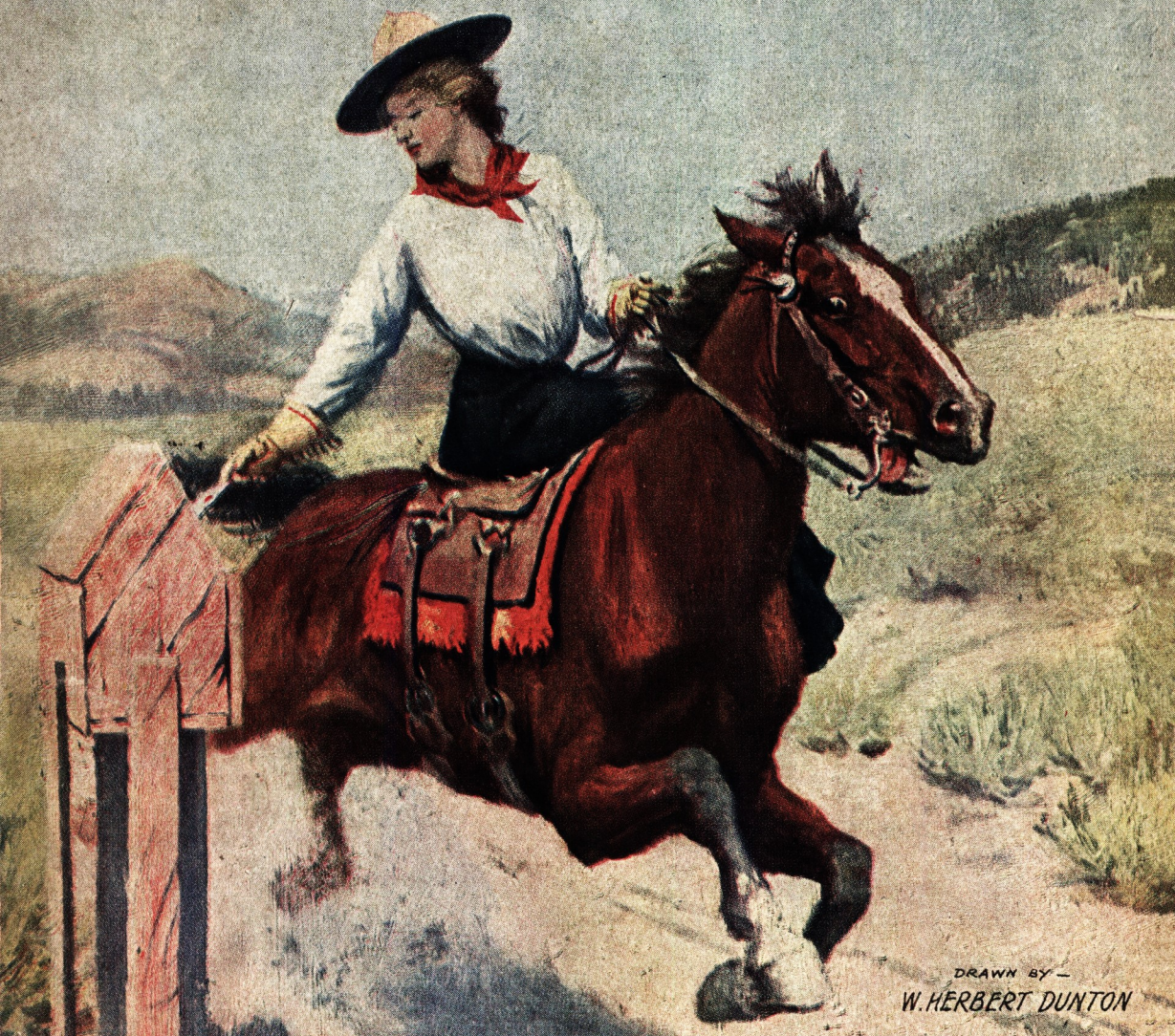
MAY, 1906 10 CENTS

REG. U. S. PAT. OFF.

The Popular Magazine



DRAWN BY—
W. HERBERT DUNTON

NOVEL OF WESTERN LIFE, COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE, BY B. M. BOWER, ENTITLED, "ROWDY OF THE 'CROSS L'"

WING PIANOS

Are Sold Direct From the Factory, and in No Other Way

You Save from $75 to $200

When you buy a Wing Piano, you buy at wholesale. You pay the actual cost of making it with only our wholesale profit added. When you buy a piano, as many still do—at retail—you pay the retail dealer's store rent and other expenses. You pay his profit and the commission or salary of the agents or salesmen he employs—all these on top of what the dealer himself has to pay to the manufacturer. The retail profit on a piano is from $75 to $200. Isn't this worth saving?

SENT ON TRIAL

Anywhere

WE PAY FREIGHT
No Money in Advance

We will place a Wing Piano in any home in the United States on trial, without asking for any advance payment or deposit. We pay the freight and all other charges in advance. There is nothing to be paid either before the piano is sent or when it is received. If the piano is not satisfactory after 20 days' trial in your home, we take it back entirely at our expense. You pay us nothing, and are under no more obligation to keep the piano than if you were examining it at our factory. There can be absolutely no risk or expense to you.

Do not imagine that it is impossible for us to do as we say. Our system is so perfect that we can without any trouble deliver a piano in the smallest town in any part of the United States just as easily as we can in New York City, and with absolutely no trouble or annoyance to you, and without anything being paid in advance or on arrival either for freight or any other expense. We take old pianos and organs in exchange.

A guarantee for 12 years against any defect in tone, action, workmanship or material is given with every Wing Piano.

Small, Easy MONTHLY Payments

In 38 years over 40,000 Wing Pianos have been manufactured and sold. They are recommended by seven governors of States, by musical colleges and schools, by prominent orchestra leaders, music teachers and musicians. Thousands of these pianos are in your own State, some of them undoubtedly in your very neighborhood. Our catalogue contains names and addresses.

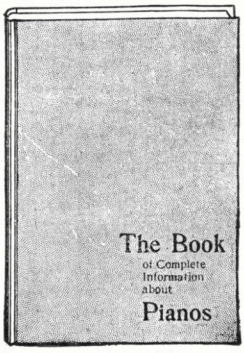
Mandolin, Guitar, Harp, Zither, Banjo— The tones of any or all of these instruments may be reproduced perfectly by any ordinary player on the piano by means of our Instrumental Attachment. This improvement is patented by us and cannot be had in any other piano. WING ORGANS are made with the same care and sold in the same way as Wing Pianos. Separate organ catalogue sent on request.

YOU NEED THIS BOOK

If You Intend to Buy a Piano—No Matter What Make

A book—not a catalogue—that gives you all the information possessed by experts. It tells about the different materials used in the different parts of a piano; the way the different parts are put together, what causes pianos to get out of order and in fact is a complete encyclopedia. It makes the selection of a piano easy. If read carefully, it will make you a judge of tone, action, workmanship and finish. It tells you how to test a piano and how to tell good from bad. It is absolutely the only book of its kind ever published. It contains 156 large pages and hundreds of illustrations, all devoted to piano construction. Its name is "The Book of Complete Information About Pianos." We send it free to anyone wishing to buy a piano. All you have to do is to send us your name and address.

Send a Postal To-day while you think of it, just giving your name and address or send us the attached coupon and the valuable book of information, also full particulars about the WING PIANO, with prices, terms of payment, etc., will be sent to you promptly by mail.



Cut or tear out this coupon and mail to us after writing your name and address at bottom. We will promptly mail book and other information.

WING & SON

353-389 W. 13th St., New York

Send to the name and address written below, the Book of Complete Information about Pianos, also prices and terms of payment on Wing Pianos.

.....

.....

WING & SON

353-389 W. 13th St., New York

1868——38th YEAR——1906

A Victor for Every Purse

VICTOR II
$30.

VICTOR I
$22.

VICTOR III
$40.

VICTOR IV
$50.

VICTOR VI
$100.

VICTOR V
$60.

The greatest musical instrument in the world can be obtained of all Victor Distributors on the Easy Payment plan. New Records by Caruso and 50 Popular Records out May 1st.

"His Master's Voice"

Victor Talking Machine Co Camden N J

Berliner Gramophone Company, of Montreal, Canadian Distributors

For catalogue and information, fill out the coupon and mail to-day.

FILL OUT—CUT OFF—MAIL TO-DAY

Victor Talking Machine Co Camden N J

Please send me information concerning the Victor and New Records and the Instalment Plan.

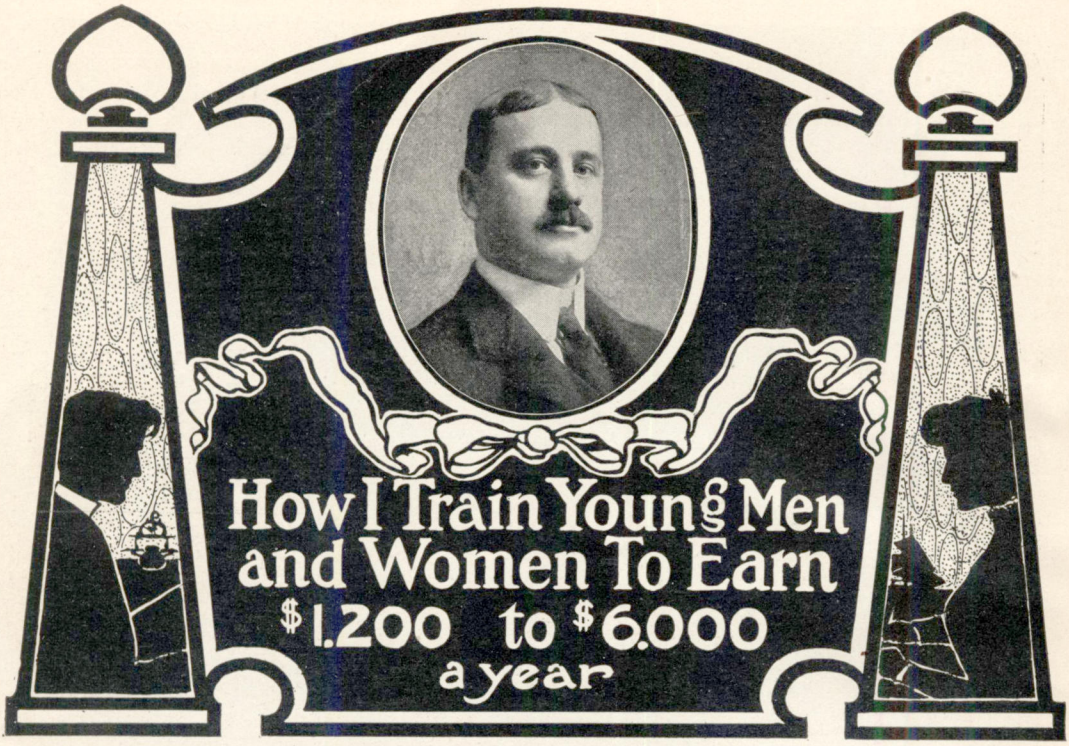
Name.....

Street.....

Town.....

State.....

V



OPPORTUNITIES AWAITING TRAINED WORKERS. A SPLENDID, GROWING BUSINESS

By GEORGE H. POWELL

The large and continued increase of advertising space in American publications shows that business men appreciate as never before the wonderful possibilities of this great modern commercial factor.

But even more remarkable, in a way, is the very large increase of requests all over the country for my former students to fill fine positions.

This 1906 demand is *more than three times* what it has been in any previous year, and it is sometimes difficult, as well as impossible, to supply just the graduate soon enough to please the advertiser applying to me.

These are very important facts for consideration by young men and women who wish to qualify for salaries and incomes running from $1200.00 to $6000.00 a year.

Only a day or two ago one of the best-known advertising authorities in the country told me that in his opinion the advertising business is in its infancy, and that within the next five years the demand for ad writers and managers trained by the Powell System would be ten times greater than it is to-day.

There is no possible room for doubt that no other vocation offers such rich rewards, and no other that can be learned so readily by the ambitious student during his or her spare-time hours.

Readers of THE POPULAR MAGAZINE who have followed my advertisements and special articles are pretty familiar with the host of splendid testimonials which recite in the most enthusiastic manner the great good that is being accomplished.

Now a testimonial is really valuable as a guide to others, or it is a mere space filler, according to its author's achievements.

Powell graduates now filling the highest positions are constantly telling about the superiority of the Powell System of Correspondence Instruction, and their words are a thousand times more valuable than would be possible were they merely the expressions of students who were satisfied, but without good positions to prove the worth.

There is not in the world to-day any method of teaching advertising to be compared with the Powell System. No living man has ever attempted to teach advertising as I teach it, and the universal

expression of great authorities, "You have them all skinned to death," is probably more truthful than elegant.

And I may add at this time another fact regarding the support of these same authorities—experts, publishers and specialists. They have stood by me for years for two reasons:

First, they know, and are free to say to all, that I stand head and shoulders above other advertising instructors.

Second, they realize the vast good that the Powell System can accomplish in diffusing a much wider knowledge of publicity, thereby promoting the interests of both advertisers and publishers.

Failed to Learn With Another Course.

Savannah, Ga.,
February 16, 1906.

MY DEAR MR. POWELL:

When I decided to enroll with you for the purpose of mastering the art of ad. writing, I must admit that I had grave doubts as to your ability to make me a successful writer and designer. This doubt was occasioned by the fact that some years ago I completed a course with another tutor in New York, with the result that I was no better equipped for "active service" upon graduation than I was when I signed the enrollment contract.

Although less than six months have passed since I determined to test the Powell System, I feel competent to undertake the most difficult work. From start to finish, the intricacies of ad. writing are clearly and simply defined; your personal criticisms are always "to the point"; the interests of your students are yours.

It is with pleasure that I recommend your System.

Sincerely yours,
HERBERT G. CURRIE.

A remarkable unanimity of opinion that has sent me scores of ambitious people who have been trained for positions with these same publishers and agencies.

The old idea that "ad writers are born, not made," has been thoroughly exploded, and it is now pretty common knowledge that a good, common school education, determination and real, genuine steadfastness of purpose, are the true qualifications.

This means that the plodding clerk who sees nothing ahead to speak of, can during his or her spare time or evening hours become just as skillful an advertiser as if taught through personal experience with the advertising department of some large advertiser, presided over by an expert manager of national renown.

Advertising instruction, or rather the Powell System, has become such a permanent factor in business development that great publications like the *New York American-Journal* have frankly said in substance:

"The correspondence school is also an employment agency; not only turning out competent graduates, but finding situations for them, employers having found out that young men and women with sufficient intelligence and energy to learn under such conditions are well worth considering."

Right here is another keynote—"Sufficient intelligence." It means that brains, rather than inborn talent, tells the story. For a long time some able people confused the word *intellect* with *talent*, but they have learned better.

The Powell System owes much of its wonderful success to my determination to encourage only those who have brains and ambition, as well as a reasonable education, for no one more thoroughly realizes than I do the crime of over-encouraging those who are deficient in the qualifications named.

And I want to say, too, that I cheerfully invite those who are in doubt to frankly state their conditions for my personal advice.

America has thousands of fine specimens of rugged manhood and womanhood that are wanted in the advertising field. Many of them will find it to their advantage to soon become Powell students; others will find it best to delay a while, and one and all can receive my advice when they want it.

The real problem is to turn out enough competent graduates from time to time to keep pace with the ever-increasing demand.

When a student can qualify as a good ad writer and secure a written contract for $6,000.00 a year within eight months from date of becoming a Powell student—a mere matter of record—it is evident that here is a wonderfully broad field for others.

Powell System Made Him Advertising Manager.

Dallas, Texas, Feb. 19, 1906.

MR. GEO. H. POWELL:

Dear Sir:—I feel I owe my present position as advertising manager of the A. J. Rogers Co., Dallas, Texas, almost entirely to the Powell System of Advertising Instruction.

I investigated several other courses before deciding on yours, and I am confident your course is far superior to that of any other school.

I heartily recommend it to any one desiring to learn result-bringing advertising.

Yours very respectfully,
H. B. HAYES.

Mr. Hayes' experience is like many others, who have found by most careful investigation that the Powell System qualifies more ad writers and managers than all other similar courses combined. And not only this, but it is also a fact that my instruction is the most practical, and is entirely free from the technical instruction that never should be in correspondence lessons.

Those who desire to investigate these growing opportunities should write for my two free books—my beautiful Prospectus and "Net Results," the most instructive and explanatory ever printed. Address me

GEORGE H. POWELL, 62 Metropolitan Annex, New York

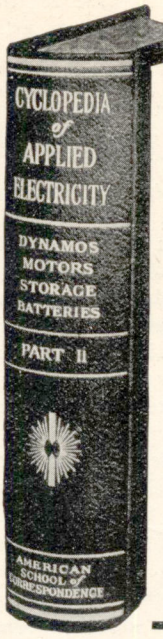
$1,282.00
A MONTH
WRITING EXPERT SHORTHAND

Waco, Texas, Jan. 6 1906
SUCCESS SHORTHAND SCHOOL,
Chicago, Ill.
Gentlemen—The business handled in my office in Nov. 1905, amounted to **$1,282**, as follows:
Salary as official stenographer **$130.00**
Transcribing case of Brown v. Am. Freehold Land Mortgage Co **$927.00**
Transcribing case of J. H. Moss v. G., C. & S. F. Ry. Co **$83.75**
Reporting Baptist Conv. at Dallas **$100.00**
Sermons, specifications, and misc. work **$41.25**
Yours truly, **$1,282.00**
J. A. LORD

THIS is the work of a graduate of the correspondence course of THE SUCCESS SHORTHAND SCHOOL—the school conducted by the most successful shorthand reporters and graduating expert writers. Mr. Lord is but one of the successful graduates. Hundreds of successful court reporters, private secretaries and legal and commercial stenographers throughout the United States, Canada and Mexico have received their ability through this expert instruction. **YOU CAN DO AS WELL.**

We are expert court reporters, doing a business of $100,000 a year writing shorthand. We will teach you the same practical shorthand we use in our immense business. Beginners are taught correct shorthand from the start. Stenographers are perfected for expert work. Write today for free catalogue and copy of guaranty. Address

SUCCESS SHORTHAND SCHOOL
Suite 185, 79 Clark Street, Chicago, Ill.



Cyclopedia of APPLIED ELECTRICITY

Five volumes. 2500 pages, size of page 8x10 inches. Bound in ¾ Red Morocco. Over 2000 illustrations. We will send the entire

Five Volumes FREE

on five days' approval, express prepaid. If satisfactory send $1 down and $2 per month for nine months; otherwise notify us and we will transfer the books free. Cash with order, $18.00. Money refunded if not satisfactory.

Magnetism—Wireless Telegraph
Telautograph
Direct Current Dynamos and Motors
Storage Batteries
Electric Lighting, Railways
Management of Dynamos and Motors
Power Stations
Alternating Current Machinery
Power Transmission
Mercury Vapor Converter
Telephony—Automatic Telephone
Wireless Telephony

American School of Correspondence
CHICAGO, ILL.

Mention Popular Magazine May

WHY NOT LEARN SIGN PAINTING?

Show Card Writing or Lettering

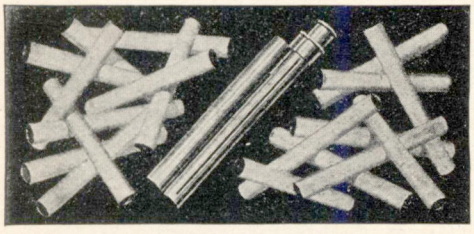
Only field not overworked. Separate courses. Ours is the only practical, thorough and personal instruction. We teach by mail and guarantee success. Easy terms. Write for large, interesting **FREE** catalogue.

The Detroit School of Lettering, Dept. 22, Detroit, Mich.
"Oldest and largest School of its kind."

STUDY LAW AT HOME

The original school. Instruction by mail adapted to every one. Recognized by courts and educators. Experienced and competent instructors. Takes spare time only. Three courses—Preparatory, Business, College. Prepares for practice. Will better your condition and prospects in business. Students and graduates everywhere. Full particulars and **special offer** free.

The Sprague Correspondence School of Law,
491 Majestic Bldg, Detroit, Mich.



YOU CAN MAKE **CIGARETTES** LIKE THESE

A Practical Novelty for Cigarette Smokers

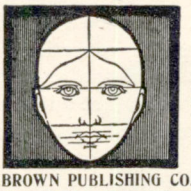
One Complete Nickled

TURKO CIGARETTE ROLLER

Sent postpaid for **25cts.** Address,

CHARLES W. OLIVER, 133 William St., New York

If Drawing or Sketching is Your Talent



The book

"How to Illustrate"

will develop it if you give earnest attention to its teachings. For beginners as well as those more advanced. Mailed to any address on receipt of **$1.00.**

Catalogue 10 Cents in Stamps.

BROWN PUBLISHING CO., 1646 Flatiron Building, New York City

CIVIL SERVICE Pays Well

If you are an American over 18 years of age and able to read and write we can qualify you for a good government position. The cost is low. Write at once for Civil Service Book FREE. State age.

International Correspondence Schools,
Box 855 C Scranton, Pa.

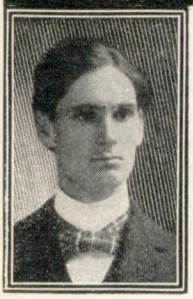
Have You Read "SHE" BY H. RIDER HAGGARD

Possibly you have and it is so long ago that you would like to read it again. The many inquiries we have received from persons who have read "AYESHA; OR, THE RETURN OF 'SHE.'"—the companion story to this masterpiece recently published in "The Popular Magazine"—led us to make arrangements with a leading publisher to supply us with a special limited De Luxe edition of "SHE," handsomely bound and profusely illustrated with twenty-one full page half-tones. It is manifestly the edition that every reader wants.

PRICE, ONE DOLLAR
ALL TRANSPORTATION CHARGES PREPAID BY US

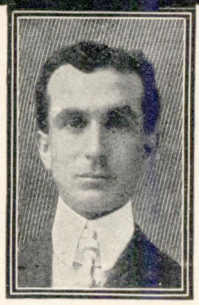
STREET & SMITH, Publishers,
79-89 SEVENTH AVE., NEW YORK CITY

LEARN TO WRITE ADVERTISEMENTS



W. A. M'CALL

Advertising manager for the LaClede Gas Light Company of St. Louis, Mo.; was prepared for his work in the Page-Davis School. He was a newspaper solicitor before taking up this study.

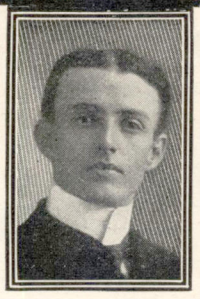


F. M. HENRY

Advertising manager for the Jno. Tea. Delahay Company of New Orleans, La. When he enrolled for a course of study with the Page-Davis Company he was a clerk in a tea store.

M. ANNIE POAGE

Advertising manager for the Daily Independent, Ashland, Ky., was reporter on a newspaper before she prepared for advertisement writing with the Page-Davis Company.



J. C. BROCKMAN

Advertising manager for the firm of Walter Scott & Co., Selma, Cal. Was wrapper in a dry goods house previous to his training in the Page-Davis School.

W. H. BARNES

Advertising manager for the Munger Laundry Co., of Los Angeles, Cal. Before studying with the Page-Davis Company he was solicitor for the same concern.

HOW YOU CAN MAKE YOUR FORTUNE

Page-Davis Training School of Experience Will Lift You Into the Ranks of Successful Men and Women

WHAT does it mean for a man to know how to write advertisements and how to manage the advertising department for a concern?

Is there a future in the business of advertising, and are there positions available for those who become qualified?

These are two important questions I intend to answer for the benefit of THE POPULAR readers. If I fail to make the subject plain to you, the failure will not arise from any fault in the profession, but rather from my own lack of ability to concentrate this vast industry within the allotted space.

Just look about you at the advertisements on billboards and in street cars and then realize if you can, the tons of ink required to place them there. You cannot view the result of this tremendous outlay of millions of dollars a year, reaching into every nook and corner of the universe, without drawing your own conclusions as to the stupendous amount of advertising being done and the field afforded you. And this is but one small part of the vast field for advertisement writers. Turn the pages of this magazine and give thought to the meaning of all the advertisements found here; then pick up another magazine, and another, and another, until you have become amazed at the number of similar magazines—500 in all—showing thousands upon thousands of advertisements, each one the work of some man or woman who was trained to prepare it; besides the magazines, there are 30,000 newspapers; and all these publications are devoted largely to advertising the goods which merchants desire to bring before the 80,000,000 people of the United States.

If the newspaper advertisements alone were sewed together they would make a blanket that would cover the ocean. This gives you a slight idea of what is meant when we speak of the great business of advertising.

My object in bringing before you this immense industry is to show that there is a field for you. The larger the business the more men required to handle it, and the more expensive the business the higher class of technical training required to take care of it.

For the past few months the Page-Davis Company has issued a list of graduates who have secured positions at from $25 to $100 per week. They were clerks, stenographers, bookkeepers, salesmen, merchants, journalists, farmers, business men, professional men—men and women in every walk of life, from factory hands to financiers. They are now filling the most responsible positions as advertisement writers and managers; business men through this training have largely increased their business ability. Men and women who take this training are those who intend that their brain power shall be used to its full capacity; that they will not be kept back by circumstances.

We will be glad to send you free, our large advertising book, telling all about this business; also, our last month's list of employed graduates earning up to $100 per week.

Just enter your name on the coupon and address your letter

PAGE-DAVIS CO.

Address either office:

Dept. 5171, 90 Wabash Ave
CHICAGO
Dept. 5171, 150 Nassau St.
NEW YORK

FILL IN NAME AND ADDRESS, AND SEND THIS COUPON

Page-Davis Company: Send me, without cost, your prospectus and all other information.

Name .....

Address .....

City ..... State .....

5171

A TREASURE FOR WOMEN

There are many thousands of women to-day who are suffering from nervousness, backache, headache and other ills which make their lives utterly miserable. The cause of the suffering generally springs from something very simple, but the effects may be very serious unless prompt attention is given to the derangement. Every woman can quickly and surely relieve her sufferings by availing herself of the friend she has in

BEECHAM'S PILLS

These wonderful pills, so easy and pleasant to take, have gained for themselves many thousands of friends by their quick action and the prompt relief they afford. Experience and practice has proved that no medicine equals Beecham's Pills for dispelling those painful and distressing symptoms from which so many women suffer, and the effectual manner in which they

EASE MANY BURDENS

In Boxes With Full Directions, 10c and 25c

WASHBURNE PAT. IMP. FASTENERS

The Fastener with a BULL-DOG GRIP

Men swear *by* them not *at* them. There is comfort and utility in their use.

Key Chain and Ring, . 25c.
Cuff Holders, . 20c.
Scarf Holders, . 10c.
Bachelor Buttons, . 10c.

Sent Postpaid.

Little, but Never Let Go.

Catalogue Free.

Sold Everywhere.

American Ring Company,
Dept. 88
Waterbury, Conn.

Write for it Today

This Book FREE

Tells how to preserve the natural beauty of the hair—how to regain this beauty if it has been lost, and how any woman may acquire it. 48 pp. including list of latest styles of switches, wigs and every kind of fine hair goods at lowest prices. We send goods on approval—pay if satisfied. Write today for the free book, it is compiled from the best known authorities.

48 pp. Illustrated

PARIS FASHION CO.
Dept. 315,
209 State St., Chicago.
Largest mail order hair merchants in the world.

FANCY VESTS

Made to Order
Regular $5 Vests, only $2.95

Send 4c. for sample book of fancy vestings—a complete line of fabrics.—Mercerized, silk or French Flannel, also washable Pique, Duck or Madras.—Value $2.50, our price $1.75. Figure, stripe or plaid, white or colored. The most popular garment this Spring will be the fancy vest. You should have one to be up-to-date. Send to-day for measuring chart and instructions, together with sample book.

Maker to Wearer
C. W. SHEWRY & CO.
4772 N. Clark St., Chicago, Ill.

A BREEZY BASEBALL NOVELETTE, AS WELL AS THE FIRST OF A NEW SERIES OF "NORROY" STORIES, WILL APPEAR IN THE JUNE NUMBER

VOL. VI. NO. 1

The Popular Magazine

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YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION, $1.20 SINGLE COPIES, 10 CENTS

Monthly Publication Issued by STREET & SMITH, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York

Copyright, 1906, by STREET & SMITH, New York. Copyright, 1906, by STREET & SMITH, Great Britain
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED
Publishers everywhere are cautioned against using any of the contents of this Magazine either wholly or in part
Entered at the New York Post Office as Second-Class Matter, under Act of Congress of March 2, 1879
WARNING—Do not subscribe through agents unknown to you. Complaints are daily made by persons who have been thus victimized.

