert. My usual price is five hundred dollars a night; but on that night I shall sing for nothing, provided Tillie has secured me another maid."

Tillie fell on her knees and hugged the woman's limbs.

"You are not angry at me then," she cried, "after all your kindness to me? But, oh, madam—he has been true to me—unworthy as I am—all these years, and now he says he wants me! You will not be angry at me, madam?"

"Very angry," said the elder woman softly, "unless you get up this instant—and kiss me!"

A woman's heart is an organ always out of tune after a man has played with it.

WHY MAN OF TO-DAY IS ONLY 50 PER CENT. EFFICIENT

By WALTER GRIFFITH

IF one were to form an opinion from the number of helpful, inspiring and informing articles one sees in the public press and magazines, the purpose of which is to increase our efficiency, he must believe that the entire American Nation is striving for such an end—

And this is so.

The American Man because the race is swifter every day: competition is keener and the stronger the man the greater his capacity to win. The stronger the man the stronger his will and brain, and the greater his ability to match wits and win. The greater his confidence in himself the greater the confidence of other people in him: the keener his wit and the clearer his brain.

The American Woman because she must be competent to rear and manage the family and home, and take all the thought and responsibility from the shoulders of the man whose present-day business burdens are all that he can carry.

Now what are we doing to secure that efficiency? Much mentally, some of us much physically, but what is the trouble?

We are not really efficient more than half the time. Half the time blue and worried—all the time nervous—some of the time really incapacitated by illness.

There is a reason for this—a practical reason, one that has been known to physicians for quite a period and will be known to the entire World ere long.

That reason is that the human system does not, and will not, rid itself of all the waste which it accumulates under our present mode of living. No matter how regular we are, the food we eat and the sedentary lives we live (even though we

do get some exercise) make it impossible; just as impossible as it is for the grate of a stove to rid itself of clinkers.

And the waste does to us exactly what the clinkers do to the stove; make the fire burn low and inefficiently until enough clinkers have accumulated and then prevent its burning at all.

It has been our habit, after this waste has reduced our efficiency about 75 per cent., to drug ourselves; or after we have become 100 per cent. inefficient through illness, to still further attempt to rid ourselves of it in the same way—by drugging.

If a clock is not cleaned once in a while it clogs up and stops; the same way with an engine because of the residue which it, itself, accumulates. To clean the clock, you would not put acid on the parts, though you could probably find one that would do the work, nor to clean the engine would you force a cleaner through it that would injure its parts; yet that is the process you employ when you drug the system to rid it of waste.

You would clean your clock and engine with a harmless cleanser that Nature has provided, and you can do exactly the same for yourself as I will demonstrate before I conclude.

The reason that a physician's first step in illness is to purge the system is that no medicine can take effect nor can the system work properly while the colon (large intestine) is clogged up. If the colon were not clogged up the chances are 10 to 1 that you would not have been ill at all.

It may take some time for the clogging process to reach the stage where it produces real illness but, no matter how long

it takes, while it is going on the functions are not working so as to keep us up to "concert pitch." Our livers are sluggish, we are dull and heavy—slight or severe headaches come on—our sleep does not rest us—in short, we are about 50 per cent. efficient.

And if this condition progresses to where real illness develops, it is impossible to tell what form that illness will take, because—

The blood is constantly circulating through the colon and, taking up by absorption the poisons in the waste which it contains, it distributes them throughout the system and weakens it so that we are subject to whatever disease is most prevalent.

The nature of the illness depends on our own little weaknesses and what we are the least able to resist.

These facts are all scientifically correct in every particular, and it has often surprised me that they are not more generally known and appreciated. All we have to do is to consider the treatment that we have received in illness to realize fully how it developed, and the methods used to remove it.

So you see that not only is accumulated waste directly and constantly pulling down our efficiency by making our blood poor and our intellect dull—our spirits low and our ambitions weak, but it is responsible through its weakening and infecting processes for a list of illnesses that if catalogued here would seem almost unbelievable.

It is the direct and immediate cause of that very expensive and dangerous complaint—appendicitis.

If we can successfully eliminate the waste, all our functions work properly and in accord—there are no poisons being taken up by the blood, so it is pure and imparts strength to every part of the body instead of weakness—there is nothing to clog up the system and make us bilious, dull and nervously fearful.

With everything working in perfect accord and without obstruction, our brains are clear, our entire physical being is competent to respond quickly to every requirement, and we are 100 per cent. efficient.

Now this waste that I speak of cannot be thoroughly removed by drugs, but even if it could the effect of these drugs on the functions is very unnatural, and, if continued, becomes a periodical necessity.

Note the opinions on drugging of two most eminent physicians:

Prof. Alonzo Clark, M.D., of the New York College of Physicians and Surgeons, says: "All of our curative agents are poisons, and as a consequence, every dose diminishes the patient's vitality."

Prof. Joseph M. Smith, M.D., of the same school, says: "All medicines which enter the circulation poison the blood in the same manner as do the poisons that produce disease."

Now, the internal organism can be kept as sweet and pure and clean as the external and by the same natural, sane method—bathing. By the proper system warm water can be introduced so that the colon is perfectly cleansed and kept pure.

There is no violence in this process—it seems to be just as normal and natural as washing one's hands.

Physicians are taking it up more widely and generally every day, and it seems as though every one should be informed thoroughly on a practice which, though so rational and simple, is revolutionary in its accomplishments.