The Seal of Public Approval

The Great American Public has expressed its Confidence in The Prudential again, and in the Practical American Way, not by words, but by deeds.

The Increase in Insurance in Force in 1905 was over One Hundred and Thirteen Million Dollars

Suppose you Inquire for a Policy Suitable to Yourself. You May be Surprised How Little It Will Cost. Write Your Name and Address on the Margin of this Advertisement and Send for a Plan of Home Protection and Saving that will Interest you.

Write Now, While You Think of It. Dept. 95

The Prudential

INSURANCE COMPANY OF AMERICA

Incorporated as a Stock Company by the State of New Jersey

JOHN F. DRYDEN, Prest. HOME OFFICE, Newark, N. J.

THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. VI. MAY, 1906. No. 1.

Rowdy of the "Cross L"

By B. M. Bower

Author of "Chip of the 'Flying U,'" "The Lure of the Dim Trails," Etc.

With the possible exception of Bret Harte, we doubt if any writer of fiction has ever been more successful in delineating the wild free life of the West than has B. M. Bower. To any one at all familiar with the cattle country, it will hardly be necessary for us to say that the author of "Rowdy of the 'Cross L'" has actually lived at cattle ranches and in mining camps in the far West. Our readers may be interested to know that many of the characters in this writer's stories are drawn from life.

(*A Complete Novel*)

CHAPTER I.

"ROWDY" Vaughan—he had been christened Rowland by his mother, and rechristened Rowdy by his cowboy friends, who are prone to treat with much irreverence the names bestowed by mothers—was not happy. He stood in the stirrups and shook off the thick layer of snow which clung, damp and close-packed, to his coat. The dull yellow folds were full of it; his gray hat, pulled low over his purple ears, was heaped with it. He reached up a gloved hand and scraped away as much as he could, wrapped the long-skirted, "sour-dough" coat around his numbed legs, then settled into the saddle with a shiver of distaste at the plight he was in, and wished himself back at the Horseshoe Bar.

Dixie, standing knee-deep in a drift, shook himself much after the manner of his master; perhaps he, also, wished himself back at the Horseshoe Bar. He turned his head to look back, blinking at the snow which beat insistently in his eyes; he could not hold them open long enough to see anything, however, so he twitched his ears pettishly and gave over the attempt.

"It's up to you, old boy," Rowdy told him resignedly. "I'm plumb lost; I never was in this damn' country before, anyhow—and I sure wish I wasn't here now. If you've any idea where we're at, I'm dead willing to have you pilot the layout. Never mind Chub; locating his feed when it's stuck under his nose is his limit."

Chub lifted an ear dispiritedly when his name was spoken; but, as was usually the case, he heard no good of himself, and dropped his head again. No one took heed of him; no one ever did. His part was to carry Vaughan's bed, and to follow unquestionably where Vaughan and Dixie might lead. He was cold and tired and hungry, but his

faith in his master was strong; the responsibility of finding shelter before the dark came down rested not with him.

Vaughan pressed his chilled knees against Dixie's ribs, but the hand upon the reins was carefully non-committal; so that Dixie, having no suggestion of his master's wish, ventured to indulge his own. He turned tail squarely to the storm and went straight ahead. Vaughan put his hands deep into his pockets, snuggled farther down into the sheepskin collar of his coat, and rode passive, enduring.

They brought up against a wire fence, and Vaughan, rousing from his apathy, tried to peer through the white, shifting wall of the storm. "You're a swell guide—not," he remarked to the horse. "Now you, you hike down this fence till you locate a gate or a corner, or *any* darned thing; and I don't give a cuss if the snow does get in your eyes. It's your own fault."

Dixie, sneezing the snow from his nostrils, turned obediently; Chub, his feet dragging wearily in the snow, trailed patiently behind. Half-an-hour of this, and it seemed as if it would go on forever.

Through the swirl Vaughan could see the posts standing forlornly in the snow, with sixteen feet of blizzard between; at no time could he distinguish more than two or three at once, and there were long minutes when the wall stood, blank and shifting, just beyond the first post.

Then Dixie lifted his head and gazed questioningly before him, his ears pointed forward—sentient, strained—and whinnied shrill challenge. He hurried his steps, dragging Chub out of the beginnings of a dream. Vaughan straightened and took his hands from his pockets.

Out beyond the dim, wavering outline of the farthest post came answer to the challenge. A mysterious, vague shape grew impalpably upon the strained vision; a horse sneezed, then nickered eagerly. Vaughan drew up and waited.

"Hello!" he called cheerfully. "Pleasant day, this. Out for your health?"

The shape hesitated, as though taken aback by the greeting, and there was no answer. Vaughan, puzzled, rode closer.

"Say, don't talk so fast!" he yelled. "I can't follow yuh."

"Who—who is it?" The voice sounded perturbed; and it was, moreover, the voice of a woman.

Vaughan pulled up short and swore into his collar. Women were not, as a rule, to be met out on the blank prairie in a blizzard. His voice, when he spoke again, was not ironical, as it had been; it was placating.

"I beg your pardon," he said. "I thought it was a man. I'm looking for the Cross L; you don't happen to know where it is, do yuh?"

"No—I don't," she declared dismally. "I don't know where *any* place is. I'm teaching school in this neighborhood—or in some other. I was going to spend Sunday with a friend, but this storm came up, and I'm—lost."

"Same here," said Rowdy pleasantly, as though being lost was a matter for congratulation.

"Oh! I was in hopes——"

"So was I, so we're even there. We'll have to pool our chances, I guess. Any gate down that way?—or haven't you followed the fence?"

"I followed it for miles and *miles*—it seemed. It must be some big field of the Cross L; but they have so very many big fields!"

"And you couldn't give a rough guess at how far it is to the Cross L?"—insinuatingly.

He could vaguely see her shake of head. "Ordinarily it should be about six miles beyond Rodway's, where I board. But I haven't the haziest idea of where Rodway's place is, you see; so that won't help you much. I'm all at sea in this snow." Her voice was rueful.

"Well, if you came up the fence, there's no use going back that way; and there's sure nothing made by going away from it—that's the way I came. Why not go on the way you're headed?"

"We might as well, I suppose," she

assented; and Rowdy turned and rode by her side, grateful for the plurality of the pronoun which tacitly included him in her wanderings, and meditating many things. For one, he wondered if she were as nice a girl as her voice sounded. He could not see much of her face, because it was muffled in a white silk scarf. Only her eyes showed, and they were dark and bright.

When he awoke to the fact that the wind, grown colder, beat upon her cruelly, he dropped behind a pace and took the windy side, that he might shield her with his body. But if she observed the action she gave no sign; her face was turned from him and the wind, and she rode without speaking. After long plodding, the line of posts turned unexpectedly a right angle, and Vaughan took a long, relieved breath.

"We'll have the wind in our backs now," he remarked. "I guess we may as well keep on and see where this fence goes to."

His tone was too elaborately cheerful to be very cheering. He was wondering if the girl was dressed warmly. It had been so warm and sunny before the blizzard struck, but now the wind searched out the thin places in one's clothing and ran lead in one's bones, where should be simply marrow. He fancied that her voice, when she spoke, gave evidence of actual suffering—and the heart of Rowdy Vaughan was ever soft toward a woman.

"If you're cold," he began, "I'll open up my bed and get out a blanket." He held Dixie in tentatively.

"Oh, don't trouble to do that," she protested; but there was that in her voice which hardened his impulse into fixed resolution.

"I ought to have thought of it before," he lamented, and swung down stiffly into the snow.

Her eyes followed his movements with a very evident interest while he unbuckled the pack Chub had carried since sunrise and drew out a blanket.

"Stand in your stirrup," he commanded briskly, "and I'll wrap you up. It's a Navajo, and the wind will have a time trying to find a thin spot."

"You're thoughtful." She snuggled into it thankfully. "I *was* cold."

Vaughan tucked it around her with more care than haste. He was pretty uncomfortable himself, and for that reason he was the more anxious that the girl should be warm. It came to him that she was a cute little schoolma'am, all right; he was glad she belonged close around the Cross L. He also wished he knew her name—and so he set about finding it out, with much guile.

"How's that?" he wanted to know, when he had made sure that her feet —such tiny feet!—were well covered. He thought it lucky that she did not ride astride, after the manner of the latter-day young woman, because then he could not have covered her so completely. "Hold on! That windy side's going to make trouble." He unbuckled the strap he wore to hold his own coat snug about him, and put it around the girl's slim waist, feeling idiotically happy and guilty the while. "It don't come within a mile of you," he complained; "but it'll help some."

Sheltered in the thick folds of the Navajo, she laughed, and the sound of it sent the blood galloping through Rowdy Vaughan's body so that he was almost warm. He went and scraped the snow out of his saddle, and swung up, feeling that, after all, there are worse things in the world than being lost and hungry in a blizzard, with a sweet-voiced, bright-eyed little schoolma'am who can laugh like that.

"I don't want to have you think I may be a bold, bad robber-man," he said, when they got going again. "My name's Rowdy Vaughan—for which I beg your pardon. Mother named me Rowland, never knowing I'd get out here and have her nice, pretty name mutilated that way. I won't say that my behavior never suggested the change, though. I'm from the Horseshoe Bar, over the line, and if I have my way, I'll be a Cross L man before another day." Then he waited expectantly.

"For fear you may think I'm a—a robber-woman," she answered him sol-

emnly—he felt sure her eyes twinkled, if only he could have seen them—"I'm Jessie Conroy. And if you're from over the line, maybe you know my brother Harry. He was over there a year or two."

Rowdy hunched his shoulders—presumably at the wind. Harry Conroy's sister, was she? And he swore. "I may have met him," he parried, in a tone you'd never notice as being painstakingly careless. "I think I did, come to think of it."

Miss Conroy seemed displeased, and presently the cause was forthcoming. "If you'd ever met him," she said, "you'd hardly forget him." (Rowdy mentally agreed profanely.) "He's the best rider in the whole country—and the handsomest. He—he's splendid! And he's the only brother I've got. It's a pity you never got acquainted with him."

"Yes," lied Rowdy, and thought a good deal in a very short time. Harry Conroy's sister! Well, she wasn't to blame for that, of course; nor for thinking her brother a white man. "I remember I did see him ride once," he observed. "He was a whirlwind, all right—and he sure was handsome, too."

Miss Conroy turned her face toward him and smiled her pleasure, and Rowdy hovered between heaven and—another place. He was glad she smiled, and he was afraid of what that subject might discover for his straightforward tongue in the way of pitfalls. It would not be nice to let her know what he really thought of her brother.

"This looks to me like a lane," he said diplomatically. "We must be getting somewhere; don't you recognize any landmarks?"

Miss Conroy leaned forward and peered through the clouds of snow-dust. Already the night was creeping down upon the land, stealthily turning the blank white of the blizzard into as blank a gray—which was as near darkness as it could get, because of the snow which fell and fell, and yet seemed never to find an abiding-place, but danced and swirled giddily in the wind as the cold froze it dry. There would be no more damp, clinging masses that night; it was sifting down like flour from a giant sieve; and of the supply there seemed no end.

"I don't know of any lanes around here," she began dubiously, "unless it's——"

Vaughan looked sharply at her muffled figure and wondered why she broke off so suddenly. She was staring hard at the few, faint traces of landmarks; and, bundled in the red-and-yellow Navajo blanket, with her bright, dark eyes, she might easily have passed for a slim young squaw.

Out ahead, a dog began barking vaguely, and Rowdy turned eagerly to the sound. Dixie, scenting human habitation, stepped out more briskly through the snow, and even Chub lifted an ear briefly to show he heard.

"It may not be any one you know," Vaughan remarked, and his voice showed his longing; "but it'll be shelter and a warm fire—and supper. Can you appreciate such blessings, Miss Conroy? I can. I've been in the saddle since sunrise; and I was so sure I'd strike the Cross L by dinner-time that I didn't bring a bite to eat. It was a sheep-camp where I stopped, and the grub didn't look good to me, anyway—I've called myself bad names all afternoon for being more dainty than sensible. But it's all right now, I guess."

CHAPTER II.

The storm lifted suddenly, as storms have a way of doing, and a low, squat ranch-house stood dimly revealed against the bleak expanse of wind-tortured prairie. Rowdy gave an exultant little whoop and made for the gate, leaned and swung it open and rode through, dragging Chub after him by main strength, as usual. When he turned to close the gate after Miss Conroy, he found her standing still in the lane.

"Come on in," he called, with a trace of impatience born of his weariness and hunger.

"Thank you, no." Miss Conroy's

voice was as crisply cold as the wind which fluttered the Navajo blanket around her face. "I much prefer the blizzard."

For a moment Rowdy found nothing to say; he just stared. Miss Conroy shifted uneasily in the saddle.

"This is old Bill Brown's place," she explained reluctantly. "He—I'd rather freeze than go in!"

"Well, I guess that won't be hard to do," he retorted curtly, "if you stay out much longer."

The dog was growing hysterical over their presence, and Bill Brown himself came out to see what it was all about. He could see two dim figures at the gate.

"Hello!" he shouted. "Why don't yuh come on in? What yuh standing there chewing the rag for?"

Vaughan hesitated, his eyes upon Miss Conroy.

"Go in," she commanded imperiously, quite as if he were a refractory pupil. "You're tired out, and hungry. I'm neither. Besides, I know where I am now. I can find my way without any trouble. Go in, I tell you!"

But Rowdy stayed where he was, with the gate creaking to and fro between them. Dixie circled till his back was to the wind. "I hope you don't think you're going to mill around out here alone," Rowdy said tartly.

"I can manage very well. I'm not lost now, I tell you. Rodway's is only three miles from here, and I know the direction."

Bill Brown waded out to them, wondering what weighty discussion was keeping them there in the cold. Vaughan he passed by with the cursory glance of a disinterested stranger, and went on to where Miss Conroy waited stubbornly in the lane.

"Oh, it's you!" he said grimly. "Well, come in and thaw out; I hope yuh didn't think yuh wouldn't be welcome—yuh knew better. You got lost, I reckon. Come on——"

Miss Conroy struck Badger sharply across the flank and disappeared into the night. "When I ask shelter of *you,*" she flung back, "you'll know it."

Rowdy started after, and met Bill Brown squarely in the gate. Bill eyed him sharply. "Say, young fellow, how'd you come by that packhorse?" he demanded, as Chub brushed past him.

"None of your damn' business," snapped Rowdy, and drove the spurs into Dixie's ribs. But Chub was a handicap at any time; now, when he was tired, there was no getting anything like speed out of him; he clung to his shuffling trot, which was really no better than a walk. After five minutes spent alternately in spurring Dixie and yanking at Chub's lead-rope, Rowdy grew frightened and took to shouting. While they were in the lane Miss Conroy must perforce ride straight ahead, but the lane would not last always. As though with malicious intent, the snow swooped down again and the world became an unreal, nightmare world, wherein was nothing save sifting, blinding snow-flour and wind and bitter, numbing cold.

Rowdy stood in his stirrups, cupped his chilled fingers around his numbed lips, and sent a long-drawn "Whoo-*ee!*" shrilling weirdly into the night.

It seemed to him, after long listening, that from the right came faint reply, and he turned and rode recklessly, swearing at Chub for his slowness. He called again, and the answer, though faint, was unmistakable. He settled heavily into the saddle—too weak, from sheer relief, to call again. He had not known till then just how frightened he had been, and he was somewhat disconcerted at the discovery. In a minute the reaction passed and he shouted a loud hello.

"Hello?" came the voice of Miss Conroy, tantalizingly calm, and as superior as the greeting of Central. "Were you looking for me, Mr. Vaughan?"

She was close to him—so close that she had not needed to raise her voice perceptibly. Rowdy rode up alongside, remembering uncomfortably his prolonged shouting.

"I sure was," he admitted. And then: "You rode off with my blanket

on." He was very proud of his matter-of-fact tone.

"Oh!" Miss Conroy was almost deceived, and a bit disappointed. "I'll give it to you now, and you can go back—if you know the way."

"No hurry," said Rowdy politely. "I'll go on and see if you can find a place that looks good to you. You seem pretty particular."

Miss Conroy may have blushed, in the shelter of the blanket. "I suppose it did look strange to you," she confessed, but defiantly. "Bill Brown is an enemy to—Harry. He—because he lost a horse or two out of a field, one time, he—he actually accused Harry of taking them! He lied, of course, and nobody believed him; nobody *could* believe a thing like that about Harry. It was perfectly absurd. But he did his best to hurt Harry's name, and I would rather freeze than ask shelter of him. Wouldn't you?—in my place, I mean."

"I always stand up for *my* friends," evaded Rowdy. "And if I had a brother——"

"Of course you'd be loyal," approved Miss Conroy warmly. "But I didn't want you to come on; it isn't your quarrel. And I know the way now. You needn't have come any farther——"

"You forgot the blanket," Rowdy reminded wickedly. "I think a lot of that Navajo."

"You insisted upon my taking it," she retorted, and took refuge in silence.

For a long hour they plodded blindly. Rowdy beat his hands often about his body to start the blood, and meditated yearningly upon hot coffee and the things he liked best to eat. Also, a good long pull at a flask wouldn't be bad, either, he thought. And he hoped this little schoolma'am knew where she was going—truth to tell, he doubted it.

After awhile, it seemed that Miss Conroy doubted it also. She took to leaning forward and straining her eyes to see through the gray wall before.

"There should be a gate here," she said dubiously, at last.

"It seems to me," Rowdy ventured mildly, "if there were a gate, it would have some kind of fence hitched to it; wouldn't it?"

Miss Conroy was in no mood for facetiousness, and refused to answer his question. "I surely can't have made a mistake," she observed uneasily.

"It would be a wonder if you didn't, such a night as this," he consoled. "I wouldn't bank on traveling straight myself, even if I knew the country—which I don't. And I've been in more blizzards than I'm years old."

"Rodway's place can't be far away," she said, brightening. "It may be farther to the east; shall we try that way?—if you know which *is* east."

"Sure, we'll try. It's all we can do. My packhorse is about all in, from the way he hangs back; if we don't strike something pretty soon, I'll have to turn him loose."

"Oh, don't do that," she begged. "It would be too cruel. We're sure to reach Rodway's very soon."

More plodding through drifts high and drifts low; more leaning from saddles to search anxiously for trace of something besides snow and wind and biting cold. Then, far to the right, a yellow eye glowed briefly when the storm paused to take breath. Miss Conroy gave a glad little cry and turned Badger sharply.

"Did you see? It was the light from a window. We were going the wrong way. I'm sure that is Rodway's."

Rowdy thanked the Lord and followed her. They came up against a fence, found a gate, and passed through. While they hurried toward it, the light winked welcome; as they drew near, some one stirred the fire and sent sparks and rose-hued smoke rushing up into the smother of snow. Rowdy watched them wistfully and wondered if there would be supper, and strong, hot coffee. He lifted Miss Conroy out of the saddle, carried her two long strides, and deposited her upon the door-step; rapped imperatively, and when a voice replied, lifted the latch and pushed her in before him.

For a minute they stood blinking, just within the door. The change from

numbing cold and darkness to the light of the overheated room was stupefying.

Then Miss Conroy went over and held her little, gloved hands to the heat of the stove, but she did not take the chair which some one pushed toward her. She stood, the blanket shrouding her face and her slim young figure, and looked about her curiously. It was not Rodway's house, after all. She thought she knew what place it was—the shack where Rodway's hay-balers bached.

From the first, Rowdy did not like the look of things—though for himself it did not matter; he was used to such scenes. It was the presence of the girl which made him uncomfortable. He unbuttoned his coat that the warmth might reach his chilled body, and frowned.

Four men sat around a small, dirty table; evidently the arrivals had interrupted an exciting game of seven-up. A glance told Rowdy, even if his nose had not, that the four round, ribbed bottles had not been nearly emptied without effect.

"Have one on the house," the man nearest him cried, and shoved a bottle toward him.

Involuntarily Rowdy reached for it. Now that he was inside, he realized all at once how weary he was, and cold and hungry. Each abused muscle and nerve seemed to have a distinct grievance against him. His fingers closed around the bottle before he remembered and dropped it. He looked up, hoping Miss Conroy had not observed the action; met her wide, questioning eyes, and the blood flew guiltily to his cheeks.

"Thanks, boys—not any for me," he said, and apologized to Miss Conroy with his eyes.

The man rose and confronted him unsteadily. "Dat's a hell off a way! You too proud for drink weeth us? You drink, now! By Gar, I *make* you drink!".

Rowdy's eyelids drooped, which was a bad sign for those who knew him. "You're forgetting there's a lady present," he reminded warningly.

The man turned a brief, contemptuous glance toward the stove. "You got the damn' queer way to talk. I don't call no squaw no lady. You drink queeck, now!"

"Aw, shut up, Frenchy," the man at his elbow adjured him. "He don't have to drink if he don't want to."

"You keep the face close," the other retorted majestically; and cursed loud and long and incoherently.

Rowdy drew back his arm, with a fist that meant trouble for somebody; but there were others before him who pinned the importunate host to the table, where he squirmed unavailingly.

Rowdy buttoned up his coat the while he eyed the group disgustedly. "I guess we'll drift," he remarked. "You don't look good to me, and that's no dream."

"Aw, stay and warm up," the fourth man expostulated. "Yuh don't need t' mind Le Febre; he's drunk."

But Rowdy opened the door decisively, and Miss Conroy, her cheeks like two storm-buffeted poppies, followed him out with dignity—albeit trailing a yard of red-and-yellow Navajo blanket behind her. Rowdy lifted her into the saddle, tucked her feet carefully under the blanket, and said never a word.

"Mr. Vaughan," she began hesitatingly, "this is too bad; you need not have left. I—I wasn't afraid."

"I know you weren't," conceded Rowdy. "But it was a hard formation—for a woman. Are there any more places on this flat marked Unavailable?"

Miss Conroy replied misanthropically that if there were they would be sure to find them.

They took up their weary wanderings again, while the yellow eye of the window winked after them. They missed Rodway's by a scant hundred yards, and didn't know it, because the side of the house next them had no lighted windows. They traveled in a wide, half circle, and thought that they were leaving a straight trail behind them. More than once Rowdy was urged by his aching arm to drop the

lead-rope and leave Chub to shift by himself, but habit was strong and his heart was soft. Then he felt an odd twitching at the lead-rope, as if Chub were minded to rebel against their leadership. Rowdy yanked him into remembrance of his duty, and wondered. Bill Brown's question came insistently to mind; he wondered the more.

Two minutes and the lead-rope was sawing against the small of his back again. Rowdy turned Dixie's head, and spoke for the first time in an hour.

"My packhorse seems to have an idea about where he wants to go," he said. "I guess we might as well follow him as anybody; he ain't often taken with a rush of brains to the head. And we can't be any worse lost than we are now, can we?"

Miss Conroy said no dispiritedly, and they swung about and followed Chub's leadership apathetically. It took Chub just five minutes to demonstrate that he knew what he was about. When he stopped, it was with his nose against a corral gate; not content with that, he whinnied, and a new, exultant note was in the sound. A deep-voiced dog bayed loudly, and a shrill yelp cut in and clamored for recognition.

Miss Conroy gasped. "It's Lion and Skeesicks. We're at Rodway's, Mr. Vaughan."

Rowdy, for the second time, thanked the Lord. But when he was stripping the pack off Chub's back, ten minutes later, he was thinking many things he would not have cared to say aloud. It might be all right, but it sure was strange, he told himself, that Chub belonged here at Rodway's when Harry Conroy claimed that he was an Oregon horse. Rowdy had thought his account against Harry Conroy long enough, but it looked now as though another item must be added to the list. He went in and ate his supper thoughtfully, and when he got into bed he did not fall asleep within two minutes, as he might be expected to do. His last conscious thought was not of stolen horses, however. It was: "And she's Harry Conroy's sister! Now, what do you think of that? But all the same, she's sure a nice little schoolma'am."

CHAPTER III.

Next morning, after breakfast, Mr. Rodway followed Vaughan out to the stable, and repeated Bill Brown's question.

"I'd like to know where yuh got this horse," he began, with an apologetic sort of determination in his tone. "He happens to belong to me. He was run off with a bunch three years ago, and this is the first trace anybody has ever got of 'em. I see the brand's been worked. It was a Roman four—that's my brand; now it looks like the map uh Texas; but I'd swear to the horse—raised him from a colt."

Rowdy had expected something of the sort, and he knew quite well what he was going to do; he had settled that the night before, with the memory of Miss Conroy's eyes fresh in his mind.

"I got him in a deal across the line," he said. "I was told he came from East Oregon. But last night, when he piloted us straight to your corral gate, I guessed he'd been here before. He's yours, all right, if you say so."

"Uh course he aint' worth such a pile uh money," apologized Rodway, "but the kids thought a heap of him. I'd rather locate some of the horses that was with him—or the man yuh got him of. They was some mighty good horses run out uh this country then, but they was all out on the range, so we didn't miss 'em in time to do any good. Do yuh know who took 'em across the line?"

"No," said Rowdy deliberately. "The man I got Chub from went north, and I heard he got killed. I don't know of any other in the deal."

Rodway grunted, and Vaughan began vigorously brushing Dixie's roughened coat. "If you don't mind," he said, after a minute, "I'd like to borrow Chub to pack my bed over to the Cross L. I can bring him back again."

"Why, sure!" assented Rodway eagerly. "I hate to take him from yuh, but the kids——"

"Oh, that's all right," interrupted Rowdy cheerfully. "It's all in the game, and I should 'a' looked up his pedigree, for I knew—— Anyway, it was worth the price of him to have him along last night. We'd have milled around till daylight, I guess, only for him."

"That's what," agreed Rodway. "Jessie's horse is one she brought from home lately, and he ain't located yet; I dunno as he'd 'a' piloted her home. Billy—that's what the kids named him. —was born and raised here, yuh see. I'll bet he's glad to get back—and the kids'll be plumb wild."

Rowdy did not answer; there seemed nothing in particular to say, and he was wondering if he would see Miss Conroy before he left. She had not eaten breakfast with the others; from their manner, he judged that no one expected her to. He was not well-informed upon the subject of schoolma'ams, but he had a hazy impression that late rising was a distinguishing characteristic —and he did not know how late. He saddled leisurely, and packed his bed for the last time upon Chub. The red-and-yellow Navajo blanket he folded tenderly, with an unconscious smile for the service it had done, and laid it in its accustomed place in the bed. Then, having no plausible excuse for going back to the house, he mounted and rode away into the brilliant white world, watching wistfully the house from the tail of his eye.

She might have got up in time to see him off, he thought discontentedly; but he supposed one cow-puncher more or less made little difference to her. Anyway, he didn't know as he had any license to moon around her. She probably had a fellow; she might even be engaged, for all he knew. And—she was Harry Conroy's sister; and from his experience with the breed, good looks didn't count for anything. Harry was good-looking, and he was a snake, if ever there was one. He had never expected to lie for him—but he had done it, all right—and because Harry's sister happened to have nice eyes and a pretty little foot!——

He had half a mind to go back and tell Rodway all he knew about those horses; it was only a matter of time, anyway, till Harry Conroy overshot the mark and got what was coming to him. He sure didn't owe Harry anything, that he had need to shield him like he had done. Still, Rodway would wonder why he hadn't told it at first; and that little girl believed in Harry, and said he was "splendid"! Humph! He wondered if she really meant that. If she did——

He squared his back to the house—and the memory of Miss Conroy's eyes —and plodded across the field to the gate. Now the sun was shining, and there was no possibility of getting lost. The way to the Cross L lay straight and plain before him.

Rowdy rode leisurely up over the crest of a ridge beyond which lay the home ranch of the Cross L. Whether it was henceforth to be *his* home he had yet to discover—though there was reason for hoping that it would be. Even so venturesome a man as Rowdy Vaughan would scarce ride a long hundred miles through unpeopled prairie, in the tricky month of March, without some reason for expecting a welcome at the end of his journey. In this case, a previous acquaintance with "Wooden Shoes" Mielke, foreman of the Cross L, was Rowdy's trump-card. Wooden Shoes, whenever chance had brought them together in the last two or three years, was ever urging Rowdy to come over and unroll his soogans in the Cross L bed-tent, and promising the best string in the outfit to ride—besides other things alluring to a cow-puncher. So that, when his relations with the Horseshoe Bar became strained, Rowdy remembered his friend of the Cross L and the promises, and had drifted south.

Just now he hoped that Wooden Shoes would be home to greet him, and his eyes searched wishfully the huddle of low-eaved cabins and the assortment of sheds and corrals for the bulky form of the foreman. But no one seemed to be about—except a big-bodied, bandy-legged individual, who

appeared to be playfully chasing a big, bright bay stallion inside the large enclosure where stood the cabins.

Rowdy watched them impersonally; a glance proved that the man was not Wooden Shoes, and so he was not particularly interested in him or his doings. It did occur to him, however, that if the fellow wanted to catch that brute, he ought to have sense enough to get a horse. No one but a plumb idiot would mill around in that snow afoot. He jogged down the slope at a shuffling trot, grinning tolerantly at the pantomime below.

He of the bandy-legs stopped, evidently out of breath; the stallion stopped also, snorting defiance. Rowdy heard him plainly, even at that distance. The horse arched his neck and watched the man warily, ready to be off at the first symptom of hostilities—and Rowdy observed that a short rope hung from his halter, swaying as he moved.

Bandy-legs seemed to have an idea; he turned and scuttled to the nearest cabin, returning with what seemed a basin of oats, for he shook it enticingly and edged cautiously toward the horse. Rowdy could imagine him coaxing, with hypocritically endearing names, such as "Good old boy!" and "Steady now, Billy"—or whatever the horse's name might be. Rowdy chuckled to himself, and hoped the horse saw through the subterfuge.

Perhaps the horse chuckled also; at any rate, he stood quite still, equally prepared to bound away on the instant or to don the mask of docility. Bandy-legs drew nearer and nearer, shaking the basin briskly, like an old woman sifting meal. The horse waited, his nostrils quivering hungrily at the smell of the oats, and with an occasional low nicker.

Bandy-legs went on tiptoes—or as nearly as he could in the snow—the basin at arm's-length before. The dainty, flaring nostrils sniffed tentatively, dipped into the basin, and snuffed the oats about luxuriously—till he felt a stealthy hand seize the dangling rope. At the touch he snorted protest, and was off and away, upsetting Bandy-legs and the basin ignominiously into a high-piled drift.

Bandy-legs sat up, scraped the snow out of his collar and his ears, and swore. It was then that Rowdy appeared like an angel of deliverance.

"Want that horse caught?" he yelled cheerfully.

Bandy-legs lifted up his voice and bellowed things I should not like to repeat verbatim. But Rowdy gathered that the man emphatically *did* want that so-and-so-and-then-some horse caught, and that it couldn't be done a blessed minute too soon. Whereat Rowdy smiled anew, with his face discreetly turned away from Bandy-legs, and took down his rope and widened the loop. Also, he turned Chub loose.

The stallion evidently sensed what new danger threatened his stolen freedom, and circled the yard with high, springy strides. Rowdy circled after, saw his chance, swirled the loop twice over his head, and hazarded a long throw.

Rowdy knew it for pure good luck that it landed right, but to this day Bandy-legs looks upon him as a Wonder with a rope—and Bandy-legs would insist upon the capital.

"Where shall I take him?" Rowdy asked, coming up with his captive, and with nothing but his eyes to show how he was laughing inwardly.

Bandy-legs crawled from the drift, still scraping snow from inside his collar, and gave many directions about going through a certain gate into such-and-such a corral; from there into a stable; and by seeming devious ways into a minutely described stall.

"All right," said Rowdy, cutting short the last needless details. "I guess I can find the trail;" and started off, leading the stallion. Bandy-legs followed, and Chub, observing the departure of Dixie, ambled faithfully in the rear.

"Much obliged," conceded Bandy-legs, when the stallion was safely housed and tied securely. "Where yuh headed for, young man?"

"Right here," Rowdy told him calmly, loosening Dixie's cinch. "I'm the

long-lost top hand that the Cross L's ben watching the sky-line for, lo! these many moons, a-yearning for the privilege of handing me forty plunks about twice as fast as I've got 'em coming. Where's the boss?"

"Er—I'm him," confessed Bandy-legs meekly, and circled the two dubiously. "I guess you've heard uh Eagle Creek Smith—I'm him. The Cross L belongs to me."

Rowdy let out an explosive, and showed a row of nice teeth. "Well, I ain't hard to please," he added. "I won't kick on that, I guess. I like your looks tolerable well, and I'm willing to take yuh on for a boss. If yuh do your part, I bet we'll get along fine." His tone was banteringly patronizing. "Anyway, I'll try yuh for a spell. You can put my name down as Rowdy Vaughan, lately canned from the Horseshoe Bar."

"What for?" ventured Bandy-legs—rather, Eagle Creek—still circling Rowdy dubiously.

"What for was I canned?" repeated Rowdy easily. "Being a modest youth, I hate t' tell yuh. But the old man's son and me, we disagreed, and one of his eyes swelled some; so did mine, a little." He stood head and shoulders above Eagle Creek, and he smiled down upon him engagingly. Eagle Creek capitulated before the smile.

"Well, I ain't got any sons—that I know of," he grinned. "So I guess yuh can consider yourself a Cross L man till further notice."

"Why, sure!" The teeth gleamed again briefly. "That's what I've been telling you right along. Where's old Wooden Shoes? He's responsible for me being here."

"Gone to Chinook. He'll be back in a day or two." Eagle Creek shifted his feet awkwardly. "Say"—he glanced uneasily behind him—"yuh don't want t' let it get around that yuh sort of—hired *me*—see?"

"Of course not," Rowdy assured him. "I was only joshing. If you don't want me, just tell me to hit the sod."

"You stay right where you're at!" commanded Eagle Creek with returned confidence in himself and his authority. Of a truth, this self-assured, straight-limbed young man had rather dazed him. "Take your bed and war-bag up to the bunk-house and make yourself t' home till the boys get back, and—say, where'd yuh git that packhorse?"

The laugh went out of Rowdy's tawny eyes. The question hit a spot that was becoming sore. "I borrowed him this morning from Mr. Rodway," he said evenly. "I'm to take him back to-day. I stopped there last night."

"Oh!" Eagle Creek coughed apologetically, and said no word, while Rowdy led Chub back to the cabin which he had pointed out as the bunk-house; he stood by while Rowdy loosened the pack and dragged it inside.

"I guess you can get located here," he said. "I ain't workin' more'n three or four men just now, but there's quite a few uh the boys stopping here; the Cross L's a regular hang-out for cow-punchers. You're a little early for the season, but I'll see that yuh have something t' do—just t' keep yuh out uh devilment."

Rowdy's brows unbent; it would seem that Eagle Creek was capable of "joshing" also. "It's up t' you, old-timer," he retorted. "I'm strong and willing, and don't shy at anything but pitchforks."

Eagle Creek grinned. "This ain't no blamed cow-hospital," he gave as a parting shot. "All the hay that's shoveled on *this* ranch needn't hurt nobody's feelings." With that he shut the door, and left Rowdy to acquaint himself with his new home.

CHAPTER IV.

Rowdy was sprawled ungracefully upon somebody's bunk—he neither knew nor cared whose—and he was snoring unmelodiously, and not dreaming a thing; for when a cow-puncher has nothing in particular to do, he sleeps to atone for the weary hours when he must be very wide-awake. An avalanche descended upon his unwarned

middle, and checked the rhythmic ebb and flow of sound. He squawked and came to life clawing viciously.

"I'd like t' know where the devil yuh come from," a voice remarked plaintively in a soft treble.

Rowdy opened his eyes with a snap. "Pink! by all that's good and bad! Get up off my diaphragm, you little fiend."

Pink absent-mindedly kneaded Rowdy's stomach with his knuckles, and immediately found himself in a far corner. He came back, dimpling mischievously. He looked much more an angel than a fiend, for all his Angora chaps and flame-colored scarf.

"Your bed and war-bag's on my bunk; you're on Smoky's; and Dixie's makin' himself to home in the corral. By all them signs and tokens, I give a reckless guess you're here t' stay awhile. That right?" He prodded again at Rowdy's ribs.

"It sure is, Pink. And if I'd known you was holding out here, I'd 'a' come sooner, maybe. You sure look good to me, you darned little cuss!" Rowdy sat up and took a lightning inventory of the four or five other fellows lounging about. He must have slept pretty sound, he thought, not to hear them come in.

Pink read the look, and bethought him of the necessary introductions. "This is my side-kicker over the line that you've heard about till you're plumb weary, boys," he announced musically. "His name is Rowdy Vaughan —bronco-peeler, crap fiend, and all-round bad man. He ain't a safe companion, and yuh want t' sleep with your six-guns cuddled under your right ear, and never, on no account, show him your backs. He's a real wolf, he is, and the only reason I live t' tell the tale is because he respects m' size. Boys, I'm afraid for yuh—but I wish yuh well."

"Pink, you need killing, and I'm tempted to live up to my rep," grinned Rowdy indulgently. "Read me the pedigree of your friends."

"Oh, they ain't so worse—when yuh git used to 'em. That long-legged jasper with the far-away look in his eyes is the Silent One—if he takes a notion t' you, he'll maybe tell yuh the name his mother calls him. He may have seen better days; but here's hoping he won't see no worse! He once was a tenderfoot; but he's convalescing."

The Silent One nodded carelessly, but with a quick, measuring glance that Rowdy liked.

"This unshaved savage is Smoky. He's harmless, if yuh don't mention socialism in his presence; and if yuh do, he'll down-with-the-trust-and-long-live-the-sons-uh-toil, all hours uh the night, and keep folks awake. Then him and the fellow that started him off 'll likely get chapped good and plenty. Over there's Jim Ellis and Bob Nevin; they've both turned a cow or two, and I've seen worse specimens running around loose—plenty of 'em. That man hidin' behind the grin—you can see him if yuh look close—is Sunny Sam. Yuh needn't take no notice of him, unless you're a mind to. He won't care —he's dead gentle.

"Say," he broke off, "how'd you happen t' stray onto this range, anyhow? Yuh used t' belong t' the Horseshoe Bar so solid the assessor always put yuh down on the personal-property list."

"They won't pay taxes on me no more, son." Rowdy's eyes dwelt fondly upon Pink's cupid-bow mouth and dimples. He had never dreamed of finding Pink here; though, when he came to think of it, there was no reason why he shouldn't.

Pink was not like any one else. He was slight and girlish to look at. But you mustn't trust appearances; for Pink was all muscle strung on steel wire, according to the belief of those who tried to handle him. He had little white hands, and feet that looked quite comfortable in a number four boot, and his hair was a tawny gold and curled in distracting, damp rings on his forehead. His eyes were blue and long-lashed and beautiful, and they looked at the world with baby innocence—whereas a more sophisticated little devil never jangled spurs at his heels. He was everything but insipid, and men liked him—unless he chose to dislike them, when they thought of him with grating teeth. To

find him bullying the Cross L boys brought a warmth to Rowdy's heart.

Pink made a cigarette, and then offered Rowdy his tobacco-sack, and asked questions about the Cypress Hills country. How was this girl?—and was that one married yet?—and did the other still grieve for him? As a matter of fact, he had yet to see the girl who could quicken his pulse a single beat, and for that reason it sometimes pleased him to affect susceptibility beyond that of other men.

It was after dinner when he and Rowdy went chumming down to the stables, gossiping like a couple of old women over a back fence.

"I see you've got Conroy's Chub yet," Pink observed carelessly.

"Oh, for Heaven's sake let up on that cayuse!" Rowdy cried petulantly. "I wish I'd never got sight uh the little buzzard-head; I've had him crammed down my throat the last day or two till it's getting plumb monotonous. Pink, that cayuse never saw Oregon. He was raised right on this flat, and he belongs to old Rodway. I've got to lead him back there and turn him over today."

Pink took three puffs at his cigarette, and lifted his long lashes to Rowdy's gloom-filled face. "Stole?" he asked briefly.

"Stole," Rowdy repeated disgustedly. "So was the whole blame' bunch, as near as I can make out."

"We might 'a' knowed it. We might 'a' guessed Harry Conroy wouldn't have a straight title to anything if he could make it crooked. I bet he never finished paying back that money yuh lent him—out uh the kindness uh your heart. Did he?" Pink leaned against the corral fence and kicked meditatively at a snow-covered rock.

"He did not, m' son. Chub's all I ever got out uh the deal—and I haven't even got *him*. I borrowed him from Rodway to pack my bed over—borrowed the blame' little runty cayuse that cost me sixty-four hard-earned dollars; that's what Harry borrowed of me. And every blame' gazabo on the flat wanted to know what I was doing with him!"

"I can tell yuh where t' find Conroy, Rowdy. He's working for an outfit down on the river. I'd sure fix him for this! Yuh got plenty of evidence; you can send him up like a charm. It was different when he cut your latigo strap in that rough-riding contest; yuh couldn't prove it on him. But this—why, man, it's a cinch!"

"I haven't lost Harry Conroy, so I ain't looking for him just now," growled Rowdy. "So long as he keeps out uh reach, I won't ask no more of him. And, Pink, I wish you'd keep this quiet—about him having Chub. I told Rodway I couldn't put him next to the fellow that brought that bunch across the line. I told him the fellow went north and got killed. He *did* go north—fifty miles or so; and he'd *ought* to been killed, if he wasn't. Let it go that way, Pink."

Pink looked like a cherub-faced child when he has been told there's no Santa Claus. "Sure, if yuh say so," he stammered dubiously. He eyed Rowdy reproachfully, and then looked away to the horizon. He kicked the rock out of place, and then poked it painstakingly back with his toe—and from the look of him, he did not know there was a rock there at all.

"How'd yuh happen to run across Rodway?" he asked guilelessly.

"I stopped there last night. I got to milling around in that storm, and ran across the schoolma'am that boards at Rodway's. She was plumb lost, too, so we dubbed around together for awhile, and finally got inside Rodway's field. Then Chub come alive and piloted us to the house. This morning Rodway claimed him—says the brand has been worked from a Roman four. Oh, it's all straight goods," he added hastily. "Old Eagle Creek here knew him, too."

But Pink was not thinking of Chub. He hunched his chap-belt higher and spat viciously into the snow. "I knowed it," he declared, with melancholy triumph. "It's schoolma'amitis that's gave yuh softening uh the vitals, and not no Christian charity play. How comes it you're took that way, all un-

beknown t' your friends? Yuh never used t' bother about no female girls. It's a cinch you're wise that she's Harry's sister; and I admit she's a swell looker. But so's he; and I should think, Rowdy, you'd had about enough uh that brand uh snake."

"There's nothing so snaky about *her* that I could see," defended Rowdy. He did not particularly relish having his own mental argument against Miss Conroy thrown back at him from another. "She seemed to be all right; and if you'd seen how plucky she was in that blizzard——"

"Well, I never heard anybody stand up and call Harry white-livered, when yuh come t' that," Pink cut in tartly. "Anyway, you're a blame fool. If she was a little white-winged angel, yuh wouldn't stand no kind uh show; and I tell yuh why. She's got a little tin god that she says prayers to regular. That's Harry. And wouldn't he be the fine brother-in-law! He could borrow all your wages off'n yuh, and when yuh went t' make a pretty ride, he'd up and cut your latigo, and give yuh a fall. And he could work stolen horses off onto yuh—and yuh wouldn't give a damn, 'cause Jessie wears a number two shoe——"

"You must have done some rim-rock riding after her yourself!" jeered Rowdy.

"And has got shiny brown eyes, just like Harry's——"

"They're not!" laughed Rowdy, half angrily. "If you say that again, Pink, I'll stick your head in a snow-bank. Her eyes are all right. They sure look good to *me*."

"You've sure got 'em," mourned Pink. "Yuh need t' be close-herded by your friends, and that's no dream. You wait till toward evening before yuh take that horse back. I'm going along t' chappyrone yuh, Rowdy. Yuh ain't safe running loose any more."

Rowdy cursed him companionably and told him to go along, if he wanted to, and to look out he didn't throw up his own hands; and Pink grumbled and swore and did go along. But when they got there, Miss Conroy greeted him like a very good friend; which sent Rowdy sulky, and kept him so all the evening. It seemed to him that Pink was playing a double game, and when they started home he told him so.

But Pink turned in his saddle and smiled so that his dimples showed plainly in the moonlight. "Chappyrones that set in a corner and look wise are the rankest kind uh fakes," he explained. "When she was talking to me, she was letting *you* alone—see?"

Rowdy accepted the explanation silently, and stored it away in his memory. After that, by riding craftily, and by threats, and by much vituperation, he managed to reach Rodway's unchaperoned at least three times out of five—which was doing remarkably well, when one considers Pink.

CHAPTER V.

In two days Rowdy was quite at home with the Cross L. In a month he found himself transplanted from the smoke-laden air of the bunk-house, and set off from the world in a line camp, with nothing to do but patrol the boggy banks of Milk River, where it was still unfenced and unclaimed by small farmers. The only mitigation of his exile, so far as he could see, lay in the fact that he had Pink and the Silent One for companions.

It developed that when he would speak to the Silent One, he must say Jim, or wait long for a reply. Also, the Silent One was not always silent, and he was quick to observe the weak points in those around him, and keen at repartee. When it pleased him so to do, he could handle the English language in a way that was perfectly amazing—and not always intelligible to the unschooled. At such times Pink frankly made no attempt to understand him; Rowdy, having been hustled through grammar-school and two-thirds through high school before he ran away from a brand new stepmother, rather enjoyed the outbreaks and Pink's consequent disgust.

Not one of them loved particularly

the line camp, and Rowdy least of all, since it put an extra ten miles between Miss Conroy and himself. Rowdy had got to that point where his mind dwelt much upon matters domestic, and he made many secret calculations on the cost of housekeeping for two. More than that, he put himself upon a rigid allowance for pocket-money—an allowance barely sufficient to keep him in tobacco and papers. All this without consulting Miss Conroy's wishes—which only goes to show that Rowdy Vaughan was a born optimist.

The Silent One complained that he could not keep supplied with reading-matter, and Pink bewailed the monotony of inaction. For, beyond watching the river to keep the cattle from miring in the mud lately released from frost grip, there was nothing to do.

According to the calendar, spring was well upon them, and the prairies would soon be flaunting new dresses of green. The calendar, however, had neglected to record the rainless heat of the summer gone before, or the searing winds that burned the grass brown as it grew, or the winter which forgot its part and permitted prairie-dogs to *chip-chip-chip* above ground in January, when they should be sleeping decently in their cellar homes.

Apart from the brief storm which Rowdy had brought with him, there had been no snow worth considering. Always the chill winds shaved the barren land from the north, or veered unexpectedly, and blew dry warmth from the southwest; but never the snow for which the land yearned. Wind, and bright sunlight, and more wind, and hypocritical, drifting clouds, and more sun; lean cattle walking, walking, up hill and down coulée, nose to the dry ground, snipping the stray tufts where should be a woolly carpet of sweet, ripened grasses, eating wild-rose bushes level with the sod, and wishing there was only an abundance even of them; drifting uneasily from hilltop to farther hilltop, hunger-driven and gaunt, where should be sleek content. When they sought to continue their quest beyond the river, and the weaker bogged at its muddy edge, Rowdy and Pink and the Silent One would ride out, and with their ropes drag them back ignominiously to solid ground and the very doubtful joy of living.

May Day found the grass-land brown and lifeless, with a chill wind blowing over it. The cattle wandered as before—except that knock-kneed little calves trailed beside their lean mothers and clamored for full stomachs.

The Cross L cattle bore the brunt of the range famine, because Eagle Creek Smith was a stockman of the old school. His cattle must live on the open range, because they always had done so. Other men bought or leased large tracts of grass-land, and fenced them for just such an emergency, but not he. It is true that he had two or three large fields, as Miss Conroy had told Rowdy, but it was his boast that all the hay he raised was eaten by his saddle-horses, and that all the fields he owned were used solely for horse pastures. The open range was the place for cattle—and no Cross L critter ever fed inside a wire fence.

Through the dry summer before, when other men read the ominous signs and hurriedly leased pasture-land and cut down their herds to what the fields would feed, Eagle Creek went calmly on as he had done always. He shipped what beef was fit—and that, of a truth, was not much!—and settled down for the winter, trusting to winter snows and spring rains to refill the long-dry lakes and water-holes, and coat the levels anew with grass.

But the winter snows had failed to appear, and with the spring came no rain. "April showers" became a hideously ironical joke at nature's expense. Always the wind blew, and sometimes great flocks of clouds would drift superciliously up from the far sky-line, play with men's hopes, and sail disdainfully on to some more favored land.

It is all very well for a man to cling stubbornly to precedent, but if he clings long enough, there comes a time when to cling becomes akin to crime. Eagle Creek Smith still stubbornly held that range-cattle should be kept to the range.

He waited until May was fast merging to June, watching, from sheer habit, for the spring transformation of brown prairies into green. When it did not come, and only the coulée sides and bottoms showed green among the brown, he accepted ruefully the unusual conditions which nature had thrust upon him, and started "Wooden Shoes" out with the wagons on the horse round-up, which is a preliminary to the round-up proper, as every one knows.

CHAPTER VI.

"I call that a bad job well done," Pink remarked, after a long silence, as he gave over trying to catch a fish in the muddy Milk River.

"What?" Rowdy, still prone to day-dreams of matters domestic, came back reluctantly to reality, and inspected his bait.

"Oh, come alive! I mean the horse round-up. How we're going to keep that bunch uh skeletons under us all summer is a guessing contest for fair. Wooden Shoes has got t' give me about forty, instead of a dozen, if he wants me t' hit 'er up on circle the way I'm used to. I bet their back-bones'll wear clean up through our saddles."

"Oh, I guess not," said Rowdy calmly. "They ain't so thin—and they'll pick up fresh. There's some mighty good ones in the bunch, too. I hope Wooden Shoes don't forget to give me the first pick. There's one I got my eye on—that blue roan. Anyway, I guess you can wiggle along with less than forty."

Pink shook his head thoughtfully and sighed. Pink loved good mounts, and the outlook did not please him. The round-up had camped, for the last time, on the river within easy riding distance of Camas. The next day's drive would bring them to the home ranch, where Eagle Creek was fuming over the lateness of the season, the condition of the range, and the June rains, which had thus far failed even to moisten decently the grass-roots.

"Let's ride over to Camas; all the other fellows have gone," Pink proposed listlessly, drawing in his line.

Rowdy as listlessly consented. Camas as a town was neither interesting nor important; but when one has spent three long weeks communing with nature in her sulkiest and most unamiable mood, even a town without a railroad to its name may serve to relieve the monotony of living.

The sun was piling gorgeous masses of purple and crimson clouds high about him, cuddling his fat cheeks against their soft folds till, a Midas, he turned them to gold at the touch. Those farther away gloomed jealously at the favoritism of their lord, and huddled closer together—the purple for rage, perhaps; and the crimson for shame.

Pink's face was tinged daintily with the glow, and even Rowdy's lean, brown features were for the moment glorified. They rode knee to knee silently, thinking each his own thoughts the while they watched the sunset with eyes grown familiar with its barbaric splendor, but never indifferent.

Soon the west held none but the deeper tints, and the shadows climbed, with the stealthy tread of trailing Indians, from the valley, chasing the afterglow to the very hilltops, where it stood a moment at bay and then surrendered meekly to the dusk. A meadow-lark near-by cut the silence into haunting ripples of melody, stopped affrighted at their coming, and flew off into the dull glow of the west; his little body showed black against a crimson cloud. Out across the river a lone coyote yapped sharply, then trailed off into the weird plaint of his kind.

"Brother-in-law's in town to-day; Bob Nevin saw him," Pink remarked, when the coyote ceased wailing and held his peace.

"Who?" Rowdy only half heard.

"Bob Nevin," repeated Pink naively.

"Don't get funny. *Who* did Bob see?"

"Brother-in-law. Yours, not mine. Jessie's tin god. If he's there yet, I bid for an invite to the 'swatfest.' Or maybe"—a horrible possibility forced itself

upon Pink—"maybe you'll kill the fattest maverick and fall on his neck——"

"The maverick's?" Rowdy's brows were rather pinched together, but his tone told nothing.

"Naw; Harry Conroy's. A fellow's liable to do most any fool thing when he's got schoolma'amitis."

"That so?"

Pink snorted. The possibility had grown to black certainty in his mind. He became suddenly furious.

"Lord! I hope some kind friend'll lead me out an' knock me in the head, if ever I get locoed over any darned girl!"

"Same here," agreed Rowdy, unmoved.

"Then your days are sure numbered in words uh one syllable, old-timer," snapped Pink.

Rowdy leaned and patted him caressingly upon the shoulder—a form of irony which Pink detested. "Don't get excited, sonny," he soothed. "Did you fetch your gun?"

"I sure did!" Pink drew a long breath of relief. "Yuh needn't think I'm going t' take chances on being no human colander. I've packed a gun for Harry Conroy ever since that rough-riding contest uh yourn. Yuh mind the way I took him under the ear with a rock? He's been makin' war-talks behind m' back ever since. *Did* I bring m' gun? Well, I guess yes!" He dimpled distractingly.

"All the same, it'll suit me not to run up against him," said Rowdy quite frankly. He knew Pink would understand. Then he lifted his coat suggestively, to show the weapon concealed beneath, and smiled.

"Different here. Yuh did have sense enough t' be ready—and if yuh see him, and don't forget he's got a sister with a number two foot, damned if I don't fix yuh both a-plenty!" He settled his hat more firmly over his curls, and eyed Rowdy anxiously from under his lashes.

Rowdy caught the action and the look from the tail of his eye, and grinned at his horse's ears. Pink in warlike mood always made him think of a four-year-old child playing pirate—with the difference that Pink was always in deadly earnest and would fight like a fiend.

For more reasons than one he hoped they would not meet Harry Conroy. Jessie was still in ignorance of his real attitude toward her brother, and Rowdy wanted nothing more than to keep her so. The trouble was that he was quite certain to forget everything but his grievances, if ever he came face to face with Harry. Also, Pink would always fight quicker for his friends than for himself, and he felt very tender toward Pink. So he hoped fervently that Harry Conroy had already ridden back whence he came, and there would be no unpleasantness.

Four or five Cross L horses stood meekly before the Come Again Saloon, so Rowdy and Pink added theirs to the gathering and went in. The Silent One looked up from his place at a round table in a far corner, and beckoned.

"We need another hand here," he said, when they went over to him. "These gentlemen are worried because they might be taken into high society some day, and they would be placed in a very embarrassing position through their ignorance of bridge-whist. I have very magnanimously consented to teach them the rudiments."

Bob Nevin looked up, and then lowered an eyelid cautiously. "He's a liar. He offered to learn us how to play it; we bet him the drinks he didn't savvy the game himself. Set down, Pink, and I'll have you for my pretty pardner."

The Silent One shuffled the cards thoughtfully. "To make it seem like bona-fide bridge," he began, "we should have everybody playing."

"Aw, the common, ordinary brand is good enough," protested Bob. "I ain't in on any trimmings."

The Silent One smiled ever so slightly. "We should have prizes—or favors. Is there a store in town where one could buy something suitable?"

"They got codfish up here; I smelt it," suggested Jim Ellis. Him the Silent One ignored.

"What do you say, boys, to a real, high society whist-party? I'll invite the crowd, and be the hostess. And I'll serve punch——"

"Come on, fellows, and have one with me," called a strange voice near the door.

"Meeting's adjourned," cried Jim Ellis, and got up to accept the invitation and range along the bar with the rest. He had not been particularly interested in bridge-whist, anyway.

The others remained seated, and the bartender called across to know what they would have. Pink cut the cards very carefully, and did not look up. Rowdy thrust both hands in his pockets and turned his square shoulder to the bar. He did not need to look—he knew that voice, with its shoddy heartiness.

Men began to observe his attitude, and looked at one another. When one is asked to drink with another, he must comply or decline graciously, if he would not give a direct insult.

Harry Conroy took three long steps and laid a hand on Rowdy's shoulder —a hand which Rowdy shook off as though it burned. "Say, stranger, are you too high-toned t' drink with a common cow-puncher?" he demanded sharply.

Rowdy half turned toward him. "No, sir. But I'll be mighty thirsty before I drink with *you*." His voice was even, but it cut.

The room stilled on the instant; it was as if every man of them had turned to lay figures. Harry Conroy had winced at sight of Rowdy's face—men saw that, and some of them wondered. Pink leaned back in his chair, every nerve tightened for the next move, and waited. It was Harry—handsome, sneering, a certain swaggering defiance in his pose—who first spoke.

"Oh, it's you, is it? I haven't saw yuh for some time. How's bronco-fighting? Gone up against any more contests?" He laughed mockingly—with mouth and eyes maddeningly like Jessie's in teasing mood.

Rowdy could have killed him for the resemblance alone. His lids drooped sleepily over eyes that glittered. Harry saw the sign, read it for danger; but he laughed again.