This is rather a delicate subject to write of exhaustively in the public press, but Chas. A. Tyrrell, M.D., has prepared an interesting treatise on "Why Man of To-day Is Only 50 per cent. Efficient," which treats the subject very exhaustively, and which he will send without cost to any one addressing him at 134 West Sixty-Fifth Street, New York, and mentioning that they have read this article in *THE CAVALIER*.

Personally, I am enthusiastic on Internal Bathing because I have seen what it has done in illness as well as in health, and I believe that every person who wishes to keep in as near a perfect condition as is humanly possible should at least be informed on this subject; he will also probably learn something about himself which he has never known through reading the little book to which I refer.



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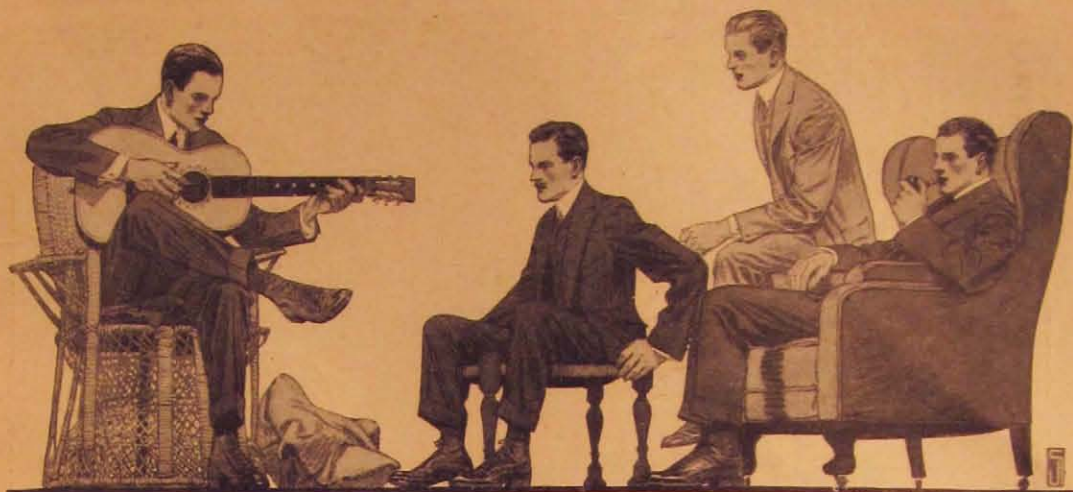
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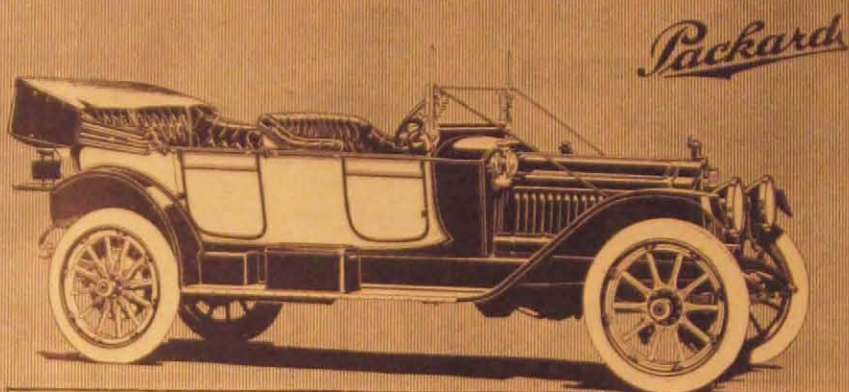
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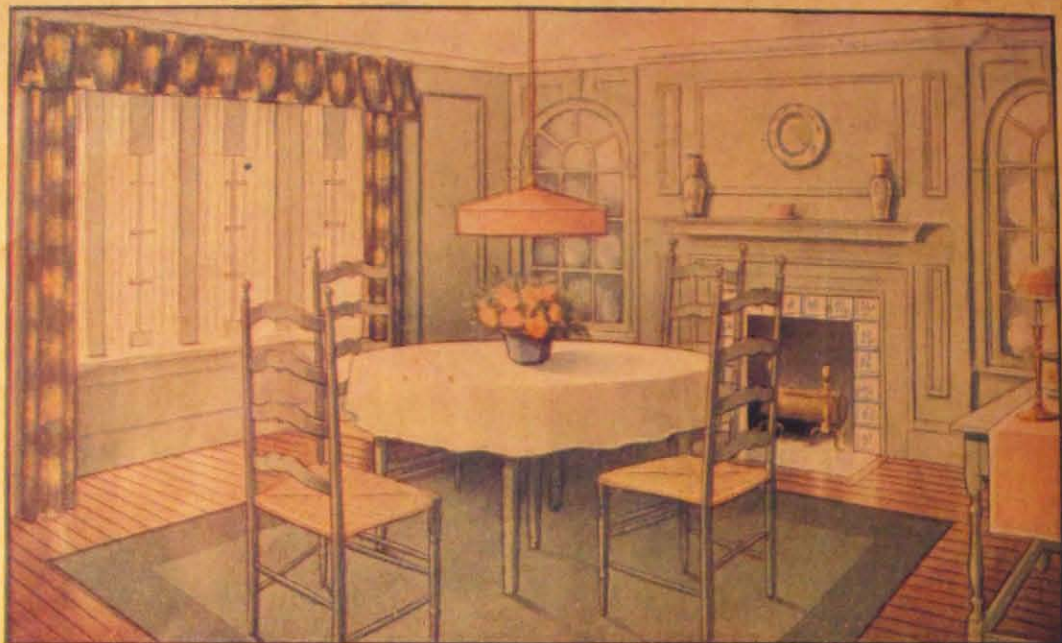


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