"Yuh ought to have seen this bronco-peeler pull leather, boys," he jeered recklessly. "I like to 'a' died. He got piled up the slickest I ever saw; and there was some feeble-minded Canucks had money up on him, too. He won't drink with me, 'cause I got off with the purse. He's got a grouch—and I don't know as I blame him; he did get let down pretty hard, for a fact."

"Maybe he did pull leather—but he didn't *cut* none, like you did, you damn' skunk!" It was Pink—Pink, with big, long-lashed eyes purple with rage, and with a dead-white streak around his mouth, and a gun in his hand.

Harry wheeled toward him, and if a new light of fear crept into his eyes, his lips belied it in a sneer. "Two of a kind!" he laughed. "So that's the story yuh brought over here, is it? Hell of a lot uh good it'll do yuh!"

Something in Pink's face warned Rowdy. Harry's face turned watchfully from one to the other. Evidently he considered Pink the more uncertain of the two; and he was quite justified in so thinking. Pink was only waiting for a cue before using his gun; and when Pink once began, there was no telling where or when he would leave off.

While Harry stood uncertain, Rowdy's fist suddenly spatted against his cheek with considerable force. He tumbled, a cursing heap, against the foot-rail of the bar, scrambled up like a cat—a particularly vicious cat—and came at Rowdy murderously. The Come Again would shortly have been filled with the pungent haze of burned powder, only that the bartender was a man of action. He hated brawls, and it did not matter to him how just might be the quarrel; he slapped the gaping barrels of a sawed-off shotgun across the bar—and from the look of it one might imagine many disagreeable things.

"Drop it! Cut it out!" he bellowed. "Yuh ain't going t' make no slaughter-pen out uh *this* joint, I tell yuh. Put

up them guns or else take 'em outside. If you fellers are hell-bent on smokin' each other up, they's all kinds uh room outdoors. Git! Vamose! Hike!"

Conroy wheeled and walked, straight-backed and venomous, to the door. "Come on out, if yuh ain't scared," he sneered. "It's two agin' one—and then some, by the look uh things. But I'll take yuh singly or in bunches. I'm ready for the whole damn' Cross L bunch uh coyotes. Come on, you white-livered——!"

Rowdy rushed for him, with Pink and the Silent One at his heels. He had forgotten that Harry Conroy ever had a sister of any sort whatsoever. All he knew was that Harry had done him much wrong, of the sort which comes near to being unforgivable, and that he had sneered insults that no man may overlook. All he thought of was to get his hands on him.

Outside, the dusky stillness made all sounds seem out of place; the faint starlight made all objects black and unfamiliar. Rowdy stopped, just off the threshold, blinking at the darkness which held his enemy. It was strange that he did not find him at his elbow, he thought—and a suspicion came to him that Harry was lying in wait; it would be like him. He stepped out of the yellow glare from a window and stood in more friendly shade. Behind him, on the door-step, stood the other two, blinking as he had done.

A form which he did not recognize rushed up out of the darkness and confronted the three belligerently. "You're a-disturbin' the peace," he yelled. "We don't stand for nothing like that in Camas. You're my prisoners—all uh yuh." The edict seemed to include even the bartender, peering over the shoulder of Bob Nevin, who struggled with several others for immediate passage through the doorway.

"I guess not, pardner," retorted Pink, facing him as defiantly as though the marshal were not twice his size.

The marshal lunged for him; but the Silent One, reaching a long arm from the door-step, rapped him smartly on the head with his gun. The marshal squawked and went down in a formless heap.

"Come on, boys," said the Silent One coolly. "I think we'd better go. Your friend seems to have vanished in thin air."

Rowdy, grumbling mightily over what looked unpleasantly like retreat, was pushed toward his horse and mounted under protest. Likewise Pink, who was for staying and cleaning up the whole town. But the Silent One was firm, and there was that in his manner which compelled obedience.

Harry Conroy might have been an optical—and aural—illusion, for all the trace there was of him. But when the three rode out into the little street, a bullet pinged close to Rowdy's left ear, and the red bark of a revolver spat viciously from a black shadow beside the Come Again.

Rowdy and the two turned and rode back, shooting blindly at the place, but the shadow yawned silently before them and gave no sign. Then the Silent One, observing that the marshal was getting upon a pair of very unsteady legs, again assumed the leadership, and fairly forced Rowdy and Pink into the homeward trail.

CHAPTER VII.

Rowdy, with nice calculation, met Miss Conroy just as she had left the school-house, and noted with much satisfaction that she was riding alone. Miss Conroy, if she had been at all observant, must have seen the light of some fixed purpose shining in his eyes; for Rowdy was resolved to make her a partner in his dreams of matters domestic. And, of a truth, his easy assurance was the thinnest of cloaks to hide his inner agitation.

"The round-up just got in yesterday afternoon," he told her, as he swung into the trail beside her. "We're going to start out again to-morrow, so this is about the only chance I'll have to see you for awhile."

"I knew the round-up must be in," said Miss Conroy calmly. "I heard

that you were in Camas a night or two ago."

Inwardly, Rowdy dodged. "We camped close to Camas," he conceded guardedly. "A lot of us fellows rode into town."

"Yes, so Harry told me," she said. "He came over to see me yesterday. He is going to leave—has already, in fact. He has had a fine position offered him by the Indian agent at Belknap. The agent used to be a friend of father's." She looked at Rowdy sidelong, and then went straight at what was in the minds of both.

"I'm sorry to hear, Mr. Vaughan, that you are on bad terms with Harry. What was the trouble?" She turned her head and smiled at him—but the smile did not bring his lips to answer; it was unpleasantly like the way Harry smiled when he had some deviltry in mind.

Rowdy scented trouble and parried. "Men can't always get along agreeably together."

"And you disagree with a man rather emphatically, I should judge. Harry said you knocked him down." Politeness ruled her voice, but cheeks and eyes were aflame.

"I did. And of course he told you how he took a shot at me from a dark corner, outside." Rowdy's eyes, it would seem, had kindled from the fire in hers.

"No, he didn't—but I—you struck him first."

"Hitting a man with your fist is one thing," said Rowdy with decision. "Shooting at him from ambush is another."

"Harry shouldn't have done that," she admitted with dignity. "But why wouldn't you take a drink with him? Not that I approve of drinking—I wish Harry wouldn't do such things—but he said it was an insult the way you refused."

"Jessie——"

"Miss Conroy, please."

"*Jessie*"—he repeated the name stubbornly—"I think we'd better drop that subject. You don't understand the case; and, anyway, I didn't come here to discuss Harry. Our trouble is long standing, and if I insulted him you ought to know I had a reason. I never came whining to you about him, and it don't speak well for him that he hot-footed over to you with his version. I suppose he'd heard about me—er—going to see you, and wanted to queer me. I hope you'll take my word for it, Jessie, that I've never harmed him; all the trouble he's made for himself, one way and another.

"But what I came over for to-day concerns just you and me. I wanted to tell you that—to ask you if you'll marry me. I might put it more artistic, Jessie, but that's what I mean, and—I mean all the things I'd like to say and can't." He stopped and smiled at her, wistfully whimsical. "I've been three weeks getting my feelings into proper words, little girl, and coming over here I had a speech thought out that sure done justice to my subject. But all I can remember of it is just that—that I want you for always."

Miss Conroy looked away from him, but he could see a deeper tint of red in her cheek. It seemed a long time before she said anything. Then: "But you've forgotten about Harry. He's my brother, and he'd be—er—you wouldn't want him related—to you."

"Harry! Well, I pass him up. I've got a pretty long account against him; but I'll cross it off. It won't be hard to do—for you. I've thought of all that; and a man can forgive a whole lot in the brother of the woman he loves." He leaned toward her and added honestly: "I can't promise you I'll ever get to *like* him, Jessie; but I'll keep my hands off him, and I'll treat him civil; and when you consider all he's done, that's quite a large-sized contract."

Miss Conroy became much interested in the ears of her horse.

"The only thing to decide is whether you like me enough. If you do, we'll sure be happy. Never mind Harry."

"You're very generous," she flared, "telling me to never mind Harry. And Harry's my own brother, and the only near relative I've got. I know he's—

impulsive, and quick-tempered, perhaps. But he needs me all the more. Do you think I'll turn against him, even for you?"

That "even" may have been a slip, but it heartened Rowdy immensely. "I don't ask you to," he told her gently. "I only want you to not turn against *me.*"

"I do wish you two would be sensible, and stop quarreling." She glanced at him briefly.

"I'm willing to cut it out—I told you that. I can't answer for him, though." Rowdy sighed, wishing Harry Conroy in Australia, or some place equally remote.

Miss Conroy suddenly resolved to be strictly just; and when a young woman sets about being deliberately just, the Lord pity him whom she judges!

"Before I answer you, I must know just what all this is about," she said firmly. "I want to hear both sides; I'm sure Harry wouldn't do anything *mean.* Do you think he would?"

Rowdy was dissentingly silent.

"Do you really, in your heart, believe that Harry would—knowingly—be guilty of anything *mean?*" Her eyes plainly told the answer she wanted to hear.

Rowdy looked into them, hesitated, and clung tenaciously to his convictions. "Yes, I do; and I know Harry pretty well, Jessie." His face showed how much he hated to say it.

"I'm afraid you are very prejudiced," she sighed. "But go on; tell me just what you have against Harry. I'm sure it can all be explained away, only I must hear what it is."

Rowdy regarded her, puzzled. How he was to comply he did not know. It would be simply brutal to tell her. He would feel like a hangman. And she believed so in Harry, she wouldn't listen; even if she did, he thought bitterly, she would hate him for destroying her faith. A woman's justice—ah, me!

"Don't you see you're putting me in a mighty hard position, girlie?" he protested. "You're a heap better off not to know. He's your brother. I wish you'd take my word that I'll drop the whole thing right where it is. Harry's had all the best of it, so far; let it stand that way."

Her eyes met his coldly. "Are you *afraid* to let me judge between you? What did he *do?* Daren't you tell?"

Rowdy's lids drooped ominously. "If you call that a dare," he said grimly, "I'll tell you, fast enough. I was a friend to him when he needed one mighty bad. I helped him when he was dead broke and out uh work. I kept him going all winter—and to show his gratitude, he gave me the double-cross, in more ways than one. I won't go into details." He decided that he simply could not tell her bluntly that Harry had worked off stolen horses on him, and worse.

"Oh—you won't go into details!" Scorn filled eyes and voice. "Are they so trivial, then? You tell me what *you* did for Harry—playing Good Samaritan. Harry, let me tell you, has property of his own; I can't see why he should ever be in need of charity. You're like all the rest; you hint things against him—but I believe it's just jealousy. You can't come out honestly and tell me a single instance where he has harmed you, or done anything worse than other high-spirited young men."

"It wouldn't do any good to tell you," he retorted. "You think he's just lacking wings to be an angel. I hope to God you'll always be able to think so! I'm sure I don't want to jar your faith."

"I must say your actions don't bear out your words. You've just been trying to turn me against him."

"I haven't. I've been trying to convince you that I want you, anyway, and Harry needn't come between us."

"In other words, you're willing to overlook my being Harry's sister. I appreciate your generosity, I'm sure." She did not look, however, as if she meant that.

"I didn't mean that."

"Then you won't overlook it? How very unfortunate! Because I can't help the relationship."

"Would you, if you could?" he asked rashly.

"Certainly not!"

"I'm afraid we're getting off the

trail," he amended tactfully. "I asked you, awhile back, if you'd marry me."

"And I said I must hear both sides of your trouble with Harry, before I could answer."

"What's the use? You'd take his part, anyway."

"Not if I found he was guilty of all you—insinuate. I should be perfectly just." She really believed that.

"Can't you tell me yes or no, anyway? Don't let him come between us."

"I can't help it. We'd never agree, or be happy. He'd keep on coming between us, whether we meant him to or not," she said dispiritedly.

"That's a cinch," Rowdy muttered, thinking of Harry's trouble-breeding talents.

"Then there's no more to be said. Until you and Harry settle your difficulties amicably, or I am convinced that he's in the wrong, we'll just be friends, Mr. Vaughan. Good afternoon." She rode into the Rodway yard, feeling very just and virtuous, no doubt. But she left Rowdy with some rather unpleasant thoughts, and with a sentiment toward her precious brother which was not far from manslaughter.

CHAPTER VIII.

Eagle Creek Smith had at last reached the point where he must face new conditions and change established customs. He could no longer ignore the barrenness of the range, or close his eyes to the grim fact that his cattle were facing starvation—and that in June, when they should be taking on flesh.

When he finally did confess to himself that things couldn't go on like that, others had been before him in leasing and buying land, until only the dry benches were left to him and his hungry herds.

But Eagle Creek was a man of resource. When the round-up pulled in and Wooden Shoes reported to him the general state of the cattle, and told of the water-holes newly fenced and of creek bottoms gobbled by men more farseeing than he, Eagle Creek took twenty-four hours to adjust himself to the situation and to meet the crisis before him. His own land, as compared to his twenty thousand cattle, was too pitifully inadequate for a second thought. He must look elsewhere for the correct answer to his problem.

When Rowdy rode apathetically up to the stable, Pink came out of the bunk-house to meet him, big with news. "Oh, doctor! We're up against it a-plenty now," he greeted, with his dimples at their deepest.

"Huh!" grunted Rowdy crossly. "What's hurting yuh, Pink?"

"Forecasting the future," Pink retorted. "Eagle Creek has come alive, and has wised up sudden to the fact that this ain't going t' be any Noah's flood brand uh summer, and that his cattle look like the tailings of a washboard factory. He's got busy—and we're sure going to. We're due t' hit the grit out uh here in the first beams uh rosy morn, and do a record stunt at gathering cattle."

"Well, we were going to, anyhow," Rowdy cut in.

"But that's only the prelude, old-timer. We've got t' take 'em across country to the Belknap reservation. Eagle Creek went t' town and telegraphed, and got the refusal of it for pasturage; he ain't so slow, oncet he gets started. But if you've ever rode over them dried-up benches, you savvy the merry party we'll be when we git there. I've saw jack-rabbits packing their lunch along over there."

"Belknap"—Rowdy dropped his saddle spitefully to the ground—"is where our friend Conroy has just gone to fill a splendid position."

Pink thoughtfully blew the ashes from his cigarette. "Harry Conroy would fill *one* position fine. Some uh these days I'll offer it to him. I don't know anybody that'd look nicer in a coffin than that jasper—and if he's gone t' Belknap, that's likely the position he'll fill, all right."

Rowdy said nothing, but his very silence told Pink much.

"How'd yuh make out with Jessie?"

Pink asked frankly, though he was not supposed to know where Rowdy had been.

Rowdy knew from experience that it was useless trying to keep anything from Pink that Pink wanted to know; besides, there was a certain comfort in telling his troubles to so stanch a friend. "Harry got his work in there, too," he said bitterly. "He beat me to her and queered me for good, by the looks."

"Huh!" said Pink. "I wouldn't waste much time worrying over her, if she's that easy turned."

"*She's* all right," defended Rowdy quickly. "I don't know as I blame her; she takes the stand any sister would take. She wants to know all about the trouble—hear both sides, she said, so she could judge which was to blame. I guess she's got her heart set on being peacemaker. I know one thing; she—likes me, all right."

"I don't see how he queered yuh any, then," puzzled Pink. "She sure couldn't take his part after you'd told her all he done."

Rowdy turned on him savagely. "You little fool, do you think I *told* her? Right there's the trouble. He told his story; and when she asked for mine, I couldn't say anything. She's his sister."

"You — didn't — tell!" Pink leaned against the stable and stared. "Rowdy Vaughan, there's times when even your friend can't disguise the fact that yuh act plumb batty. Yuh let Harry do yuh dirt that any other man'd 'a' killed him on bare suspicion uh doing; and yuh never told her when she asked yuh to! How yuh lent him money, and let him steal some right out uh your pocket——"

"I couldn't prove that," Rowdy objected.

"And yuh never told her about his cutting your latigo——"

"Oh, cut it out!" Rowdy glowered down at him. "I guess I don't need to be reminded of all those things. But are they the things a man can tell a girl about her brother? Pink, you're about as unfeeling a little devil as I ever run across. Maybe you'd have told her; but I couldn't. So it's all off."

He turned away and stared unseeingly at the rim of hills that hid the place where she lived. She seemed very far away from him just then—and very, very desirable. He thought then that he had never before realized just how much he cared.

"You can just bet I'd 'a' told her!" gritted Pink, watching furtively Rowdy's averted face. "She ain't goin' t' be bowed down by no load of ignorance much longer, either. If she don't get Harry Conroy's pedigree straight out, without the varnish, it'll be because I ain't next to all his past."

But Rowdy, glooming among the débris of certain pet air-castles, neither heard nor wanted to hear Pink's wrathful mutterings. As a matter of fact, it was not till Pink clattered out of the yard on Mascot that he remembered where he was. Even then it did not occur to him to wonder where Pink was going.

CHAPTER IX.

Four thousand weary cattle crawled up the long ridge which divides Chin Coulée from Quitter Creek. Pink, riding point, opposite the Silent One, twisted round in his saddle and looked back at the slow-moving river of horns and backs veiled in a gray dust-cloud. Down the line at intervals rode the others, humped listlessly in their saddles, their hat brims pulled low over tired eyes that smarted with dust and wind and burning heat.

Pink sighed, and wished lonesomely that it was Rowdy riding point with him, instead of the Silent One, who grew even more silent as the day dragged leadenly to mid-afternoon; Pink could endure anything better than being left to his thoughts and to the complaining herd for company.

He took off his hat, pushed back his curls—dripping wet they were and flattened unbecomingly in pasty, yellow rings on his forehead—and eyed with

disfavor a line-backed, dry cow, with one horn tipped rakishly toward her speckled nose; she blinked silently at wind and heat, and forged steadily ahead, up hill and down coulée, always in the lead, always walking, walking, like an automaton. Her energy, in the face of all the dry, dreary days, rasped Pink's nerves unbearably. For nearly a week he had ridden left point, and always that line-backed cow with the down-crumpled horn walked and walked and walked, a length ahead of her most intrepid followers.

He leaned from his saddle, picked up a rock from the barren, yellow hillside, and threw it at the cow spitefully. The rock bounced off her lean rump; she blinked and broke into a shuffling trot, her dragging hoofs kicking up an extra amount of dust, which blew straight into Pink's face.

"Aw, cut it out!" he shouted petulantly. "You're sure the limit, without doing any stunts at sprinting up-hill. Ain't yuh got any nerves, yuh blamed old skate? Yuh act like it was milkin'-time, and yuh was headed straight for the bars and a bran mash. Can't yuh realize the kind uh deal you're up against? Here's cattle that's got you skinned for looks, old girl, and *they* know it's coming blamed tough; and *you* just bat your eyes and peg along like yuh enjoyed it. Bawl, or something, can't yuh? Drop back a foot and act human!"

The Silent One looked across at him with a tired smile. "Let her go, Pink, and pray for more like her," he called amusedly. "There'll be enough of them dropping back presently."

Pink threw one leg over the horn and rode sidewise, made him a cigarette, and tried to forget the cow—or, at least, to forgive her for not acting as dog-tired as he felt.

They were on the very peak of the ridge now, and the hill sloped smoothly down before them to the bluff which bounded Quitter Creek. Far down, a tiny black speck in the coulée-bottom, they could see Wooden Shoes riding along the creek bank, scouting for water. From the way he rode, and from the fact that camp was nowhere in sight, Pink guessed shrewdly that his quest was in vain. He shrugged his shoulders at what that meant, and gave his attention to the herd.

The marching line split at the brow of the bluff. The line-backed cow lowered her head a bit and went unfaltering down the parched, gravel-coated hill, followed by a few hundred of the freshest. Then the stream stopped flowing, and Pink and the Silent One rode back up the bluff to where the bulk of the footsore herd, their senses dulled by hunger and weariness and choking thirst, sniffed at the gravel that promised agony to their bruised feet, and balked at the ordeal. Others straggled up, bunched against the rebels, and stood stolidly where they were.

Pink galloped on down the crawling line. "Forward, the Standard Oil Brigade!" he yelled whimsically as he went.

The cowboys heard—and understood. They left their places and went forward at a lope, and Pink rode back to the coulée edge, untying his slicker as he went. The Silent One was already off his horse and shouting hoarsely as he whacked with his slicker at the sulky mass. Pink rode in and did the same. It was not the first time this thing had happened, and from a diversion it was verging closely on the monotonous. Presently, even a rank tenderfoot must have caught the significance of Pink's military expression. The Standard Oil Brigade was at the front in force.

Cowboys, swinging five-gallon oil-cans, picked up from scattered sheep camps and carried many a weary mile for just such an emergency, were charging the bunch intrepidly. Others made shift with flat sirup cans with pebbles inside. A few, like Pink and the Silent One, flapped their slickers till their arms ached. Anything, everything that would make a din and startle the cattle out of their lethargy, was pressed into service.

But they might have been raised in a barnyard and fed cabbage leaves from back door-steps, for all the excitement they showed. Cattle that three months

ago—or a month—would run, head and tail high in air, at sight of a man on foot, backed away from a rattling, banging cube of gleaming tin, turned and faced the thing dull-eyed and apathetic.

In time, however, they gave way doggedly before the onslaught. A few were forced shrinkingly down the hill; others followed gingerly, until the line lengthened and flowed, a sluggish, brown-red stream, into the coulée and across to Quitter Creek.

Here the leaders were browsing greedily along the banks. They had emptied the few holes that had still held a meager store of brackish water, and so the mutinous bulk of the herd snuffed at the trampled, muddy spots and bellowed their disappointment.

Wooden Shoes rode up and surveyed the half-maddened animals gloomily. "Push 'em on, boys," he said. "They's nothings for 'em here. I've sent the wagons on to Red Willow; we'll try that next. Push 'em along all yuh can, while I go on ahead and see."

With tin cans, slickers, and much vituperation, they forced the herd up the coulée side and strung them out again on trail. The line-backed cow walked and walked in the lead before Pink's querulous gaze, and the others plodded listlessly after. The gray dust-cloud formed anew over their slow-moving backs, and the cowboys humped over in their saddles and rode and rode, with the hot sun beating aslant in their dirt-grimed faces, and with the wind blowing and blowing.

If this had been the first herd to make that dreary trip, things would not have been quite so disheartening. But it was the third. Seven thousand lean kine had passed that way before them, eating the scant grass growth and drinking what water they could find among those barren, sun-baked coulées.

The Cross L boys, on this third trip, were become a jaded lot of hollow-eyed men, whose nerves were rasped raw with long hours and longer days in the saddle. Pink's cheeks no longer made his name appropriate, and he was not the only one who grew fretful over small things. Rowdy had been heard, more than once lately, to anathematize viciously the prairie-dogs for standing on their tails and chip-chip-chipping at them as they went by. And though the Silent One did not swear, he carried rocks in his pockets, and threw them with venomous precision at every "dog" that showed his impertinent nose out of a burrow within range. For Pink, he vented his spleen on the line-backed cow.

So they walked and walked and walked.

The cattle balked at another hill, and all the tin cans and slickers in the crowd could scarcely move them. The wind dropped with the sun, and the clouds glowed gorgeously above them, getting scant notice, except that they told eloquently of the coming night; and there were yet miles—long, rough, heartbreaking miles—to put behind them before they could hope for the things their tired bodies craved: supper and dreamless sleep.

When the last of the herd had sidled, under protest, down the long hill to the flat, dusk was pushing the horizon closer upon them, mile by mile. When they crawled sinuously out upon the welcome level, the hill loomed ghostly and black behind them. A mile out, Wooden Shoes rode out of the gloom and met the point. He turned and rode beside Pink.

"Yuh'll have t' swing 'em north," he greeted. "Red Willow's dry as hell—all but in the Rockin' R field. No use askin' ole Mullen to let us in there; we'll just *go*. I sent the wagons through the fence, an yuh'll find camp about a mile up from the mouth uh the big coulée. You swing 'em round the end uh this bench, an' hit that big coulée at the head. When you come t' the fence, tear it down. They's awful good grass in that field!"

"All right," said Pink cheerfully. It was in open defiance of range etiquette; but their need was desperate. The only thing about it Pink did not like was the long détour they must make. He called the news across to the Silent One, after Wooden Shoes had gone on

down the line, and they swung the point gradually to the left.

Before that drive was over, Pink had vowed many times to leave the range forever and never to turn another cow—besides a good many other foolish things which would be forgotten, once he had a good sleep. And Rowdy, plodding half-way down the herd, had grown exceedingly pessimistic regarding Jessie Conroy, and decided that there was no sense in thinking about her all the time, the way he had been doing. Also, he told himself savagely that if Harry ever crossed his trail again, there would be something doing. This thing of letting a cur like that run rough-shod over a man on account of a girl that didn't care was plumb idiotic. And beside him the cattle walked and walked and walked, a dim, moving mass in the quiet July night.

CHAPTER X.

It was late next morning when they got under way; for they had not reached camp until long after midnight, and Wooden Shoes was determined the cattle should have one good feed, and all the water they wanted, to requite them for the hard drive of the day before.

Pink rode out with Rowdy to the herd—a heavy-lidded, gloomy Rowdy he was, and not amiably inclined toward the small talk of the range. But Pink had slept five whole hours and was almost his normal self; which means that speech was not to be denied him.

"What yuh mourning over?" he bantered. "Mad 'cause the reservation's so close?"

"Sure," assented Rowdy, with deep sarcasm.

"That's what I thought. Studying up the nicest way uh giving brother-in-law the glad hand, ain't yuh?"

"He's no relation uh mine—and never will be," said Rowdy curtly. "And I'll thank you, Pink, to drop that subject for good and all."

"Down she goes," assented Pink, quite unperturbed. "But the cards ain't all turned yet, yuh want to remember. I wouldn't pass on no hand like you've got. If I wanted a girl right bad, Rowdy, I'd wait till I got refused before I'd quit."

"Seems to me you've changed your politics lately," Rowdy retorted. "A while back you was cussing the whole business; and now you're worse than an old maid aunt. Pink, you may not be wise to the fact, but you sure are an inconsistent little devil."

"Are yuh going t' hunt Harry up and——"

"I thought I told you to drop that."

"Did yuh? All right, then—only I hope yuh didn't leave your gun packed away in your bed," he insinuated.

"You can take a look to-night, if you want to."

Pink laughed in a particularly infectious way he had, and, before he quite knew it, Rowdy was laughing, also. After that the world did not look quite so forlorn as it had, nor the day's work so distasteful. So Pink, having accomplished his purpose, was content to turn the subject.

"There's old Liney"—he pointed her out to Rowdy—"fresh as a meadow-lark. I had a big grouch against her yesterday, just because she batted her eyes and kept putting one foot ahead uh the other. I could 'a' killed her. But she's all right, that old girl. The way she led out down that black coulée last night wasn't slow! Say, she's an ambitious old party. I wish you was riding point with me, Rowdy. The Silent One talks just about as much as that old cow. He sure loves to live up to his rep."

"Oh, go on to work," Rowdy admonished. "You make me think of a magpie." All the same, he looked after him with smiling lips, and eyes that forgot their gloom. He even whistled while he helped round up the scattered herd, ready for that last day's drive.

Every man in the outfit comforted himself with the thought that it was the last day's drive. After long weeks of trailing lean herds over barren, wind-brushed hills, the last day meant much to them. Even the Silent One sang

something they had never heard before, about "If Only I Knew You Were True."

They crossed the Rocking R field, took down four panels of fence, passed out, and carefully put them up again behind them. Before them stretched level plain for two miles; beyond that a high, rocky ridge that promised some trouble with the herd, and after that more plain and a coulée or two, and then, on a far slope—the reservation.

The cattle were rested and fed, and walked out briskly; the ridge neared perceptibly. Pink's shrill whistle carried far back down the line and mingled pleasantly with voices calling to one another across the herd. Not a man was humped listlessly in his saddle; instead, they rode with shoulders back and hats at divers jaunty angles to keep the sun from shining in eyes that faced the future cheerfully.

The herd steadily climbed the ridge, choosing the smoothest path and the easiest slope. Pink assured the line-backed cow that she was a peach, and told her to "go to it, old girl." The Silent One's pockets were quite empty of rocks, and the prairie-dogs chipped and flirted their funny little tails unassailed. And Rowdy, from wondering what had made Pink change his attitude so abruptly, began to plan industriously the next meeting with Jessie Conroy, and to build a new castle that was higher and airier than any he had ever before attempted—and perhaps had a more flimsy foundation; for it rested precariously on Pink's idle remarks.

The point gained the top of the ridge, and Pink turned and swung his hat jubilantly at the others. The reservation was in sight, though it lay several miles distant. But in that clear air one could distinguish the line fence—if one had the eye of faith and knew just where to look. Presently he observed a familiar horseman climbing the ridge to meet them.

"Eagle Creek's coming," he shouted to the man behind. "Come alive, there, and don't let 'em roam all over the map. Git some style on yuh!"

Those who heard laughed; no one ever dreamed of being offended at what Pink said. Those who had not heard had the news passed on to them, in various forms. Wooden Shoes, who had been loitering in the rear gossiping with the men, rode on to meet Smith.

Eagle Creek urged his horse up the last steep place, right in the face of the leaders, which halted and tried to turn back. Pink, swearing in a whisper, began to force them forward.

"Let 'em alone," Eagle Creek bellowed harshly. "They ain't goin' no farther."

"W-what?" Pink stopped short and eyed him critically. Eagle Creek could not justly be called a teetotaller; but Pink had never known him to get worse than a bit wobbly in his legs; his mind had never fogged perceptibly. Still, something was wrong with him, that was certain. Pink glanced dubiously across at the Silent One and saw him shrug his shoulders expressively.

Eagle Creek rode up and stopped within ten feet of the line-backed cow; she seemed hurt at being held up in this manner, Pink thought.

"Yuh'll have t' turn this herd back," Eagle Creek announced bluntly.

"Where to?" Pink asked, too stunned to take in the meaning of it.

"T' hell, I guess. It's the only place I know of where everybody's welcome." Eagle Creek's tone was not pleasant.

"We just came from there," Pink said simply, thinking of the horrors of that drive.

"Where's Wooden Shoes?" snapped the old man; and the foreman's hat-crown appeared at that instant over the ridge.

"Well, we're up against it," Eagle Creek greeted. "That damn' agent—or the fellow he had workin' for him—reported his renting us pasture. Made the report read about twice as many as we're puttin' on. He's got orders now t' turn out every hoof but what b'longs there."

"My Lord!" Wooden Shoes gasped at the catastrophe which faced the Cross L.

"That's Harry Conroy's work," Pink cut in sharply. "He'd hurt the Cross

L if he could, t' spite me and Rowdy. He——"

"Don't matter—seein' it's *done*. Yuh might as well turn the herd loose right here, an' let 'em go t' the devil. I don't know what else t' do with 'em."

"Anything gone wrong?" It was Rowdy, who had left his place and ridden forward to see what was holding the herd back.

"Naw. We're fired off the reservation, is all. We got orders to take the herd to hell. Eagle Creek's leased it. Mr. Satan is going to keep house here in Montana; he says it's better for his trade," Pink informed him, in his girlish treble.

Eagle Creek turned on him fiercely, then thought better of it and grinned. "Them arrangements wouldn't make us any worse off'n what we are," he commented. "Turn 'em loose, boys."

"Man, if yuh turn 'em loose here, the first storm that hits 'em, they'll die," Wooden Shoes interposed excitedly. "They ain't nothings for 'em. We had t' turn 'em into the Rockin' R field last night, t' git water an' feed. Red Willow's gone dry outside dat field. They ain't—*nothings*. They'll *die!*"

Eagle Creek looked at him dully. For the first time in his life he faced utter ruin. "Damn 'em, let 'em die, then!" he said.

"That's what they'll sure do," Wooden Shoes reiterated stubbornly. "If they don't git feed and water now, yuh needn't start no round-up next spring."

Pink's eyes went down over the close-huddled backs and the thicket of polished horns, and his eyelids stung. Would all of them die, he wondered! Four thousand! He hoped not. There must be some way out. Down the hill, he knew the cowboys were making cigarettes while they waited and wondered mightily what it was all about. If they only knew, he thought, there would be more than one rope ready for Harry Conroy.

"How about the Peck reservation? Couldn't you get them on there?" Rowdy ventured.

"Not a hoof!" growled Eagle Creek, with his chin sunk against his chest. "There's thirty thousand Valley County cattle on there now." He looked down at the cattle, as Pink had done. "God! It's bad enough t' go broke," he groaned; "but t' think uh them poor brutes dyin' off in bunches, for want uh grass an' water! I've run that brand fer over thirty year."

CHAPTER XI.

Rowdy rode closer. "If you don't mind paying duty," he began tentatively, "I can put you next to a range over the line, where I'll guarantee feed and water the year round for every hoof you own."

Eagle Creek lifted his head and looked at him. "Whereabouts?" he demanded skeptically.

"Up in the Red Deer country. Pink knows the place. There's range a-plenty, and creeks running through that never go dry; and the country isn't stocked and fenced to death, like this is."

"And would we be ordered off soon as we got there?"

"Sure not—if you paid duty, which would only be about double what you were going to pay for one year's pasture."

Eagle Creek breathed deeply, like a man who has narrowly escaped suffocation. "Young man, I b'lieve you're a square dealer, and that yuh savvy the cow business. I've thought it ever since yuh started t' work." His keen old eyes twinkled at the memory of Rowdy's arrival, and Rowdy grinned. "I take yuh at your word, and yuh can consider yourself in charge uh this herd as it stands. Take it t' that cow heaven yuh tell about—and damn it, yuh won't be none the worse for it!"

"We'll pass that up," said Rowdy quietly. "I'll take the herd through, though; and I'd advise you to get the rest on the road as soon as they can be gathered. It's a three-hundred-mile drive."

"All right. From now on it's up to you," Eagle Creek told him briskly. "Take 'em back t' the Rockin' R field,

and I'll send the wagons back t' you. Old Mullen'll likely make a roar—but that's most all gove'ment land he's got fenced, so I guess I c'n calm him down. Will yuh go near the ranch?"

"I think so," said Rowdy. "It will be the shortest way."

"Well, I'll give yuh some blank checks, an' you c'n load up with grub and anything else yuh need. I'll be over there by the time you are, and fix up that duty business. Wooden Shoes'll have t' get another outfit together, and get another bunch on the trail. One good thing—I got thirty days t' get off what cattle is on there; and thirty days uh grass and water'll put 'em in good shape for the trip. Wish this bunch was as well fixed."

"That's what," Rowdy assented. "But I think they'll make it, all right."

"I'll likely want yuh to stay up there and keep cases on 'em. Any objections?"

"Sure not!" laughed Rowdy. "Only I'll want Pink and the Silent One to stay with me."

"Keep what men yuh want. Anything else?"

"I don't think of anything," said Rowdy. "Only I'd like to have a—talk—with Conroy."

Eagle Creek eyed him sharply. "Yuh won't be apt t' meet him. Old Bill Brown, up home, would like to see him, too. Bill's a perseverin' old cuss, and wants to see Conroy so bad he's got the sheriff out lookin' for him. It's about a bunch uh horses that was run off, three years ago. Yuh brought one of 'em back into the country last spring, yuh mind."

Rowdy and Pink looked at one another, but said nothing.

"Old Bill, he follered your back trail and found out some things he wanted t' know. Conroy got wind of it, though, and he left the agency kind-a suddint. No use yuh lookin' for him."

"Then we're ready to hit the grit, I guess." Rowdy glanced again at Pink, who nodded.

"Well, *I* ain't stoppin' yuh," Eagle Creek drawled laconically. "S'-long, and good luck t' yuh."

He waited while Pink and the Silent One swung the point back down the hill, with Rowdy helping them, quite unmoved by his sudden promotion. When the herd was fairly started on the backward march, Eagle Creek nodded satisfaction the while he pried off a corner of plug-tobacco.

"He's all right," he asserted emphatically. "That boy suits me, from the ground up. If he don't put that deal through in good shape, it'll be because it can't be did."

Wooden Shoes, with whom Rowdy had always been a prime favorite, agreed with Dutch heartiness. Then, leaving the herd to its new guardian, they rode swiftly to overtake and turn back the wagons.

"Three hundred miles! And part of it across a howling desert!" Rowdy drew his brows together. "It's a big thing for me, all right, Pink; but it's sure a big contract to take this herd through, if anybody should happen to ask yuh."

"Oh, buck up! You'll make good, all right—if only these creeks wasn't so bone dry!"

"Well, there's water enough in the Rocking R field for to-day; we'll throw 'em in there till to-morrow. And I've a notion I can find a better trail across to North Fork than the way we came. I'm going to strike out this afternoon and see, anyway, if Quitter Creek hasn't got water farther up. Once we get up north uh the home ranch, I can see my way clear."

"Go to it, boss," Pink cried heartily. "I don't see how I'm going t' keep from sassing yuh, once in a while, though. That's what bothers me. What'll happen if I turn loose on yuh, some time?"

"You'll get fired, I expect," laughed Rowdy, and rode off to announce the news to the rest of the outfit, who were very unhappy in their mystification.

If their reception of the change of plans and foreman was a bit profane, and their manner toward him a bit familiar, Rowdy didn't mind. He knew that they did not grudge him his good luck, even while they hated the long

drive. He also knew that they watched him furtively; for nothing—not even misfortune—is as sure a test of a man's character as success. They liked Rowdy, and they did not believe this would spoil him; still, every man of them was secretly a bit anxious.

On the trail, he rode in his accustomed place, and, so far as appearances went, the party had no foreman. He went forward and helped Pink take down the fence that had been so carefully put up a few hours before, and he whistled while he put it in place again, just as if he had no responsibility in the world. Then the cattle were left to themselves, and the men rode down to their old camp ground, marked by empty tin cans and a trodden place where had been the horse corral.

Rowdy swung down and faced the men gravely. Instinctively they stood at attention, waiting for what he had to say; they felt that the situation was so far out of the ordinary that a few remarks pertaining to their new relations would not be out of place.

He looked them over appraisingly, and met glances as grave as his own. Straight, capable fellows they were, every man of them.

"Boys," he began impressively, "you all know that from to-day on you're working under my orders. I never was boss of anything but the cayuse I happened to have under me, and I'm going to extract all the honey there is in the situation. Maybe I'll never be boss again—but at present I'm *it*. I want you fellows to remember that important fact, and treat me with proper respect. From now on you can call me Mr. Vaughan; 'Rowdy' doesn't go, except on a legal holiday.

"Furthermore, I'm not going to get out at daylight and catch up my own horse; I'll let yuh take turns being flunky, and I'll expect yuh to saddle my horse every morning and noon, and bring him to the cook-tent—and hold my stirrup for me. Also, you are expected, at all times and places, to anticipate my wants and fall over yourselves waiting on me. You're just common, ordinary, forty-dollar cow-punchers, and if I treat yuh white, it's because I pity yuh for not being up where I am. Remember, vassals, that I'm your superior, mentally, morally, socially——"

"Chap him!" yelled Pink, and made for him. "I'll stand for a lot, but don't yuh ever think *I'm* a vassal!"

"Mutiny is strictly prohibited!" he thundered. "Villains, beware! Gadzooks—er—let's have a swim before the wagons come!"

They laughed and made for the creek, feeling rather crestfallen and a bit puzzled.

"If *I* had an outfit like this to run, and a three-hundred-mile drive to make," Bob Nevin remarked to the Silent One, "blessed if I'd make a josh of it! I'd cultivate the corrugated brow and the stiff spine—me!"

"My friend," the Silent One responded, "don't be too hasty in your judgment. It's because the corrugated brow will come later that he laughs now. You'll presently find yourself accomplishing the impossible in obedience to the flicker of Rowdy Vaughan's eyelids. Man, did you never observe the set of his head, and the look of his eye? Rowdy Vaughan will get more out of this crowd than any man ever did; and if he fails, he'll fail with the band playing 'Hot Time.'"

"Maybe so," Bob admitted, not quite convinced; "but I wonder if he realizes what he's up against."

At which the Silent One only smiled queerly as he splashed into the water.

After dinner Rowdy caught up the blue roan, which was his favorite for a hard ride—he seemed to have forgotten his speech concerning "flunkies"—and rode away up the coulée which had brought them into the field the night before. The boys watched him go, speculated a bit, and went to sleep as the best way of putting in the afternoon.

Pink, who knew quite well what was in Rowdy's mind, said nothing at all; it is possible that he was several degrees more jealous of the dignity of Rowdy's position than was Rowdy himself, who had no time to think of any-

thing but the best way of getting the herd to Canada. He would like to have gone along, only that Rowdy did not ask him to. Pink assured himself that it was best for Rowdy not to start playing any favorites, and curled down in the bed-tent with the others and went to sleep.

It was late that night when Rowdy crept silently into his corner of the tent; but Pink was awake, and whispered to know if he found water. Rowdy's "Yes" was a mere breath, but it was enough.

At sunrise the herd trailed up the Rocking R coulée, and Pink and the Silent One pointed them north of the old trail.

CHAPTER XII.

In the days that followed Rowdy was much alone. There was water to hunt, far ahead of the herd, together with the most practicable way of reaching it. He did not take the shortest way across that arid country and leave the next day's camping-place to chance—as Wooden Shoes had done. He felt that there was too much at stake, and the cattle were too thin for any more dry drives; long drives there were, but such was his generalship that there was always water at the end.

He rode miles and miles that he might have shirked, and he never slept until the next day's move, at least, was clearly defined in his mind and he felt sure that he could do no better by going another route.

These lonely rides gave him over to the clutch of thoughts he had never before harbored in his sunny nature. Grim, ugly thoughts they were, and not nice to remember afterward. They swung persistently around a central subject, as the earth revolves around the sun; and, like the earth, they turned and turned on the axis of his love for a woman.

In particularly ugly moods he thought that if Harry Conroy were caught and convicted of horse-stealing, Jessie must perforce admit his guilt and general unworthiness—Rowdy called it general cussedness—and Rowdy be vindicated in her eyes. Then she would marry him, and go with him to the Red Deer country and—air-castles for miles! When he awoke to the argument again, he would tell himself savagely that if he could, by any means, bring about Conroy's speedy conviction, he would do so.

This was unlike Rowdy, whose generous charity toward his enemies came near being a fault. He might feel any amount of resentment for wrong done, but cold-blooded revenge was not in him; that he had suffered so much at Conroy's hands was due largely to the fact that Conroy was astute enough to read Rowdy aright, and unscrupulous enough to take advantage. Add to that a small-minded jealousy of Rowdy's popularity and horsemanship, one can easily imagine him doing some rather nasty things. Perhaps the meanest, and the one which rankled most in Rowdy's memory, was the cutting of Rowdy's latigo just before a riding contest, in which the purse and the glory of a championship-belt seemed in danger of going to Rowdy.

Rowdy had got a fall that crippled him for weeks, and Harry had won the purse and belt—and the enmity of several men better than he. For though morally sure of his guilt, no one could prove that he had cut the strap, and so he got off unpunished, except that Pink thrashed him—a bit unscientifically, it is true, since he resorted to throwing rocks toward the last, but with a thoroughness worthy even of Pink.

But in moods less ugly he shrank from the hurt that must be Jessie's if she should discover the truth. Jessie's brother a convicted thief serving his sentence in Deer Lodge! The thought was horrible; it was brutal cruelty. If he could only know where to look for that lad, he'd help him out of the country. It was no good shutting him up in jail; that wouldn't help him any, or make him better. He hoped he would get off—go somewhere, where they couldn't find him, and stay there.

He wondered where he was, and if he had money enough to see him

through. He might be no good—he sure wasn't!—but he was Jessie's brother, and Jessie believed in him and thought a lot of him. It would be hard lines for that little girl if Harry were caught. Bill Brown, the meddlesome old freak!—he didn't blame Jessie for not wanting to stop there that night. She did just the right thing.

With all this going round and round, monotonously persistent in his brain, and with the care of four thousand lean kine and more than a hundred saddle-horses—to say nothing of a dozen overworked, fretful cow-punchers—Rowdy acquired the "corrugated brow" fast enough without any cultivation.

The men were as the Silent One had predicted. They made drives that lasted far into the night, stood guard, and got along with so little sleep that it was scarce worth mention, and did many things that shaved close the impossible—just because Rowdy looked at them straightly, with half-closed lids, and asked them if they thought they *could*.

Pink began to speak of their new foreman as "Moses"; and when the curious asked him why, told them soberly that Rowdy could "hit a rock with his quirt and start a creek running bank full." When Rowdy heard that, he thought of the miles of weary searching, and wished that it were true.

They had left the home ranch a day's drive behind them, and were going north. Rowdy had denied himself the luxury of riding over to see Jessie, and he was repenting the sacrifice in deep gloom and sincerity, when two men rode into camp and dismounted, as if they had a right. The taller one—with brawn and brain a-plenty, by the look of him—announced that he was the sheriff, and would like to stop overnight.

Rowdy gave him welcome half-heartedly, and questioned him craftily. A sheriff is not a detective, and does not mind giving harmless information; so Rowdy learned that they had traced Conroy thus far, and believed that he was ahead of them and making for Canada. He had dodged them cleverly two or three times, but now they had reason to believe that he was not more than half-a-day's ride before them. They wanted to know if the outfit had seen any one that day, or sign of any one having passed that way.

Rowdy shook his head.

"I bet it was Harry Conroy driving that little bunch uh horses up the creek, just as we come over the ridge," spoke Pink eagerly.

Rowdy could have choked him. "*He* wouldn't be driving a lot of horses," he interposed quickly.

"Well, he might," argued Pink. "If *I* was making a quick get-away, and my horse was about played out—like his was apt t' be—I'd sure round up the first bunch I seen, and catch me a fresh one—if I was a horse-thief. I'll bet yuh——"

The sheriff had put down his cup of coffee. "Is there any place where a man could corral a bunch on the quiet?" he asked crisply. It was evident that Pink's theory had impressed him.

"Yes, there is. There's an old corral up at the ford—Drowning Ford, they call it—that *I'd* use, if it was *me*. It was an old line camp, and there's a cabin. It's down on the flat by the creek, and it's as God-forsaken a place as a man'd want t' hide in, or t' change mounts." Pink hitched up his chaps-belt and looked across at Rowdy. He was aching for a sight of Harry Conroy in handcuffs, and he was certain that Rowdy felt the same. "If it was me," he added speculatively, "and I thought I was far enough in the lead, I'd stop there till morning."

"How far is it from here?" demanded the sheriff, standing up.

Pink told him he guessed it was five miles. Whereupon the sheriff announced his intention of going up there at once, and Pink hinted rather strongly that he would like to go with them. The sheriff did not know Pink; he looked down at his slimness and at the yellow fringe of curls showing under his hat brim, at his pink cheeks and dimples and girlish hands, and threw back his head in a loud ha! ha!

Pink asked him politely, but rather

stiffly, what there was funny about it, The sheriff laughed louder and longer; then, being the sort of man who likes a joke now and then, even in the way of business, he solemnly deputized Pink, and patted him on the shoulder and told him gravely that they couldn't possibly do without him.

It looked for a minute as if Pink were going at him with his fists—but he didn't. He reflected that one must not offer violence to an officer of the law, and that, being made a deputy, he would have to go, anyway; so he gritted his teeth and buckled on his gun, and went along sulkily.

They rode silently, for the most part, and swiftly. Even in the dusk they could see where a band of horses had been driven at a gallop along the creek bank. When they neared the place it was dark. Pink pulled up and spoke for the first time since leaving the tent.

"We better tie up our horses here and walk," he said, quite unconscious of the fact that he was usurping the leadership, and thinking only of their quest.

But the sheriff was old at the business, and not too jealous of his position. He signed to his deputy proper, and they dismounted.

When they started on, Pink was ahead. The sheriff observed that Pink's gun still swung in its scabbard at his hip, and he grinned—but that was because he didn't know Pink. That the gun swung at his hip would have been quite enough for any one who did know him; it didn't take Pink all day to get into action.

Ten rods from the corral, which they could distinguish as a black blotch in the sparse willow growth, Pink turned and stopped them. "I know the layout here," he whispered. "I'll just sneak ahead and rubber around. You Rubes sound like the beginning of a stampede, in this brush."

The sheriff had never before been called a Rube—to his face, at least. The audacity took his breath; and when he opened his mouth for scathing speech, Pink was not there. He had slipped away like a slim, elusive shadow, and the sheriff did not even know the exact direction of his going. There was nothing for it but to wait.

In five minutes Pink appeared with a silent suddenness that startled them more than they would like to own.

"He's somewheres around," he announced, in a murmur that would not carry ten feet. "He's got a horse in the corral, and, from the sound, he's got him all saddled; and the gate's tied shut with a rope."

"How d'yuh know?" grunted the sheriff crossly.

"Felt of it, yuh chump. He's turned the bunch loose and kept up a fresh one, like I said he would. It's blame dark, but I could see the horse—a big white devil. It's him yuh hear makin' all that racket. If he gits away now——"

"Well, we didn't come for a chin-whackin' bee," snapped the sheriff. "I come out here t' *git* him."

Pink gritted his teeth again, and wished the sheriff was just a man, so he could lick him. He led them forward without a word, thinking that Rowdy wanted Harry Conroy captured.

The sheriff circled warily the corral, peered through the rails at the great white horse that ran here and there, whinnying occasionally for the band, and heard the creak of leather and the rattle of the bit. Pink was right; the horse was saddled, ready for immediate flight.

"Maybe he's in the cabin," he whispered, coming up where Pink stood listening tensely at all the little night sounds. Pink turned and crept silently to the right, keeping in the deepest shade, while the others followed willingly. They were beginning to see the great advantage of having Pink along, even if he had called them Rubes.

The cabin door yawned wide open, and creaked weirdly as the light wind moved it; the interior was black and silent—suspiciously silent, in the opinion of the sheriff. He waited for some time before venturing in, fearing an ambush. Then he caught the flicker of a shielded match, called out to Conroy

to surrender, and leveled his gun at the place.

There was no answer but the faint shuffle of stealthy feet on the board floor. The sheriff called another warning, cocked his gun—and came near shooting Pink, who walked composedly out of the door into the sheriff's astonished face. The sheriff had been sure that Pink was just behind him.

"What the hell——" began the sheriff explosively.

"He ain't here," said Pink simply. "I crawled in the window and hunted the place over."

The sheriff glared at him dumbly; he could not reconcile Pink's daredevil behavior with Pink's innocent, girlish appearance.

"I tell yuh the corral's what we want t' keep cases on," Pink added insistently. "He's sure somewheres around—I'd gamble on it. He saddled that horse t' git away on. That horse is sure the key t' this situation, old-timer. If you fellows 'll keep cases on the gate, I'll cover the rear."

He made his way quietly to the back of the corral, inwardly much amused at the tractability of the sheriff, who took his deputy obediently to watch the gate.

Pink squatted comfortably in the shade of a willow and wished he dared indulge in a cigarette, and wondered what scheme Harry was trying to play now.

Fifty feet away the big white horse still circled round and round, rattling his bridle impatiently and shaking the saddle in an occasional access of rage, and whinnying lonesomely out into the gloom.

So they waited and waited, and peered into the shadows, and listened to the trampling horse fretting for freedom and his mates.

The cook had just called breakfast when Pink dashed up to the tent, flung himself from his horse, and confronted Rowdy—a hollow-eyed, haggard Rowdy who had not slept all night, and whose eyes questioned anxiously.

"Well," Rowdy said, with what passed for composure, "did you get him?"

Pink leaned against his horse, with one hand reaching up and gripping tightly the horn of the saddle. His cheeks held not a trace of color, and his eyes were full of a great horror.

"They're bringin' him t' camp," he answered huskily. "We found a horse—a big white horse they call the Fern Outlaw"—the Silent One started and came closer, listening intently; evidently he knew the horse—"saddled in the corral, and the gate tied shut. We dubbed around awhile, but we didn't find—Harry. So we camped down by the corral and waited. We set there all night—and the horse faunching around inside something fierce. When—it come daybreak—I seen something—by the fence, inside. It was—Harry." Pink shivered and moistened his dry lips. "That Fern Outlaw—some uh the boys know—is a devil t' mount. He'd got Harry down—hell, Rowdy! it—it was sure—awful. He'd been there all night—and that horse stomping——"

"*Shut up!*" Rowdy turned all at once deathly sick. He had once seen a man who had been trampled by a maddened, man-killing horse. It had not been a pretty sight. He sat down weakly and covered his face with his shaking hands.

The others stood around horrified, muttering disjointed, shocked sentences.

Pink lifted his head from where it had fallen upon his arm. "One thing, Rowdy—I done. You can tell Jessie. I shot that horse."

Rowdy dropped his hands and stood up. Yes, he must tell Jessie.

"You'll have to take the herd on," he told Pink in his masterful way. "I'll catch you to-morrow some time. I've got to go back and tell Jessie. You know the trail I was going to take—straight across to Wild Horse Lake. From there you strike across to North Fork—and if I don't overtake you on the way, I'll hit camp some time in the night. It's all plain sailing."

CHAPTER XIII.

Miss Conroy was rather listlessly endeavoring to persuade the First Reader class that "catch" should not be pronounced "ketch," when she saw Rowdy ridè past the window. Intuition of something amiss sent her to the door before he reached it.

"Can't you give the kids a day off?" he began, without preface. "I've got such a lot to talk about—and I don't come very often." He thought that his tone was perfectly natural; but all the same she turned white. He rode on to a little tree and tied his horse—not that it was necessary to tie him, but to avoid questions.

Miss Conroy went in and dismissed the children, although it was only fifteen minutes after nine. They gathered up their lunch-pails and straggled out reluctantly, round-eyed and curious. Rowdy waited until the last one had gone before he went in. Miss Conroy sat in her chair on the platform, and she was still white; otherwise she seemed to have herself well in hand.

"It's about Harry," she asserted, rather sharply. "Have they—caught him?"

Rowdy stopped half-way down the aisle and stared. "How did you know they were—after him?"

"He came to me night before last, and—told me." She bit her lip, took firm hold on her honesty and her courage, and went on steadily. "He came because he—wanted money. I've wanted to see you since, to tell you that—I misjudged you. I know all about your—trouble, and I want you to know that I think you are—that you did quite right. You are to understand that I cannot honestly uphold—Harry. He is—not the kind of brother—I thought."

Rowdy went clanking forward till only the table stood between. "Did *he* tell you?" he demanded, in a curious, breathless fashion.

"No, he did not. He denied everything. It was Pink. He told me long ago—that evening, just after you—the last time I saw you. I told him he—lied. I tried not to believe it, but I did. Pink knew I would; he said so. The other night I asked Harry about—those things he did to you. He lied to me. I'd have forgiven him—but he *lied*. I—can't forgive that. I——"

"Hush!" Rowdy threw out a gloved hand quickly. He could not bear to let her go on like that.

She looked up at him, and all at once she was shaking. "There's something—*tell* me!"

"They didn't take him," he said slowly, weighing each word and looking down at her pityingly. "They never will. He—had an accident. A horse—fell with him—and—he was dead when they picked him up." It was as merciful a version as he could make it, but the words choked him, even then. "Girlie!" He went around and knelt, with his arms holding her close.

After a long while he spoke again, smoothing her hair absently, and never noticing that he had not taken off his gloves. His gray hat was pushed aslant as his head rested against hers.

"Perhaps, girlie, it's for the best. We couldn't have saved him from—the other; and that would have been worse, don't you think? We'll forget all but the good in him"—he could not help thinking that there would not be much to remember—"and I'll get a little home ready, and come back and get you before snow flies—and—you'll be kind of happy, won't you?

"Maybe you haven't heard—but Eagle Creek has made me foreman of his outfit that's going to Canada. It's a good position. I can make you comfortable, girlie—and happy. Anyway, I'll try, mighty hard. You'll be ready for me when I come—won't you, girlie?"

Miss Conroy raised her face, all tear-stained, but with the light of happiness fighting the sorrow in her eyes, nodded just enough to make the movement perceptible, and settled her head to a more comfortable nestling-place on his shoulder.

The Law of the Desert

By Bradley Gilman

Despite our boasted civilization, we are all liable at times to feel a desire to take the law into our own hands on the "eye for eye, tooth for tooth" principle, just as men still do in the wild places of the earth

"I WOULD like to look now at the murderers," I said casually.

Commandant Sir Hugh Kenyon frowned, reflected; and slowly, inscrutably, shook his head. But my friendship with him was deeply rooted, and I made show of insistence.

"What! No murderers?" I exclaimed, with a laugh. "No murderers in Kourbah, the greatest convict-prison of Egypt?" And I added facetiously: "No well-equipped prison should be without its murderers."

"H'm! And what is a murderer?" demanded the commandant, rousing, and glaring at me with assumed severity from underneath his gray, shaggy eyebrows.

"A human being who has killed another human being," I responded promptly, but without due reflection.

The commandant turned contemptuously to his pipe. "If that is your definition, you must include chemists and physicians; I commend the prison surgeon to you."

"Not so," I retorted. "I amend my definition. I mean by a murderer one who has intentionally killed a human being."

The commandant smiled grimly into the bowl of his brier and resumed: "If that is essential, look behind you. There stands a murderer of the first water."

I wheeled nervously and confronted —only the wiry figure and brown, impenetrable face of the Arab lieutenant, Abdul, who had just finished showing me the interior of the prison.

My countenance, as I turned again toward Sir Hugh, showed perplexity. He, for his part, nonchalantly dug out the ashes from his pipe-bowl.

"I think Abdul meets the required conditions," he remarked. "He has killed his man—several times; with clear intention, too, and with my warm approval, especially on one peculiar occasion."

I was on the point of again amending my definition, but I did not wish to lose the story which evidently lay behind the commandant's remarks. "We will drop definitions," I said firmly, "and we will hear about that episode."

My note-book, already well filled with prison notes, came quickly to my hand, and I awaited my friend's response. He leisurely filled and lighted his pipe, inveterate smoker that he was, looking at me through the smoke-puffs.

"The occasion when I was most warmly, and even most earnestly, in sympathy with Abdul's 'taking off' of a human being was last spring. I was standing over there by the doorway, looking on as some prisoners from Port Saíd were being stripped and searched. I had my hands in my pockets. I suddenly saw several of the convicts open their eyes and mouths in surprise, and stare straight at me—or over my shoulder. With an instinctive movement, born of experience, I took a quick, long side-step. At the same instant I heard a pistol-shot. Then, from behind me, a savage Circassian came headlong to the ground, exactly where

I had been standing; and the vicious knife in his hand stuck into the ground about four inches."

Glancing toward the impassive Arab lieutenant, who still stood erect and silent, my friend added: "Abdul did it; took the wretch with a ball at the base of the skull; and from twenty yards, too. Very clever is Abdul with a pistol, and just a little bit quicker in action than any man, white or black, that I have ever seen."

I nodded assent. I knew that Sir Hugh Kenyon's experience in Afghanistan—for which he was knighted—and in Upper Egypt, had been wide and varied.

He resumed his smoking; and the ugly scar on his cheek, which he got from a Ghazi spear in '85, up at Abu-Klea, was partly concealed by the big bowl of the brier. I made no excited comment on his narrow escape, uttered no prolonged exclamations. Women do, on occasions of such recitals, but men do not—they "look" their thought, and they understand one another.

I turned mechanically, and my eyes rested upon Abdul, son of Abou-Kader, Abdul the Bedawi, now a regular officer in the British Army of Occupation in Egypt. I knew that he spoke and understood English extremely well, for we had talked together for two hours while I was being shown through the huge fortresslike prison and over the deadly quarries, two miles outside, in the heart of the Mokattam Hills. He had heard and understood, but he showed no sign.

I made a few notes in my book, and then returned on my track. "That is one man only whom Abdul has killed," I remarked to the commandant. "How about the others?"

I was aware that I was a bit pertinacious, but I knew my ground. School-days at Eton together, and visits exchanged between Shropshire and Boston, had made us firm friends.

The commandant did not at once reply. Then he spoke to Abdul, in his habitual official tones:

"Lieutenant, please answer Achmed Pasha's letter about the chaps from Tayoum. Say that I await further information from the khedive. And, lieutenant, turn out those fellaheen from their cell in the lower northeast corner of sections. I thought the ground there sounded badly as I walked over it this morning."

The lithe, sinewy lieutenant in khaki saluted and went away. Then Sir Hugh responded to my inquiry.

"The other occasion which I had in mind," he said, "was when the big riot was on here in the prison in 1902. I had been called to London to make verbal reports at the home office on several matters. The department was hesitant about allowing me to leave Abdul in charge, but they yielded to my formal request. He had been with me several years. I knew my man, and he knew my ways. I said to him on leaving: 'I put the whole place in your hands, lieutenant.' I looked at him, and he looked at me. 'Order must be maintained—you understand what I mean—at any cost.'

"I had not been gone twenty-four hours—I was possibly just outside the harbor of Alexandria—when the insubordination which had been planned broke out. I have never been able to discover how news travels through a prison, and even through several prisons; but somehow the convicts keep in touch with everything important in prison circles, and even in state affairs. For instance, they knew when Aziz, the Wady Mallum conspirator, escaped from the court-room at Ismalia; and they had an opinion about the new commandant at the Cairo prison.

"Before the latter was fairly settled in his position, an Abyssinian here said to the prison surgeon: 'The fellows at Cairo will have a bad time—the new commandant believes in flogging.'

"Thus they knew that I was to be away. And although I took precautions—went off in the night to Cairo with a hand-bag, and had my traveling-trunk put into a rough deal-box—they knew next day that I was gone."

I ventured to suggest that the prisoners had a sign language.

"That is quite likely," assented Sir

Hugh. "And all of them learn to talk without moving their lips. They communicate, also, by taps on the cell wall, or on the wood-work or iron-work in the shops; anyhow, it is their business to outwit us, and it is our business to hold them.

"That afternoon the riot started. A number of them—fifty in all—refused to work, and broke ranks out there in front of the machine-shop. Of course you understand that such a riot could not have occurred in former times here in Egypt—even as late as the days of old Ismail Pasha. You saw the heavy rusty shackles and chains in the store-room. In those barbaric times, before Lord Romer laid his iron hand in its velvet glove on the khedive's shoulder, there was no attempt at working convicts. They were simply loaded with iron, and thrown into dungeons. Many died from disease, and even from starvation.

"Lord Romer and Boles Pasha have changed all that. Various kinds of work have been introduced, and, from the money received by the sale of brushes, harnesses, and other kinds of goods, the physical condition of the prisoners has been greatly improved. Nevertheless, we have to admit that the partial freedom thus given to them lays us more open to attempts at escape and riots.

"As I said, this riot of 1902 started with the men in the machine-shop. They simply struck work, without any explanation, and rushed out into the court-yard. We could not find, afterward, that they had any definite plan, but they had ugly leaders, and they probably trusted to their numbers and my absence. All the races in Egypt fear an Englishman; they expect from him justice, and they dread the punishment at his hands which is sure to follow. It is hard for them to believe that any official of the native races is above bribery or intimidation. That was where they made their mistake in Abdul.

"The prisoners rushed out of the shop in disorder, shouting and brandishing hammers and other tools which they had been using. The situation was ominous. A wholesale clearing out of the entire prison was possible, with death to officers, and no end of disgrace in train. The overseers of the shops were powerless, and the Sudanese guards were worthless. They are good shooting-machines, those inky fellows from the Sudan, if well led—Gordon found that out at Khartum. However, intelligent judgment and individual initiative are hardly their forte.

"So the whole pressure came on Abdul, my lieutenant. How would he stand up under it? I have known men —'white men,' too, as we say here in Egypt—under such conditions to lose the day by weak concessions. Selvey did that at Massurak; and his successor —for Romer displaced him—felt the bad effect of his weakness during years afterward. Indeed, I have even known a commandant of a prison to completely lose his head, apologize to rioters, and beg them to return to their shops. That was Barclay's mistake at Damietta; and he lost his head literally, physically, poor devil! for a Bulgarian slashed it off, even while Barclay was talking.

"No, there is only one way in such cases; only one thing to do. Abdul knew it, and did it. He was sitting in this guard-room when the men came out. He quickly dropped two revolvers into his coat pockets, took a light bamboo cane in his hand, and went out to them.

"They stopped for a moment when he came up. Being strong in numbers, they were not exactly afraid of him, but there was just one moment—one 'psychological moment,' as the scientific men nowadays like to put it—when their united riot-purpose became confused. That brief moment was Abdul's opportunity. He knew who the leaders were —a brutal, one-eyed Greek, a life-sentence man; and a crafty Arab, a fellow in a magenta suit, which, as you have been told, means that the wearer has attempted to escape."

Sir Hugh's pipe had quite gone out, but he was oblivious of the fact. He was stirred by his own narration. His huge stature, as he paced up and down the room, his broad shoulders, and his

stern face, made him a formidable-looking personage; and I could see that his very presence must be a controlling force over malefactors. I noticed the contrast between my stalwart friend's appearance and that of the lithe, silent Arab lieutenant; but each was effective indeed, in his own way.

"This was the situation, you see," continued the commandant, gesturing, with pipe in hand, as if he were a military engineer. "There stood fifty men in front of one man. But the fifty were confused—for that moment only—and the one, luckily, was cool and clear-headed.

"At once, as the cursing and threatening died down, Abdul spoke to the one-eyed Greek. 'Go back to your work,' was all he said, standing there, swinging his cane, as if on a peaceful promenade.

"The Greek uttered an oath of defiance, and stood his ground. Whereupon, with a quick movement—just how quick I know as well as if I had been there—Abdul whipped out a revolver and shot him through the mouth. Then he dropped the revolver back into his pocket, and played with his cane.

"Ah, it was a pretty shot! About ten yards was the distance. Abdul chose his bull's-eye wisely, too; the fellow made a grand object-lesson, kicking there on the ground, with his mouth bubbling red.

"However, the crowd did not break; they began to mutter and threaten. But before this noise mounted high enough to silence the low, quiet tone in which Abdul wished to be heard, he spoke again sharply, not loudly, and this time to the Arab.

" 'Mahmoud, go back to work. Lead these men back to the shop.' But the Arab, although he could not quite meet the lieutenant's eye, would not obey; he lowered his gaze, and began to mutter some complaint.

"Ah, there was a moment even more 'psychological' than the other—a moment of most seductive temptation, likely to be fatal to anybody less self-reliant and strong-willed than my lieutenant.

"Four men out of five in such a position as Abdul's would have hesitated, hoped for a peaceful solution, dallied—and would have lost the day. Not so Abdul, son of Abou-Kader. In the moment that the rioter lowered his treacherous eyes and opened his deceitful lips, Abdul shot him through the neck; and the fellow plunged headlong, spouting blood from his carotid.

"Just behind the Arab were three ugly fellows in a group. Abdul's keen eye had noted that they hung together a bit, as if by habit, and would probably act together. When the Arab fell, they instantly touched shoulders, and, with a yell, leaped toward the officer. But this time, after firing, Abdul had not returned the revolver to his pocket; and he gave them 'one,' 'two,' 'three'; and they dropped like pheasants, shot each through the heart."

Sir Hugh paused, drew a long breath, as if he had finished, wiped his forehead, and proceeded to light his pipe.

"Well, what next?" I asked. "How did it all come out?"

"Oh, that ended it," was his offhand reply. "The thing was settled with those last three shots. Five men lay on the ground—four dead, and one wallowing and groaning. The crowd couldn't stand that; because, you see, Abdul had his other pistol out, and they knew that he was good for nine more shots, each shot sure to kill. He would have done it, too, would Abdul, my Arab lieutenant. And, mark you——"

Here the commandant paused, match in hand, and addressed me directly:

"Abdul has a cool, quiet, almost smiling way of killing a man which gets hold of a spectator's nerves. When you are on the point of pulling trigger on a fellow-being, and you look your part, with face knotted and eyes blazing, the scene is normal. The several elements are harmonious. You seem to be performing a very natural act. But this Abdul is nothing short of devilish when he smiles—and shoots his man dead without breaking his smile.

"So, as I say, the crowd turned, like one man, and made for the shops, each fellow having a great fear that he

would be one of the nine whom the lieutenant could pick off as easily as he could pick bilberries off a branch.

"When you study Abdul more thoroughly during your stay with me, you may be able to analyze and catalogue his qualities better than I. I simply know what he will do under certain conditions. I never met a man whom I trusted more, or whom I would like less to have for an enemy."

That closed our talk for the time being, but my visit at the prison was prolonged several days; and I was much interested—from what the commandant had told me, and from my own observation—in analyzing the lieutenant's character.

Physically, he was a trifle above the average height, tawny of complexion, with shaven face, small, shapely hands and feet, a somewhat narrow forehead, keen black eyes, eyebrows extending nearly across the base of the nose; small mouth, thin lips, and firm chin. He was erect in carriage; a silent, dignified Arab of the highest Bedawi type.

There was a frank, fearless expression in his eyes, which, with his faint, shadowy smile, was his individual characteristic, outside his racial markings. That peculiar smile was not an expression of merely sensuous joy, nor did it arise from a perception of humor, for Abdul had little fun in his nature; but it was the smile of a human being who has in some way exhausted life, who has been "burnt out" by some great passion, and is content to take what comes to him—not expecting much.

Moreover, Abdul had a deep, religious stratum in his nature, and I think that the smile was rooted there; it grew out of his conscience and his Moslem fatalism. Sir Hugh told me that he wore that same smile when he walked into a cell, ten months before, and laid hands on an insane victim who was in defiant possession.

He also told me that the lieutenant never touched liquors—being a strict follower of the Koran—and when Kenyon one day rallied him about his abstinence from tobacco, Abdul replied, in a childlike way, that he did not care for tobacco, but he would learn to smoke if the commandant wished it.

"His religious side is, perhaps, his strongest element," said Sir Hugh, as we again sat in the guard-room, a few days later, and talked the matter over. "He says his prayers regularly wherever he is, without regard to possible spectator, unless some imperative duty prevents. He says them, too, in the postures which are prescribed in the Koran—one with the hands at the sides; one with thumbs at the lobes of the ears; one with hands on knees, and face inclined forward; one with nose to ground, and then with forehead to ground.

"By the by, do you know that this most unsuitable head-covering, a tarboosh or fez, as the Turks call it, which I wear sometimes, but most of the races in Egypt, Turkey, and Persia wear continuously—do you happen to know that its use is rooted in the Moslem religion?

"As you see, the tarboosh or fez has no visor, and allows the wearer to put nose and forehead to the ground when saying his prayers. A hat or cap would interfere with the prescribed prayer postures; and although we English know that the tarboosh, in a tropical climate, is hot for the head, and does not properly shade the eyes, yet when we tried, last year, to alter the custom, we ran straight against a wall of religious prejudice—or conviction, whichever you call it—and we had to give up our attempt.

"However, speaking of Abdul, in him you have a fine type of the desert Arab; he is intelligent—you see how well he speaks English—he despises the fellaheen; and, indeed, despises most races except his own and the English. He has the quality of leadership; and he is what I call a 'thoroughbred'—clean-limbed, clean-minded, high-spirited, absolutely incorruptible.

"When he feels out of sorts physically, he asks leave of absence, puts off his khaki, dons his native Bedawi garb—a brown-plaited turban, instead of the ordinary red tarboosh, and a white

burnoose—takes a little bread and some figs and a skin of water, and goes out, entirely alone, into the desert.

"He starts usually at night on such trips, and looks like a ghost, not because of his garb, but more because of the strange, remote, unearthly look which comes into his eyes. I think he has a conviction, partly hygienic and partly religious, that the solitude of the great sand-tract gives health to body and mind.

"Once, when I ventured to ask him why he went out thus, he replied, with the same frank, unaffected tone in which he would report about some prison duty, 'My God told me to go.'

"I have heard him use that same expression on other occasions also. Ah, he is a strange fellow, is Abdul, my Arab lieutenant. I sometimes wonder why I trust so implicitly a man whom I so little comprehend. Still, I do not wonder, either, and you will not, when you hear his peculiar history."

That history, thrown into brief narrative form, ran thus:

The Arab lieutenant, Abdul, had been known to the commandant about ten years. His father was a sheik of the Ababdeh tribe, and had large possessions in slaves, sheep, and camels. The family maintained all the traditions of their ancestors, and were people of power in all the country.

Abdul grew to the age of eighteen, with his three brothers and a sister—who was four years younger than himself—meeting but few exciting events in his wandering desert life.

There were the usual duties of tending the flocks and directing the slaves. Occasionally some camel or sheep strayed among the dry water-courses, and must be searched for; or a wandering Arab marauder—a criminal perhaps—raided the flocks, and fled, and must be tracked and punished. But the boy lived the characteristic, monotonous, nomadic life of his fathers, learning to know the paths of the desert; in the daytime by landmarks, like those which guide the mariner along the coast; and noting the starry heavens at night, like a clearly drawn chart.

Abdul's brothers were all much older than himself, and his sister became his playmate. With the leaves of the date-palm they made garlands and toy garments, pinning the leaves together with thorns from the acacia. With date-stones they played a game like the English game of "jack-stones."

The ribs of the date-palm they fashioned into spears, and with these played hunting jackals. In this play Ayeh, the sister, was very brave; but one evening, when a real jackal put his gray snout under the hem of her tent, the girl forgot her warlike sport and fled, screaming for Abdul to come and protect her.

Thus the two, brother and sister, were much together, and Abdul felt and acted as if his sister were under his special care.

Then an evil day came upon the family. An evil day, indeed, it was when the she-camel, who had strayed out into the Gebel Taher Hills, was brought in by a black vagrant—a flat-nosed Sudanese. Well did the miscreant know that if he brought in the strayed animal he would be given food, of which he was much in need, having eaten only a handful of carob-pods in three days.

The sheik, Abdul's father, thanked him with brief, dignified phrase, and ordered him to be fed with lentil soup and asses' milk and dates. Little did the stern, old, white-bearded Bedawi realize what a traitor he was harboring; but he knew twenty-four hours later.

The next evening, when the women had finished the milking, and the animals were hobbled for the night, Ayeh was not to be seen. All the gray and black tents were searched, and signals were made by blowing a ram's-horn, and by fires hoisted high on wet poles; but the child could not be found.

The mother was wildly anxious. Searching parties went cautiously out into the cloudy night, mindful of possible enemies, and returned unsuccessful. Where was the girl? Could she have fallen into some wadi, or old water-course? Had some skulking member of a south-country slave-party enticed her away to a life of despair?

Then it was that a camel-driver came to Abdul, who had persisted in the vain search longer than had the others, and said humbly:

"If I may speak, young master, I would say to you that the ugly Sudanese has not been seen these many hours. Can he have carried off the child? I remember hearing him speak one evening of an inland slave-mart near Wady-Halfa; and I liked not his manner as he spoke."

The humble fellow's words were like match to tinder, in Abdul's heart. The definite suggestion of sweet Ayeh in slavery flamed in his bosom, where hope had already burned itself out. He thanked the faithful camel-driver, and instantly renewed his wild search, taking nobody into his confidence.

Unseen, he slipped away from the caravan as it was striking tents for departure. He made his way to a point two miles outside the rough group of seamed hillocks, where the camp had been pitched; once outside this uneven, roughened, clay-bottomed land, he came to the illimitable sand-tract; and there he began a rapid circuit of the rough region, half running, with eyes fixed on the sand.

If the traitorous Sudanese had carried the child away, Abdul knew that somewhere in the periphery of the great circle he was now making footsteps of the two would be found.

In an hour he had solved his problem; he had taken the first step for a rescue—or vengeance.

He discovered the footprints in the sand; he recognized that of the Sudanese by the absence of the big toe on the left foot—a mutilation that had been noticed by several members of the caravan.

With strength renewed by this discovery, the young Bedawi sprang forward on the trail like an arrow from the bow. By the marks in the sand he knew that the black ruffian was dragging Ayeh forward at a reckless rate of speed; at times the child's footprints disappeared, and those of the Sudanese deepened and his stride was shorter; evidently he was carrying the girl.

The country here roughened again into water-courses and hillocks; and Abdul, as he strained his keen eyes over the horizon in front, suddenly caught sight of the two receding figures.

The Sudanese saw his pursuer at the same time. There was a distance of about five miles between them—a distance which looked in that clear desert air hardly more than two.

At once the black changed his course. He had been hurrying southward, undoubtedly toward the desert slave-mart of which he had spoken. Now he turned toward the Nile, and Cairo just beyond. His fear for his own life overpowered his greed for money.

As he altered his line of flight, Abdul veered to intercept him; but at that moment, having been hidden briefly behind the shoulder of a low cliff, the ruffian reappeared, running alone and more swiftly.

A cry of anxiety burst from the brother's lips at this discovery. He slackened speed, uncertain whether to pursue the man, or to hasten to the point where Ayeh, living or dead, was probably to be found.

This was the distraction which the crafty fugitive had expected; and he ran now straight for the Nile, which was visible in the distance; and Abdul saw him wave an arm in derision as he ran.

When the young Bedawi, wildly anxious, presently climbed the shelving cliff, his heart pounded his ribs, yet more from anxiety than physical fatigue. He paused, before glancing over the broken brow of the cliff, and called his sister's name. He hoped he might hear her answering voice; but no reply came; and when, with dread shaking his limbs like an ague, he stumbled across and down, his worst fears were realized.

There lay the lifeless body of his dear sister, horridly crushed by the huge stones which the cruel Sudanese had hurled upon her.

Abdul's brain reeled for an instant; then his soul-anguish found expression in an impassioned prayer to Great

Allah—a prayer for strength to avenge this cruel deed.

Next the young Arab began rapidly dragging up other huge boulders; and in a few minutes he had built a protective cairn above the lifeless body.

This done, he sprang up the slope to the highest point, and piled several boulders as a landmark. Then, with a long breath and a tigerish glitter in his dark eyes, he started on the mission of vengeance, to which he devoutly believed he was commissioned of Heaven.

If the trail had led out into the wild region of the Libyan Desert Abdul would have rejoiced. He had the feeling in his simple heart that Allah was nearer to his faithful ones in the somber silences of the desert than amid the noise and confusion of the town; and if he could come upon the Sudanese alone, with only the sun or the stars and Allah, the wise and just one, the guide of sun and stars, to look down upon them, Abdul was confident that his enemy would be given into his hands.

But, with regret and uneasiness, the lad soon saw that the guilty man was hurrying eastward toward Cairo, that great city of the Delta.

When Abdul drew near the Nile, its broad expanse offered an impassable obstacle to his progress. He had never before looked upon it, "the life giver," although he had often heard about it. Moreover, he had never learned to swim. What was he to do?

As if arranged by a higher power, the way opened to him. When he approached the river he discovered a boatman and his son about to ferry across a herd of brown, shaggy goats in a felucca.

The boatman knew Abdul's father, and only a few hurried words were needed by Abdul to explain matters. The boatman had seen a black man swimming across an hour before; and now, as he heard Abdul's awful narration, he raised his hands and cursed the swimmer; cursed his own eyes, that they had not detected the man's guilt; and separately cursed his two hands, which had not seized and killed the murderer.

That was Egyptian sympathy and volubility. But the man meant what he said; and he now promised, more calmly, to return on Abdul's track and carry the dead child's crushed body back to the caravan.

This being arranged even while the transit of the river was going on, Abdul, like some wild animal, leaped ashore and sped away toward Cairo, whose domes and minarets now could be seen gleaming in the sunlight; but below them and around lay many dark dens and obscure alleys, wherein a guilty man might hope to hide himself from vengeance, and might think to escape the inexorable law of the desert.

Abdul's first sight of the great city gave rise to many emotions—wonder, dread, repugnance. But the all-consuming fire in his heart tolerated no rival; and, as he walked cautiously along the middle of the streets, he examined every face amid the hurrying throng, hoping, hour after hour, to look upon the countenance of his enemy.

Under other conditions, with a free mind and untroubled heart, he would have felt a pleasurable interest in the strange life of the great city; but the pale face of his slain sister hovered before his eyes, and his muscles grew tense at times—for a moment only—as the features of some Sudanese or Nubian in the hurrying throng suggested the evil face of him whom he hoped ere long to lay dead at his feet.

There were many races represented in the crowds of Cairo's streets and alleys, and the costumes of all were different from his own. He often saw eyes directed curiously toward his brown-plaited head-dress—worn only by the nomadic Bedawin of the deep desert.

At times solemn trains of stately camels forced passage through the throng, and the great, brown, shaggy creatures seemed near and dear to him; for here they were aliens like himself, and appeared to look down, with dignified scorn, on the inferior beings about them.

At length hunger and physical weakness asserted themselves—he had not

eaten during the past thirty-six hours —and he sank, exhausted, in a corner of an alley opening out from the Mousky, where he could watch the faces of those who passed along that busy thoroughfare.

"I must have strength," he presently said to himself, with simplicity and earnestness. "Else, when I meet my adversary, I cannot kill him."

He took from his neck a small gold chain, went into a shop and sold it, then bought bread and wild carrots, and began to eat. Even the first mouthful revived him; and, eating, he started again upon his relentless quest. Soon he came out into the broad Shariah Mohammed Ali; and there his first serious experience in Cairo came to him.

He presently needed rest; and—for he was a true son of the desert, possessing an inherited distrust of all enclosed places, and an inborn instinct for the free air—he seated himself, not upon a door-step, or even upon the curb of the sidewalk, but, cross-legged, in the open roadway, eating his bread and throwing the green tops of the carrots upon the street beside him.

By this conduct Abdul came into collision with the British law in Egypt, whose administration he afterward aided so effectually.

British rule in the Delta has not only prohibited the usual crimes and misdemeanors—theft, assault, arson, murder, and the like—but dealing, as it has, with a semi-civilized people, unaccustomed to social restraints, it has wisely laid down minute rules about what are styled elsewhere in legal terms, "nuisances"—infractions of the lighter ordinances of decency and cleanliness and good order. These are called in Egypt "contraventions"; and two-thirds of the inmates of Egyptian prisons are held for infractions—through defiance or carelessness or ignorance—of this somewhat artificial and venial code.

Abdul, therefore, in strewing his waste carrot-ends upon the public highway, rendered himself liable to arrest under the law of "contraventions"; and barely had five minutes elapsed when one of the native policemen came up and laid a heavy, official hand upon him.

The free native of the trackless desert, son of an unconquered race, winced under the hand, and resented the tone of authority in which the policeman spoke.

The Egyptian police force is made up of men who have served creditably six years in the army, and they are fairly efficient. But the sum of five pounds buys exemption from military service; hence the standard of intelligence in the police ranks is not high; and nearly all the policemen, being fellaheen, of low social extraction, are despised by the race-proud Bedawin.

Abdul responded to the policeman's command with a contemptuous frown; but his whole being was so absorbed in his one insatiate thirst for vengeance that he obeyed the man's orders, like a person in a dream.

As the wise English rulers of Egypt do not quite trust the discretion of their policemen, these men are not allowed to use weapons or handcuffs, or any physical restraint except their hands. The handcuffing of an English or American tourist, for example, by an overzealous but ignorant fellah might lead to grave results, even to international complications.

Abdul walked quietly beside the policeman, with little concern for himself, watching—always watching for his hated enemy.

As the two passed along the Sharia Tahir, going toward the Ezbekiah Garden, Abdul, scanning every countenance within his range of vision, caught sight of the half-naked figure of a Sudanese water-carrier. The man's back was toward him, and he was equipped with the usual appliances of his calling—a goat-skin of water slung across his back, and jingling brass cups in his hands.

At sight of him Abdul felt his heart bound with eagerness; he partially identified the man by his gait. At that moment the Sudanese, as if influenced by some subtle spell cast over him by the Arab youth's blazing eyes, turned his head; and, as he turned, he recognized his implacable foeman.

Without a moment's pause the black fellow started to run; but his burden impeded him; he could make but poor speed. With one more look behind him, to assure himself that the act was necessary, he threw off the leathern band which held the water-skin on his back, tumbled it upon the street, and ran, with all possible speed, along the sidewalk toward the Ezbekiah.

He had spent his last piaster to purchase the water-skin and cups, but their loss seemed of little moment to him as he caught sight of the Arab youth's relentless eyes. Moreover, Abdul, as he saw his enemy attempt to run, with a quick, powerful upward thrust threw off the unsuspecting policeman's grasp, and started in swift pursuit.

Without hesitation, without any regard to his personal appearance, with thought only of laying his retributive hand on that child-slayer before him, the young Bedawi tore off his burnoose and cast it away; and thus, in a costume almost as scanty as that of the Sudanese, he sped on.

There was now no doubt as to the result of the race. The black miscreant was athletic, but not fleet; and the hate which burned in every fiber of Abdul's frame made his muscles like steel. With the speed of an antelope he closed up the intervening space between himself and his now terrified victim.

The Sudanese knew that he was running for his life, and mortal terror laid hold of his brutal heart. Now he reached the Ezbekiah; and at this point he followed a misleading instinct.

If he had plunged into the crowd, and sought the narrow lanes and alleys of the city, he might have eluded his pursuer; but, instead, he rushed through the iron grating of the garden, and, howling with fear, ran at his best speed along the smooth, central roadway.

On either hand were the tiny tables of sherbet venders; and startled customers paused, with uplifted glasses, as the fugitive sped past. Along the roadway banana-palms nodded indolently in the warm sunlight; overhead towered the branches of massive eucalyptus trees; high up in the blue sky floated black-winged vultures; and the Sudanese could hear their plaintive yet pitiless cry as he ran.

The Egyptian musicians, playing a gay waltz in the Moorish pavilion, lost their places on their scores as their eyes strayed in the direction of pursuer and pursued; the running was eager, breathless, and implied deep emotions; terror and hate were painted respectively on the faces of the two men.

Wildly, swiftly, runs the Sudanese, but his swiftness avails little against the winged feet of his silent, relentless pursuer.

Closer and closer draws Abdul, and a red mist dances before his eyes. He cares nothing for the shrill summoning whistle of the policeman, far behind; nor does he heed the shouts of the gathering crowd. His one absorbing purpose is to compass the death of the monster before him. The gentler elements of his nature are submerged. Like a human tiger he scorns the ground in long, nervous leaps, and draws nearer and nearer to his straining, panting victim.

Another bound, and his small, steel-like hand shoots out and clutches the Sudanese by his sweat-dripping shoulder, and whirls him to the ground.

Then, unarmed, he leaps upon the murderer. But the desperate man, out of the dust, meets him with a knife thrust. The blow reaches around the youth's back and glances from a rib, inflicting only a slight flesh-wound—there had not been distance enough for an effective thrust.

The next instant it is Abdul who holds the knife. His strength is as the strength of ten men. With pitiless eye, with unerring aim, and with the name of his murdered sister on his lips, he strikes—once, twice, thrice, at the thick, glistening neck, and red fountains burst from the black, velvety skin.

The writhing form becomes suddenly quiet—quiet in stupor, in death. Ayeh is avenged; the law of the desert has been enforced.

Outside the Ezbekiah, with its dead victim and frenzied avenger, only a few

yards away from that scene of bloodshed, the raucous voices of donkey-boys clamor for bakshish; and across the street, upon the terraces of the Continental, daintily gowned women sip tea and compare their latest purchases of Oriental silks and laces; while the men near them idly gather in groups, smoke cigarettes, and carelessly comment on the recent races at the Ghezireh Palace.

This narrative I have transcribed from my notes, taken as the commandant talked. I remember that at this point he was interrupted. It was none other than Abdul himself who entered, saluted, and said: "The transfer squad from Port Said has come with those prisoners; will you look them over before they are assigned?"

Sir Hugh nodded an affirmative, and the lieutenant saluted and went away.

"Your story breaks off at a most interesting point," I remarked regretfully. "There seems a long distance between that savage young Arab in the Ezbekiah and this quiet, intelligent lieutenant who has just come and gone. I wish you would fill in the interim for me."

The commandant arose, putting on his pith-helmet, and said: "The rest of his story is less exciting, though no less interesting. I got hold of him, learned his story, talked with him in Arabic—which won his heart—and made myself surety for him. As to his transformation, you will understand that when you recall how intelligent and earnest he is; and I gave him considerable time and attention through a year or two. The main point, however, is this."

Here Sir Hugh grew grave, and his manner impressed me. "We started with some talk about the definition of a 'murderer.' You have now some facts to build on, and I shall be glad to hear, later, how you reason out your conclusion. Here is a man who has killed several human beings since he was put into a position of authority at this prison. And before that, as a private individual, he killed that Sudanese. Now you think it all over. Is he a murderer? Is he guilty, according to law—especially according to that law, the only one he knew, the *lex talionis*, the unwritten law of the desert, and—to him—the law of God?"

The commandant, with frowning brow, yet with a kindly light in his gray eyes, walked rapidly from the guard-room.

A SEA IDYLL

THE editor sat in his easy chair, his expression alert and keen. He was trying to think out something new to put in his magazine; when into the room, with a heavy glide, a wearisome figure glid, with hair that hung in a tangled maze, and blear eyes heavy of lid. "I've a poem here," croaked the solemn one, in a cracked voice out of the gloam. The editor sadly wiped his brow and stifled a heavy groan. But the poet remorselessly read his lines, and told how a deep-sea whale fell in love with a mermaid with ginger hair and a beautiful codfish tail. He explained how they wandered hand in fin down the starfish-bespangled lane; where the sea-horse browsed on the tender weeds and the dogfish rattled his chain. He thickly related relentlessly how the shrimp chased the flies in the pool, and the sea-urchins toddling over the rocks roughly romped on their way to school.

Then the editor pulled himself to with a jerk and rushed on that poet feller, and struck him dead with his roll of verse and buried him in the cellar. And a heap of coal marks the resting-place of this rash and impetuous poet. You won't catch *me* calling with verses to read to an editor if I know it.

The Ringmaster's Double Rôle

By Philip C. Stanton

Author of "Millionaire Marsden's Eleven," "Winslow, Navy Halfback," Etc.

Herein is the account of the extraordinary adventure which befell a member of an American circus troupe traveling abroad. Mr. Stanton, the author, was connected for several years with one of the great amusement enterprises, during which time he collected material for this and other stories of circus life which we shall publish in "The Popular Magazine"

(*A Complete Story*)

HERE is Wentworth?" called out the equestrian director angrily, as he entered the circus greenroom from the arena where the performance was being witnessed by a packed house.

It was La Shelle & Santley's "Greatest Show on the Globe," filling a long engagement in London. The place of exhibition was in a large structure on the Kensington Road.

"Wentworth! Has anybody seen Wentworth?" continued the equestrian director—a large, swarthy man, in a dress-suit and opera-hat. He had just come from the arena, where he had been supervising the performance from his stand, which was fitted with electric bell, to stop and start the different acts. The equestrian director is to the circus what the stage-manager is to the theater.

Frowningly Director Melrose looked over the groups of circus people standing about waiting for their "entrances."

"I saw Wentworth, awhile ago, talking to Miss Annesley," an acrobat in pink fleshings declared.

As he spoke a slim, blue-eyed, light-haired, handsome chap, of about twenty-five years of age, came down the stairway leading from the dressing-rooms above. He was attired in red coat, hunting-boots, and peaked, black cap—a ringmaster's costume.

"I wish you would stay where I could get a chance to give you instructions, Wentworth," fumed the director, catching sight of him. "I won't stand for any more tardiness in the ring. If I have any more of this 'silly Billy' business, I'll get another ringmaster. If you've got so much to tell Miss Annesley, do it out of business hours. Display No. 7 next. All out!" he shouted, returning to the arena.

With a crash and bang, the military band started a lively tune; the performers poured out of the arena by one door, while new ones entered by another.

All knew of the equestrian director's jealousy on account of the friendliness of Nellie Annesley, equestrienne, known as the "Sylph of the Sawdust," for Ringmaster Wentworth; and Melrose's announcement was resented by those who heard it as being only one of many petty persecutions.

"Never mind, Billy, he won't last," a handsome woman in riding-costume called out, and then added in a lower tone: "Nell hates him as much as you do."

Wentworth did not reply, but, turning on his heel, made his way to the dressing-room stairway. Just as he had started up it a pretty girl in the garb of an equestrienne descended. She was

a brunette with dark, lustrous eyes and red lips, and was possessed of a large amount of vivacity.

She was petite, but finely formed.

"Were you looking for me?" she asked sweetly.

"You know that without my telling you, Nellie," was Wentworth's low reply.

The girl tossed her head and started to pass him.

"Oh, I guess I can take care of myself," she declared.

"I'm not late, am I?" she inquired, a trifle anxiously.

"Not this time, Nell," was the ringmaster's laughing reply.

He did not tell her how the equestrian director's displeasure had fallen on him on account of her lateness at the afternoon performance. In reality, it was her own fault, for, like all artists in whatever line, the Sylph was whimsical.

Now the signal-bell tinkled, and Nellie Annesley and Wentworth followed the groom leading the beautiful white horse, Beauty Bright, into the place, dazzling with lights and resounding with the handclappings of the big audience.

The girl was immensely popular with all audiences, for, aside from her grace and beauty, her act was a daring one.

As the equestrienne and ringmaster reached the center ring and the handclapping grew more pronounced, the Sylph bowed low, turned her fearless, laughing face to the admiring ones on every side, and threw kisses. A moment later she had her left hand on Wentworth's shoulder, her little left foot in his right hand. A spring, a deft twirl, and she was standing on the broad back of the white horse. At Wentworth's whispered injunction: "Don't put on any extra frills, and be careful, little girl," she simply laughed. Then he had cracked his long whip in the ring, and the act was begun.

It was only a repetition of the former triumphs which had been achieved by the pretty little girl who gracefully pirouetted and went through her evolutions on the horse's back with the same ease she would have done on terra firma.

Perhaps some of the spectators noticed how extremely attentive this ringmaster was to the equestrienne—how with anxious face he watched her every move and appeared relieved when she had finished.

"The act's a hit all right. Seems to go better all the time. I'll be asking for a raise of salary next!" the girl cried joyously at the end.

"You're worth it, Nell," the ringmaster declared enthusiastically, as they marched out of the arena together. "But do you know, Nellie, I'd rather have you sitting with your hands folded in your lap, on one-fourth what you're getting—and that's my salary?"

She was silent until they had reached the dressing-room stairway.

"Good night, Billy," she said quietly. "Don't be reckless in the 'Roman.'"

For two other equestrian acts Wentworth acted as ringmaster, before going to his dressing-room and making a change. In addition to his other duties, he drove a chariot in the hippodrome part of the performance, four horses abreast. It is a daring performance, requiring a skilful handler of horses and a man with excellent nerve.

Whatever may be supposed by the public, it is a fact that circus races are run on their merits, there being an unflagging rivalry between the riders or drivers. On account of the necessarily constricted space of the circus, accidents are likely to happen.

Circus performers, except those of the highest class, are required to "double up" in various acts, according to their abilities, and Melrose's brother Sam, who was a leaper in the first part, was the other driver in the Roman act.

Generally, the ringmaster's keen eye and superb handling of his four horses gained him the blue flag of victory. Particularly since the equestrienne's decided preference for the ringmaster, Sam Melrose had shown a nasty disposition in the race, and once or twice it had seemed to Wentworth that Melrose had attempted to put him against the ringside or partition.

When Wentworth came down-stairs from the dressing-room, having exchanged his ringmaster costume for the classic one of a Roman charioteer, he found the Sylph in street dress, standing chatting with the woman costumer of the show—her regular chaperon.

Presently she edged over to Wentworth and said, with an assumption of carelessness, but deep meaning:

"Look out for yourself to-night, Billy. Melrose is drinking again, I hear, and you know what a devil the liquor makes of him. Take my tip."

"I guess I can take care of myself, Nell, as you remarked not long ago," was Wentworth's quiet reply. "Thank you, just the same."

"You're so careful about me, I've got to come back at you," she retorted, laughing.

Just then the bell sounded. Wentworth stepped into the gilded chariot, behind the four blooded horses, and they rumbled out into the arena.

One malignant glance he caught from Melrose's bloodshot eyes as they moved up to the stand together.

More silent than they had been at any other feature of the show, the spectators sat with rigid faces as the eight thoroughbred horses, spurred on by the spirit of contest as well as by their drivers, sprang into their stride.

Wentworth had one horse, a fiery animal at best, of whom at times he had a genuine dread. This horse, which bore the appropriate name of Nero, had a hard mouth, and sometimes got the bit in his teeth. Then he and the others would make a regular runaway race of it, and all Wentworth could do was to try to guide them around the turns. The big black was the near horse of the team, the one on the outside left.

Wentworth had noted at the outset that the black seemed to be animated by more than usual of the spirit of his namesake.

"Hold hard there, Nero," he hissed out coaxingly, between set teeth, as they drew up to the starter's stand. "Steady, Nero; steady there, now."

The horse was an intelligent beast, and acted as pacemaker for the others.

As Melrose swung around into position in the lead, Nero sprang forward with so unexpected and sudden a leap that he almost dragged Wentworth over the front of the chariot, and pulled the other three horses nearly out of the harness. In a second they were careering around the arena at full speed. Nero had the bit in his teeth.

Such a pace they never had set before. Spectators in the boxes nearest the arena had risen in alarm and were backing away. The ribbon ends of the fillet, which Melrose wore around his brow as charioteer, were sticking straight out behind, and his white toga was flapping in the wind like a banner in a stiff breeze.

In vain Wentworth tugged at the reins, bracing himself against the chariot dashboard in the effort to restrain the mad speed of his runaway steeds. All of the equine quartet were uncontrollable. Whizzing past the entrance doors, he saw that they were half-open, and caught a glimpse of the scared, big-eyed countenances of the performers, attracted by the race, and regardless of all rules.

Once more around they thundered, Melrose maintaining his lead, the tanbark from the flying hoofs and careening wheels streaming into Wentworth's face, almost blinding him.

He held on to the reins and tugged at them hopelessly. Already some of the spectators had begun to cry out in alarm. The arena boxes on both sides had been vacated. The first time around Melrose's chariot had narrowly escaped hurling itself against the thin board partition separating the track from the boxes.

There was no diminution of the speed. Moreover, Wentworth saw that Melrose, instead of making an attempt to restrain his four horses, was driving them with loose reins, and lashing them with the slack, looking back over his shoulder with a triumphant leer.

In some inexplicable manner the two chariots miraculously avoided hitting the raised timbers of the two end rings as they cut the corners around the turns. So great was the momentum that Went-

worth felt his chariot spin around on one wheel, and had to shift his feet in the bottom to stand upright.

He felt himself wondering how long it could last. They were required to go around three times. They had nearly completed the second circuit.

Wentworth's head was in a whirl. His eyes were wide open, but all he could see was a swirl of lights, the same solid white wall of faces on every side, and the flying magnet in front drawing him and his horses to destruction.

Then he was vaguely conscious that he had whirled by the greenroom doors, wide open now. A man with a blurred face, whose features might have been those of the equestrian director, if they had not been so blurred, seemed to be standing close, with arms lifted warningly, as they flashed by.

They were on the third circuit now, and the speed had not dimnished. Melrose was still ahead, wildly lashing his horses.

By all the rules and rights of the circus race, being in the lead, Melrose, on turning the corners around the ends of the elliptic course, should have gone wide, allowing his opponent to strive to better his position by slipping into the vacant space between the inner arc of the ring and the chariot. That was always the rule, as it permitted more of a contest down the stretches. But a driver maddened with liquor and animated by hope of revenge cares not for precedents.

As they rumbled down the first stretch, after passing the indistinct figure of the equestrian director, Wentworth experienced a slight feeling of relief. It would soon be over, now. Probably Melrose would win; but one victory would mean nothing. At the first turn, when the other chariot would go wide, he could cut in, and still might win.

With this idea in mind, exerting all his strength and pulling hard on the rein, he yelled with fierce strength: "Left, yoho; left, Nero!" as he neared the turn.

The horse obeyed, swerving sharply as they reached it. A swift, glowering, triumphant look Melrose shot back.

Involuntarily a warning cry came to Wentworth's lips. Rearing back on his heels, dragging at the reins with such effort that his hands were split open, he made a last attempt to save himself and his horses, and at the same time to prevent collision with the other chariot.

Too late he learned that his rival would not turn out, but was hugging the inner rim of the ring closely. Instead of turning out, the front chariot was tilted on one wheel, the maneuver completely cutting off the chariot behind.

Wentworth still might have run the chance of pulling to the right and taking off the wheel of Melrose's chariot on that side. Instead, he pulled still more sharply to the left.

With a crash which resounded through the huge structure, causing the spectators to rise to their feet, the left wheel struck the rim of the ring and was smashed.

Wentworth's horses went down in a struggling heap. He himself was conscious for a moment of flying through the air with terrific velocity, of descending later, and being hurled violently against the ground, his ears filled with a deep, roaring sound.

When he recovered consciousness he was lying on the floor, back of the big doors, on a stretcher, while some man, whom he recognized later as being the circus physician, was feeling him all over. Near at hand was the body of a chariot—both wheels missing—and a jumbled heap of harness. Painted, kindly faces of the circus people peered at him sympathetically. Bending over him, her eyes full of tears, he spied the face of Nellie Annesley. He gazed at her wonderingly, and murmured:

"Why—why, I thought you had gone home. What's going on here? Oh, yes! I remember."

"Oh! Billy, you are not dead, then?" sobbed the girl. "I was afraid——" her sentence was lost in a flood of tears.

"I'm all right, Nell," began Went-

worth. "Don't you worry about me." He strove to rise, but sank back dizzily.

"You are worth a hundred dead men, Wentworth," said the surgeon cheerfully. "Not a bone broken, Miss Annesley. Just a little shaken up, that's all. He'll be all right presently."

The Sylph came and knelt down by Wentworth's side, her face close to his.

"Thank God you were not killed, sweetheart!" she whispered. "I thought you would be, and I prayed for you."

The equestrian director had come up in time to hear the girl's speech, and his face was furious.

"You will please not butt in, Miss Annesley," he said savagely. "I guess I know when a man turns a trick to gain sympathy, but it don't go with me," he declared.

The girl gazed at him blankly for a moment. The next her eyes were blazing, and she stamped her foot as she exclaimed:

"You—you cur! And this about a better man than yourself!"

She swept out of his presence.

Wentworth felt it due to himself to stagger to his feet.

"If you've got anything to say, Melrose, by the Lord you say it to me!" he broke out fiercely.

"I'll say it and quick, too," retorted the equestrian director. "I give you your two weeks' notice to quit. What the devil do you mean by trying to queer the show as you've been doing? You've gone the limit, I can tell you. You're lucky if La Shelle don't make you pay for the loss of the best ring animal in the show, due to your carelessness. That Nero was a better performer than you ever were."

It gave Wentworth a shock to know that the horse was dead, for the brute had his good points.

Melrose strode away, and Wentworth sought his lodgings soon afterward. The memory of what Nellie had said thrilled him still.

La Shelle, for whom Wentworth had ridden as a jockey several years, was especially friendly to the young ringmaster. But La Shelle was in the United States, and it was not known when he would return. In his absence, Melrose had full power of dismissal.

To tell the truth, Wentworth had saved little money, and he was at a loss to know what else to do save return to the States. Of course he could get a position with one of the shows there, but he did not wish to leave Nellie Annesley.

Much to Wentworth's chagrin, he discovered that he was not to be allowed to act as ringmaster next day.

"I don't propose to give you a chance to break the neck of the best human performer in the show, after the way you tore up things last night," said Melrose sneeringly. "And that goes, too," he added.

Wentworth was preparing to make a hot retort, when the words were taken out of his mouth by the Sylph, who had come up just in time to hear Melrose's declaration.

"That goes, does it, Mr. Melrose?" she snapped out, with rising voice, her cheeks flushed, her big, black eyes sparkling.

"Well, let me tell you, if that goes, I don't go. I guess I'm of enough importance around here to say who will act as my ringmaster—as long as he's with the show, anyway. I mean what I say. Either Mr. Wentworth goes into the ring with me, or I don't go."

Melrose stormed for awhile and threatened, finally ending with allowing Wentworth to accompany the girl as usual.

"It'll only be for two weeks, anyway," he said.

"I thought you would come down off your high horse," declared the girl, with spirit. "My opinion of you hasn't changed a jot from what I expressed it last night," she declared defiantly.

"And that opinion is mine, made a hundred per cent. stronger," broke in Wentworth contemptuously.

Melrose made a rush at the ringmaster, who was waiting for him with clenched fists and flashing eyes. A personal encounter was averted only by some of the men of the show rushing between them.

Wentworth was not allowed to do the "Roman" that night. Another horse was substituted for Nero; another driver for the team. The act was a tame affair compared with what it was usually.

Wentworth took the first opportunity to say to Nellie:

"When you called me sweetheart that time, did you really mean it, little girl?"

"If I called you that, it must have been due to—to the excitement of the occasion," she stated, laughing merrily. "Don't be foolish, before all these people, for Heaven's sake!"

They were going into the ring at the time. Wentworth referred to it no more.

It was just after this that the ringmaster fell in with a fellow American in a "pub" near the place of exhibition. The public house was run by a man who formerly had been in the show business and was known to many of the circus people.

Con O'Meara, the "Irish Samson," as he had been known when he traveled as a circus "strong man," was partial to Americans. A jovial, big-hearted chap, he had taken an especial liking to Wentworth.

"Cheer up, me bye," he said, when he had come across the ringmaster sitting alone in the back room over a mug of "bitter."

"Kape a stiff upper lip, old son, and I'll maybe be afther puttin' yez in the way of somethin' till La Shelle comes back from over the wather," he said mysteriously.

Finally he confided that an American showman, who patronized the place, wished some one to assist him in some special work.

Just as he had finished speaking, the showman in question entered. He was smooth-faced, with sharp eyes which seemed to take in everything at once. His appearance was somewhat clerical, an effect heightened by the black clothes he wore. Possibly he was forty-five years of age.

As the stranger started to take a seat, the proprietor beckoned to him.

"I want to introduce yez to Mr. Wentworth, of the big show, Mr.—Mr.—I forgit yer name," he stammered.

The clerical-looking man had come over with outstretched hand and a smile on his face.

"I'm glad to meet you, Mr. Wentworth," he said heartily. "In the 'perfesh,' and an American, are you? I have the honor to fill both niches in the hall of fame myself. My card."

The ringmaster took it and read on the pasteboard:

SILAS P. BARKER,
Museum Collector.
Purveyor to the Trade.
HEADQUARTERS,
NEW YORK CITY, U. S. A.

"I ain't right in the circus business now, as you see," he said blandly. "I've run through the list in my time. Legit., variety, circus, dime museum, and all. My specialty at present is the collecting of rare and interesting objects for museums. It's an enticing business, once you get mixed up in it, and highly profitable at times, I may say.

"My friend, here"—he nodded to O'Meara—"tells me you're going to close with the show?" he interrogated.

Wentworth nodded.

"Your loss, but my gain," declared Barker speciously. "You're just the man I've been looking for to aid me in the acquisition of an object which will make a fortune for both of us. It will require considerable daring—quite a bit, Mr. Wentworth—but I guess you're something of a brave man. I flatter myself I am."

For an hour or more Barker talked of the profits to be made from his business, giving details of ventures wherein he had cleared thousands of dollars.

"Now, the scheme I have in mind requires a little daring—a bit of nerve, I may say—but I can see you don't lack

that, Mr. Wentworth," he said oilily. "You go in it with me and your share of the venture will be two hundred pounds — one thousand dollars — no more, no less. To-morrow night you meet me here, and we'll sign papers— that is, by word of mouth, I mean."

After the performance the following evening Wentworth hastened to the Crown and Mace, O'Meara's place, all eagerness to learn the nature of the venture which would net him a cool thousand dollars. With that he could travel with the show and see Nellie as often as he chose, until La Shelle's return. He was confident all would be adjusted properly then.

Barker was not in the "pub." A large man was standing with his back to the door in close confab with O'Meara. They glanced up quickly at the ringmaster's appearance, and Wentworth got a glimpse of his face. The unknown whispered something. O'Meara came over.

"Looking for Barker?" he asked. "He'll be along presently. Are yez goin' now?" he called out to the big fellow, striding out the back way. "Well, I suppose yez'll be droppin' in again soon?"

O'Meara nodded to his friend; then, turning to Wentworth, explained lightly:

"He's a chap who's about to start some eatin' places somewhere along the Strand. Quick lunch places, I believe he calls 'em. I'm hopin' he'll do well. A good felly. Run a perfessional boardin'-house in Noo York. Ever see him afore?" he asked, somewhat anxiously.

Wentworth replied in the negative. The talk drifted into another channel. Soon after Barker came in. Wentworth followed him into a partioned-off place, and they sat down at opposite sides of the narrow table.

Barker lost no time in coming to the point.

"Let's get down to business, Mr. Wentworth," he said. "What I want you to do is to help me to gain possession of the Traitor's Gate. You've heard of the Traitor's Gate, haven't you? It's the entrance through which all the famous prisoners were taken to the Tower of London. You've seen or read of that?"

Wentworth nodded.

"Ever been there?"

The ringmaster said he had not, but he remembered some of its history.

"In New York there is an association called the Hibernian Historical Research Society," said Barker. "There's a museum in connection with the society. One of the rich old duffers conceived the idea of adding to it the famous Traitor's Gate. The thought of securing this object, so closely identified with the history of England's tyranny, tickled every member of the society to the core. Finally the more practical set to work to put it into execution. The committee sent for me. We had a conference, and it ended with their offering me five thousand dollars and expenses if I would do the trick. There you are!" Barker leaned back triumphantly to note the effect of his words on the ringmaster.

"Of that five thousand dollars you will get one thousand," he added slowly.

"But it would be burglary," said Wentworth bluntly.

"Nonsense, sheer nonsense! Why, if we should be discovered in the act, which is exceedingly unlikely, it would be regarded as an international joke of huge proportions. We would go down to fame as the greatest practical jokers in the world. Once out of the country, they'd never get their gate back. A little adventure: I take all the risks; you simply do what I tell you, and one thousand dollars is yours. I need a helper. Fate throws you in my way."

Barker was undoubtedly a plausible talker. Tempted by the thousand-dollar prize, Wentworth accepted the offer.

Barker hit the table with his clenched hand.

"You're one after my own heart," he said. "I'm a man of action. Stop a moment. I believe in binding a bargain."

He took out a wallet, abstracted a

twenty-pound note and handed it to Wentworth.

It was arranged that three nights later the ringmaster was to call on Barker at his lodgings, in the West End, to arrange the details.

Wentworth found his man at home when he called.

"Let's get right down to business and have everything understood," was the collector's greeting. "This is Thursday night. Monday night we secure the gate—and you your thousand."

Saturday night would end Wentworth's engagement with the circus. The scheme was threshed out fully. It is not necessary to go into details, but Barker described to his companion the location of the Tower, for one thing.

"Only about half-a-mile below London Bridge, as you can see," he pointed out in a guide-book, "directly on the Thames. The gate itself is right on the river, double gateway, on a level with the Thames, admitting persons to —well, of course that's immaterial."

Wentworth caught a curious inflection in his voice at the time. Later he understood.

Until after midnight the two sat together discussing the manner of carrying out their plans.

"You understand where to meet me Monday night?" queried Barker.

"I've got it all down pat."

As Wentworth made his way up the deserted street he felt a thrill of apprehension on seeing a man standing in a doorway. For a minute their eyes met. Although the other had his hat pulled down, Wentworth thought he recognized the face of the American whom he had seen in O'Meara's place.

His last night with the circus passed without incident, except that Nellie made him promise to visit her the next day, Sunday. "I want you to tell me what you are going to do," she said.

The ringmaster paid the promised visit.

"Can I trust you with a secret, Nell?" he asked, ending with his unbosoming himself to her regarding the project on hand.

To his surprise, the Sylph did not attempt to dissuade him from the venture. She took the matter quite coolly, to his mind. She even asked him pertinent questions regarding the affair.

"If it proves successful, I'll have enough for you and me to start in housekeeping with," he told her, whereat she only laughed and admonished him to take care of himself.

Away from the excitement of the circus, time passed slowly enough for Wentworth on Monday. In the afternoon he dropped into O'Meara's place. As luck would have it, the big American was there, chatting with the proprietor. He disappeared soon.

Later in the evening Wentworth took a bus to Ludgate Circus, where he got another for London Bridge. On the ride he noticed that it was becoming foggy. Directly he realized that the city was being enveloped in a yellow mist. He had some difficulty in finding the landing-place which Barker had specified, but at last he reached there, and waited, cold, damp, and dispirited, for the collector. Above him, the lights on London Bridge shone murkily; in front, the black water swirled by through the yellow fog.

Wentworth did not know whether he was early or late, for he had brought no timepiece, until the muffled tones of Big Ben boomed out ten, the hour for the meeting. He waited, shivering and lonely. No human being was in sight.

For fully a half-hour longer the ringmaster waited. When on the point of leaving disgustedly, suddenly his ears caught the pulsating strokes of a launch; somewhere through the murkiness he heard a subdued hail, to which he replied. Presently a lantern-light showed through the fog, and a gasoline-launch glided up to the landing. The form of Barker, completely encased in oilskins, dripping wet, was in the bow.

"Hold her nose in, and get aboard," he commanded. "I lost my bearing in the fog. The chap with me ain't used to running a launch, anyway. This fog is all right, though," he said gruffly.

In the bow the ringmaster saw what seemed to be the figure of a boy. Under a slouch hat Wentworth caught a glimpse of a youthful face.

As close to the middle of the stream as he could guess, with the impenetrable fog shutting them in all around, Barker guided the little craft. The ringmaster could not help but admire the coolness and nerve of the man who was embarking on such a hazardous mission—for so he himself considered it—with such tranquillity. They headed down-stream, where the Tower lay.

Owing to the fact that the fog was so thick, the river craft were moored to the landings, which was better for them, as Barker explained. The slight figure in the stern remained crouched down, silent, immovable. Only once did it rise, and that was when, without a warning, the solid, menacing prow of some large vessel, moored in the stream, loomed up before them.

It seemed as if they must strike it. The boy sprang forward with an exclamation of alarm, and sank back again, as Barker, just before the moment of collision, put the wheel of the little craft hard over with a jerk. The launch only gently scraped the bow of the big vessel.

"Ticklish work," said Barker grimly. "We'll have to go slower."

In response, the pulsations of the launch subsided almost completely. Perhaps it was as well, for as quickly as the ship had appeared before them, a small steamer shot by like a ghost, its search-light illumining the mist. For a second it flashed across their own boat.

Instantly a hail came to them through the fog: "Hold hard, there, you in the launch!"

"Police boat," whispered Barker. "Now for it!"

As he spoke the nose of the launch was turned at right angles, and swiftly and noiselessly the craft neared the other bank and slowed down.

For some time they watched the police boat sweeping its search-light around through the mist, but they were beyond its reach. After awhile the throbbing of the engine was heard echoing up the river toward London Bridge. Big Ben boomed out the hour of eleven.

For a little longer they remained in at the bank.

"Cold, Johnny?" asked Barker, turning to the silent figure in the stern.

A nod was the only response.

"Ain't used to being out in the wet at night, poor little chap," said Barker, a touch of feeling in his voice.

Again they were gliding down-stream—drifting, more than aught else. On the bank to which they were closest, loomed, as if by magic, an indistinguishable mass, here and there a light showing on the massive pile.

It was the historic Tower, wrapped by night and the fog. Wentworth craned his head with curiosity as they glided by, Barker turning in closer to the bank and inspecting the surroundings. They swept by an archway, which was quickly left behind.

All was quiet on shore and river, but Barker deemed it best to remain in the middle of the stream some time longer. Wentworth was growing impatient, when he heard the midnight hour striking.

The collector turned the wheel around, and the launch moved noiselessly up-stream. He leaned over, peering forward anxiously as they crept close to the bank. Once more they passed the gloomy archway.

"That's where we get what we came for," growled out Barker sharply.

"That's the Traitor's Gate arch, then?" inquired Wentworth.

His companion simply nodded and chuckled. A sound of subdued mirth came from the stern.

In a few seconds they bumped into a landing.

Barker jumped out, uncoiled a rope, and had the craft tied to an iron ring in a jiffy. He was all activity.

"This is the 'Queen's Stairs' landing to the Tower I told you about," he declared curtly. "Only a short distance below is the gate."

He hesitated a moment, glancing furtively down the river.

"Everything's gone all right so far," he said slowly. For a little he was silent, then continued:

"Now comes the ticklish part of the job. Johnny and I are going down there in the rowboat. All you've got to do for your thousand is to wait here until I flash a dark lantern three times, or call to you. Then you'll drop down and pick up us and the gate, and our job's done. I've got all the implements needed to saw the old thing off the arch, in the yawl behind the launch."

For the first time, Wentworth knew that a rowboat was behind the launch.

Barker jumped aboard again, making his way to the stern.

"Come on, Johnny," he called, and the boy stepped into the rowboat as Barker drew it alongside, and followed. They dropped noiselessly down-stream.

The ringmaster waited and waited. It was so quiet that it got upon his nerves. There was no sign of life anywhere. If anything, he thought, the fog had grown thicker. Would he be able to see the lantern signal, if Barker made it? The museum collector had said he would call, if necessary.

Once Wentworth imagined he heard the sound of oars down-stream. He strained his ears to listen, but heard nothing further, so concluded he had been mistaken.

He wondered what could keep Barker so long. He had almost concluded to drop down there with the launch.

Directly, his heart in his mouth, he heard the sound of pistol-shots in quick succession; the shouts of men to one another. Not one lantern but several gleamed through the fog, down the river bank. The shots and cries had come from somewhere in the Tower enclosure. Certainly Barker was not there!

The thought flashed into Wentworth's head that Barker had been caught. That was the meaning of those cries and shouts. Surely the man had not been fool enough to try to resist capture.

He was considering whether to drop down the river to ascertain just what had happened, or escape, while there was time. Even while he was as yet undecided, a figure appeared suddenly beside him, a lantern was raised to his face, and in its light he recognized the features of the big man he had seen in O'Meara's place. The countenance of the big fellow was smiling. He appeared intensely gratified.

"Oh! Here you are, Mr. Wentworth," he began, with a chuckle. "I must say that you've played your part mighty well, mighty well."

At first Wentworth could only gasp. He looked at the other in astonishment, not unmixed with trepidation.

"I don't understand what you mean," blurted out the ringmaster. "You've got the advantage of me. If you mean I'm your prisoner, I'm ready."

The big fellow ignored the latter part of the statement.

"You don't mean to say you don't recognize Francis Regan, of the Central Office force, New York?" he said amusedly. "Maybe if you don't recognize the detective, you'll be willing to acknowledge the uncle of Nellie Annesley, being as you and she are such good friends," he added patronizingly.

Wentworth stared at him blankly.

"Do you mean to say you're Nellie's uncle?" he broke out huskily.

"I am that, my boy," was the smiling answer. "Francis Regan, Central Office man, on a pleasure trip, which combined business. Had a run to Ireland, and put in a short visit to London to see my niece. Chanced across a job here.

"Look here, Wentworth," he continued, in a businesslike tone. "I know all about this affair, but Nell and I are the only ones who do know it—understand? To all the others you're to be simply the clever chap who assisted in the capture of 'Gentleman George' Barton, the greatest safe-blower, bank-robber, and confidence man in the world, bar none.

"Of course we know how you got into this thing as a dupe, with the Traitor's Gate a blind of Barton, but that's between ourselves. If it was known that you had been caught red-handed as an accomplice to steal the gate, it

would give you all sorts of trouble. But that would be nothing compared to what it would be if it were suspected for an instant you were mixed up with a world-famous criminal in an attempt to swipe the crown jewels of Great Britain, for that's what you were."

Wentworth could only grasp at the meaning.

"The crown jewels!" he faltered. "I know nothing about them."

"Barton did, though, and they're what he was after," was the detective's cheery response. "The jewels are kept in the Tower, and it was for them he was working, with you to hold out chance to escape here.

"He's a clever one," continued Regan. "Looked over the ground, saw an opportunity to slip into the Tower through the Traitor's Gate entrance, and invented his story to hoodwink you and maybe others. Blest if he and his wife hadn't found their way under the Bloody Tower, to the Inner Bail, and were ready to blow their way into the inside Record Tower, where the jewels are concealed, when we nabbed them! George got a bullet in his shoulder, too. It's a question if they wouldn't have got the booty."

Wentworth was too stunned to speak at first.

"You say his wife was with him?" he asked.

The sleuth's sides shook with laughter.

"Sure she was," he ejaculated. "Dressed like a boy. She's as bad as he is.

"Understand the rôle you've got to play from now on, Wentworth. You're the one who has led George on. I happened to drop into O'Meara's place—we're old friends—and I got him to steer you up against George. He told O'Meara he was a collector. That put me and the London sleuths 'wise' that he had some big job afoot. I recognized him here, the first time I set eyes on him, in spite of his clean-shaven face—had a beard last time I saw him. If we hadn't got him in this, requisition papers from the other side would have landed him with me.

"I'm glad you told Nellie all about it. That helped us wonderfully. It's cold here, Wentworth. Come with me over into the Inner Bail of the Tower, where I can introduce you to the Scotland Yard fellows, and let 'em congratulate you. I've been telling them what a sleek worker you are, in a game like this—how you left the show, temporarily, just to help us out, see? That's your cue."

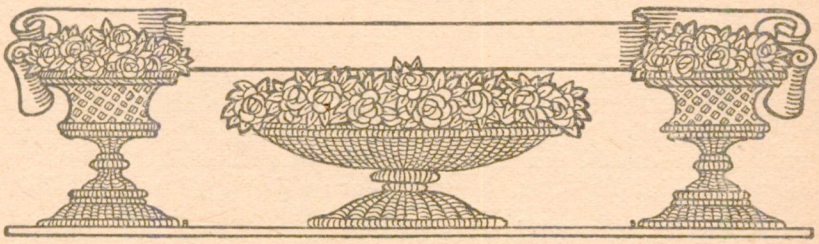
Too much bewildered to reply, Wentworth followed.

It seemed that good luck was to be Wentworth's still further, though he experienced the humiliation of having the Sylph tease him unmercifully in private for his double rôle of dupe and detective.

"I guess I need some one to look after me all the time, little girl," he said shamefacedly. "I wish you would take a lifetime job of it."

This time she did not laugh.

La Shelle returned unexpectedly to the circus. Evidently he did not hold his ringmaster responsible, for Melrose and his brother "resigned," another equestrian director was chosen, and Wentworth took his old place.



The Malefactor

By E. Phillips Oppenheim

Author of "The Betrayal," "A Maker of History," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

After serving a term of fifteen years in prison for manslaughter—sent there through the perfidy of the wife of the man whom he was wrongfully accused of murdering—Sir Wingrave Seton again takes his place in the world, cold, bitter, unfeeling, revengeful. One of his first steps is to engage as his private secretary a young newspaper man named Aynesworth, through whom he arranges for an interview with the woman who wronged him, now Lady Ruth Barrington. She is reluctant to see Sir Wingrave, but she is afraid to refuse, for she knows that he must still have in his possession several letters from her which would have cleared him and compromised her had he seen fit to use them during the trial. Wingrave tells her that he is going to America for several years, after which he will return, bringing letters of introduction to her, and that he will rely on her to help him, as Mr. Wingrave, a wealthy American, to attain a place in society which will enable him to carry out several plans he has in mind. She, of course, is compelled to acquiesce. Lumley Barrington, Lady Ruth's husband, goes to Aynesworth and tries to bribe him to steal the incriminating documents, but the secretary refuses. After a visit to a place called Tredowen, where Sir Wingrave arranges to sell all his inherited belongings, and where Aynesworth becomes interested in an orphan child named Juliet Lundy, Seton and his secretary embark for America. On the steamer also goes George Richardson, a young man who has been hired by the Barringtons to follow their enemy and report on his movements.

CHAPTER XIII.

"THE bar closes in ten minutes, sir," the smoking-room steward announced.

The young man who had been the subject of Wingrave's remarks, hastily ordered another drink. Presently he stumbled out on to the deck. It was a dark night, and a strong head-wind was blowing. He groped his way to the railing and leaned over, with his head half buried in his hands. Below, the black tossing sea was churned into phosphorescent spray, as the steamer drove onward into the night.

Was it he indeed—George Richardson? He doubted it. The world of tape-measures and calico-counters seemed so far away; the interior of his quondam lodgings in a by-street of Islington so unfamiliar and impossible.

He felt himself swallowed up in this new and bewildering existence, of which he was so insignificant an atom; the existence where tragedy reared her gloomy head, and the shadows of great things loomed around him. Down there in the cold, restless waste of black waters—what was it he saw?

The sweat broke out upon his forehead; the blood seemed turned to ice in his veins. He knew very well that his fancy mocked him; that it was not indeed a man's white face gleaming on the crest of the waves. But none the less he was terrified.

Mr. Richardson was certainly nervous. Not all the brandy he had drunk—and he had never drunk half as much before in his life—afforded him the least protection from these ghastly fancies. The step of a sailor on the deck made him shiver; the thought of his empty stateroom was a horror.

He tried to think of the woman at whose bidding he had left behind him

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Islington and the things that belonged to Islington. He tried to recall her soft, suggestive whispers, the glances which promised more even than her spoken words, all the perfume and mystery of her wonderful presence. Her very name was an allurement. Mademoiselle Violet! How softly it fell from the lips!

God in heaven! what was that? He started round, trembling in every limb. It was nothing more than the closing of the smoking-room door behind him. Sailors with buckets and mops were already beginning their nightly tasks. He must go to his stateroom! Somehow or other he must get through the night.

He did it, but he was not a very prepossessing looking object when he staggered out on deck twelve hours later, into the noon sunshine. The chair toward which he looked so eagerly was occupied. He scarcely knew himself whether that little gulp of acute feeling which shot through his veins was of relief or disappointment. While he hesitated, Wingrave raised his head.

Wingrave did not, as a rule, speak to his fellow passengers. Of Richardson he had not hitherto taken the slightest notice. Yet this morning, of all others, he addressed him.

"I believe that this envelope is yours," he said, holding it out toward him. "I found it under your chair."

Richardson muttered something inarticulate, and almost snatched it away. It was the envelope of the fatal letter which Mademoiselle Violet had written him to Queenstown.

"Sit down, Mr. Richardson, if you are not in a hurry," Wingrave continued calmly. "I was hoping that I might see you this morning. Can you spare me a few minutes?"

Richardson subsided into his chair. His heart was thumping against his ribs. Wingrave's voice sounded to him like a far-off thing.

"The handwriting upon that envelope which I have just restored to you, Mr. Richardson, is well known to me," Wingrave continued, gazing steadily at the young man whom he was addressing.

"The envelope! The handwriting!" Richardson faltered. "I—it was from a——"

An instant's pause. Wingrave raised his eyebrows.

"Ah!" he said. "We need not mention the lady's name. That she should be a correspondent of yours, however, helps me to better understand several matters which have somewhat puzzled me lately. No, don't go, my dear sir. We must really have this affair straightened out."

"What affair?" Richardson demanded, with a very weak attempt at bluster. "I don't understand you—don't understand you at all."

Wingrave leaned a little forward in his chair. His eyebrows were drawn close together; his gaze was entirely merciless.

"You are not well this morning," he remarked. "A little headache, perhaps? Won't you try one of these phenacetin lozenges? Excellent things for a headache, I believe. Warranted, in fact, to cure all bodily ailments forever! What! You don't like the look of them?"

The young man cowered back in his chair. He was gripping the sides tightly with both hands, and the pallor of a ghastly fear had spread over his face.

"I—don't know what you mean," he faltered. "I haven't a headache!"

Wingrave looked thoughtfully at the box between his fingers.

"If you took one of these, Mr. Richardson," he said, "you would never have another, at any rate. Now, tell me how you came by them."

"I know nothing about——" the young man said.

"Don't lie to me, sir," Wingrave said sharply. "I have been wondering what the devil you meant by hanging around after me, giving the deck-steward five shillings to put your chair next mine, and pretending to read, while all the time you were trying to overhear any scraps of conversation between my secretary and myself. I thought you were simply guilty of impertinent curiosity. This, however, rather alters the look of affairs!"

"What does?" Richardson asked faintly. "That box ain't mine."

"Perhaps not," Wingrave answered, "but you found it in my stateroom and filled it up with its present contents. My servant saw you coming out, and immediately went in to see what you had stolen, and report you. He found nothing missing, but he found this box full of lozenges, which he knows quite well was half full before you went in. Now, what was your object, Mr. Richardson, in tampering with that box upon my shelf?"

"I have—I have never seen it before," Richardson declared. "I have never been in your stateroom!"

The deck-steward was passing. Wingrave summoned him.

"I wish you would ask my servant to step this way," he said. "You will find him in my stateroom."

The man disappeared through the companionway. Richardson rose to his feet.

"I'm not going to stay here to be bullied and cross-examined," he declared. "I'm off!"

"One moment," Wingrave said. "If you leave me now, I shall ask the captain to place you under arrest."

Richardson looked half fearfully around.

"What for?"

"Attempted murder. Very clumsily attempted, but attempted murder, none the less."

The young man collapsed. Wingrave's servant came down the deck.

"You sent for me, sir?" he inquired respectfully.

Wingrave pointed toward his companion.

"Was that the person whom you saw coming out of my stateroom?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," the man replied at once.

"You could swear to him, if necessary?"

"Certainly, sir."

"That will do, Morrison."

The man withdrew. Wingrave turned to his victim.

"A few weeks ago," he remarked, "I had a visit from the lady whose handwriting is upon that envelope. I had on the table before me a box of phenacetin lozenges. She naturally concluded that I was in the habit of using them. That lady has unfortunately cause to consider me, if not an enemy, something very much like it. You are in correspondence with her. Only last night you placed in my box of lozenges some others, closely resembling them, but fortunately a little different in shape. Mine were harmless—as a matter of fact, a single one of yours would kill a man in ten minutes. Now, Mr. Richardson, what have you to say about all this? Why should I not send for the captain, and have you locked up till we arrive at New York?"

Richardson drew his handkerchief across his damp forehead.

"You can't prove nothing," he muttered.

"I am afraid that I must differ from you," Wingrave answered. "We will see what the captain has to say."

He leaned forward in his chair to attract the attention of a seaman.

Richardson interposed.

"All right," he said thickly. "Suppose I own up. What then?"

"A few questions. Nothing terrifying. I am not very frightened of you."

"Go on."

"How did you become acquainted with the writer of that letter?"

Richardson hesitated.

"She came to a dancing-class at Islington," he said.

Wingrave's face was expressionless, but his tone betrayed his incredulity.

"A dancing-class at Islington! Nonsense!"

"Mind," the young man asserted, "it was her mistress who put her up to this! It has nothing to do with her. It was for her mistress' sake."

"Do you know the mistress?" Wingrave asked.

"No; I don't know her name even. Never heard it."

"Your letter, then, was from the maid?"

"Of course it was," Richardson answered. "If you recognize the writing you must know that yourself."

Wingrave looked reflectively sea-

ward. The matter was not entirely clear to him. Yet he was sure that the young man was telling the truth, so far as he could divine it.

"Well," he said, "you have made your attempt and failed. If fortune had favored you, you might at this moment have been a murderer. I might have warned you, by the bye, that I am an exceedingly hard man to kill."

Richardson looked uneasily around.

"I ain't admitting anything, you know," he said.

"Precisely. Well, what are you going to do now? Are you satisfied with your first reverse, or are you going to renew the experiment?"

"I've had enough," was the dogged answer. "I've been made a fool of. I can see that. I shall return home by the next steamer. I never ought to have got mixed up in this."

"I am inclined to agree with you," Wingrave remarked calmly. "Do I understand that if I choose to forget this little episode, you will return to England by the next steamer?"

"I swear it," Richardson declared.

"And in the meantime that you make no further attempt of a similar nature?"

"Not I!" he answered, with emphasis. "I've had enough."

"Then," Wingrave said, "we need not prolong this conversation. Forgive my suggesting, Mr. Richardson, that while I am on deck, the other side of the ship would prove more convenient for you."

The young man rose, and without a word staggered off. Wingrave watched him, through half-closed eyes, until he disappeared.

"It was worth trying," he said softly to himself. "A very clever woman that! She looks forward through the years, and she sees the clouds gathering. It was a little risky, and the means were very crude. But it was worth trying!"

CHAPTER XIV.

"To-morrow morning," Aynesworth remarked, "we shall land."

Wingrave nodded.

"I shall not be sorry," he said shortly.

Aynesworth fidgeted about. He had something to say, and he found it difficult. Wingrave gave him no encouragement. He was leaning back in his steamer-chair, with his eyes fixed upon the sky-line. Notwithstanding the incessant companionship of the last six days, Aynesworth felt that he had not progressed a single step toward establishing any more intimate relations between his employer and himself.

"Mrs. Travers is not on deck this afternoon," he remarked a trifle awkwardly.

"Indeed!" Wingrave answered. "I hadn't noticed."

Aynesworth sat down. There was nothing to be gained by fencing.

"I wanted to talk about her, sir, if I might," he said.

Wingrave withdrew his eyes from the sea, and looked at his companion in cold surprise.

"To me?" he asked.

"Yes. I thought, the first few days, that Mrs. Travers was simply a vain little woman of the world, perfectly capable of taking care of herself, and heartless enough to flirt all day long, if she chose, without any risk, so far as she was concerned. I believe I made a mistake!"

"This is most interesting," Wingrave said calmly; "but why talk to me about the lady? I fancy that I know as much about her as you do."

"Very likely; but you may not have realized the same things. Mrs. Travers is a married woman, with a husband in Boston, and two little children, of whom, I believe, she is really very fond. She is a foolish, good-natured little woman, who thinks herself clever because her husband has permitted her to travel a good deal, and has evidently been rather fascinated by the latitudinarianism of Continental society. She is a little afraid of being terribly bored when she gets back to Boston, and she is very sentimental."

"I had no idea," Wingrave remarked, "that you had been submitting the lady and her affairs to the ordeal of your marvelous gift of analysis. I rather

fancied that you took no interest in her at all."

"I did not," Aynesworth answered, "until last night."

"And last night?" he repeated questioningly.

"I found her on deck—crying. She had been tearing up some photographs, and she talked a little wildly. I talked to her then for a little time."

"Can't you be more explicit?" Wingrave asked.

Aynesworth looked him in the face.

"She gave me the impression," he said, "that she did not intend to return to her husband."

Wingrave nodded.

"And what have you to say to me about this?" he asked.

"I have no right to say anything, of course," Aynesworth answered. "You might very properly tell me that it is no concern of mine. Mrs. Travers has already compromised herself to some extent with the people on board who know her and her family. She never leaves your side for a moment if she can help it, and for the last two or three days she has almost followed you about. You may possibly derive some amusement from her society for a short time, but—afterward!"

"Explain yourself exactly," Wingrave said.

"Is it necessary?" Aynesworth declared bruskly. "Talk sensibly to her. Don't encourage her if she should really be contemplating anything foolish."

"Why not?"

"Oh, hang it all!" Aynesworth exploded. "I'm not a moralist, but she's a decent little woman. Don't ruin her life for the sake of a little diversion."

Wingrave, who had been holding a cigar-case in his hand for the last few minutes, opened it, and calmly selected a cigar.

"Aren't you a little melodramatic, Aynesworth?" he said.

"Sounds like it, no doubt," his companion answered; "but, after all, she's not a bad little sort, and you wouldn't care to meet her on notorious Piccadilly in a couple of years' time."

Wingrave turned a little in his chair. There was a slight hardening of the mouth, a cold gleam in his eyes.

"That," he remarked, "is precisely where you are wrong. I am afraid you have forgotten our previous conversations on this or a similar subject. Disconnect me in your mind at once from all philanthropic notions. I desire to make no one happy, to assist at no one's happiness. My own life has been ruined by a woman. Her sex shall pay me where it can. If I can obtain from the lady in question a single second's amusement, her future is a matter of entire indifference to me."

"In that case," Aynesworth said slowly, "I presume that I need say no more."

"Unless it amuses you," Wingrave answered, "it really is not worth while."

"Perhaps," Aynesworth remarked, "it is as well that I should tell you this. I shall put the situation before Mrs. Travers exactly as I see it. I shall do my best to dissuade her from any further or more intimate intercourse with you."

"At the risk, of course," Wingrave said, "of my offering you—this?"

He drew a paper from his pocket-book, and held it out. It was the return half of a steamer ticket.

"Even at that risk," Aynesworth answered without hesitation.

Wingrave carefully folded the document, and returned it to his pocket.

"I am glad," he said, "to find that you are so consistent. There is Mrs. Travers scolding the deck-steward. Go and talk to her. You will scarcely find a better opportunity."

Aynesworth rose at once. Wingrave in a few moments also left his seat, but proceeded in the opposite direction. He made his way into the purser's room, and carefully closed the door behind him.

Mrs. Travers greeted Aynesworth without enthusiasm. Her eyes were resting upon the empty place which Wingrave had just vacated.

"Can I get your chair for you, Mrs. Travers?" Aynesworth asked, "or shall we walk for a few minutes?"

Mrs. Travers hesitated. She looked

around, but there was obviously no escape for her.

"I should like to sit down," she said. "I am very tired this morning. My chair is next Mr. Wingrave's there."

Aynesworth found her rug and wrapped it around her. She leaned back and closed her eyes.

"I shall try to sleep," she said. "I had such a shocking night."

He understood at once that she was on her guard, and he changed his tactics.

"First," he said, "may I ask you a question?"

She opened her eyes wide, and looked at him. She was afraid.

"Not now," she said hurriedly. "This afternoon."

"This afternoon I may not have the opportunity," he answered. "Is your husband going to meet you at New York, Mrs. Travers?"

"No."

"Are you going direct to Boston?"

She looked at him steadily. There was a slight flush of color in her cheeks.

"I find your questions impertinent, Mr. Aynesworth," she answered.

There was a short silence. Aynesworth hated his task and hated himself. But, most of all, he pitied the woman who sat by his side.

"No," he said, "they are not impertinent. I am the looker-on, you know, and I have seen—a good deal. If Wingrave were an ordinary sort of man, I should never have dared to interfere. If you had been an ordinary sort of woman, I might not have cared to!"

She half rose in her chair.

"I shall not stay here," she began, struggling with her rug.

"Do," he begged. "I am—I want to be your friend, really."

"You are supposed to be his," she reminded him.

He shook his head.

"I am his secretary. There is no question of friendship between us. For the rest, I told him that I should speak to you."

"You have no right to discuss me at all," she declared vehemently.

"None whatever," he admitted. "I have to rely entirely upon your mercy. This is the truth. People are thrown together a good deal on a voyage like this. You and Mr. Wingrave have seen a good deal of one another. You are a very impressionable woman; he is a singularly cold, unimpressionable man. You have found his personality attractive. You fancy—other things. Wingrave is not the man you think he is. He is selfish and entirely without affectionate impulses. The world has treated him badly, and he has no hesitation in saying that he means to get some part of his own back again. He does not care for you, he does not care for any one. If you should be contemplating anything ridiculous from a mistaken judgment of his character, it is better that you should know the truth."

The anger had gone. She was pale again, and her lips were trembling.

"Men seldom know one another," she said softly. "You judge from the surface only."

"Mine is the critical judgment of one who has studied him intimately," Aynesworth said. "Yours is the sentimental hope of one fascinated by what they do not understand. Wingrave is utterly heartless."

"That," she answered steadfastly, "I do not believe."

"You do not, because you will not," he declared. "I have spoken because I wish to save you from doing what you would repent of for the rest of your days. You have the one vanity which is common to all women. You suppose that you can change what, believe me, is unchangeable. To Wingrave, women are less than playthings. He owes the unhappiness of his life to one, and he would see the whole of her sex suffer without emotion. He is impregnable to sentiment. Ask him, and I believe that he will admit it."

She smiled, and regarded him with the mild pity of superior knowledge.

"You do not understand Mr. Wingrave," she remarked.

Aynesworth sighed. He realized that every word he had spoken had been

wasted upon this pale, pretty woman, who sat still with her eyes now turned seaward, and the smile still lingering upon her lips. Studying her for a moment, he realized the danger more acutely than ever before.

The fretfulness seemed to have gone from her face, the weary lines from her mouth. She had the look of a woman who has come into the knowledge of better things. And it was Wingrave who had done this!

Aynesworth for the first time frankly hated the man. Once as a boy, he had seen a keeper take a rabbit from a trap and dash its brains out against a tree. The incident flashed then into his mind, only the face of the keeper was the face of Wingrave!

CHAPTER XV.

Wingrave and Aynesworth were alone in a private room of the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel. The table at which the former was seated was covered with letters and papers. A New York directory and an atlas were at his elbow.

"I propose," Wingrave said, leaning back in his chair, "to give you some idea of the nature of my business in this country. You will be able then, I trust, to carry out my instructions more intelligibly."

Aynesworth nodded.

"I thought," he said, "that you came here simply to remain in seclusion for a time."

"That is one of my reasons," Wingrave admitted, "but I had a special purpose in coming to America. During my enforced seclusion I made the acquaintance of a man called Hardwell. He was an Englishman, but he had lived in America for some years, and had got into trouble over some company business. We had some conversation, and it is upon his information that I am now going to act."

"He is trustworthy?" Aynesworth asked.

"I take the risk," Wingrave answered coolly. "There is a small copper mine in Utah called the Royal Hardwell Copper Mine. The shares are hundred-dollar ones, and there are ten thousand of them. They are scarcely quoted now, as the mine has become utterly discredited. Hardwell managed this himself with a false report. He meant to have the company go into liquidation, and then buy it for a very small amount. As a matter of fact, the mine is good, and could be worked at a large profit."

"You have Hardwell's word for that," Aynesworth remarked.

"Exactly," Wingrave remarked. "I am proceeding on the assumption that he told me the truth. I wish to buy, if possible, the whole of the shares, and as many more as I can get brokers to sell. The price of the shares to-day is two dollars."

"I presume you will send out an expert to the mine first?" Aynesworth said.

"I shall do nothing of the sort," Wingrave answered. "The fact that I was buying upon information would send the shares up at once. I mean to buy first, and then go out to the mine. If I have made a mistake I shall not be ruined. If Hardwell's story is true, there will be millions in it."

Aynesworth said nothing, but his face expressed a good deal.

"Here are the names of seven respectable brokers," Wingrave continued, passing a sheet of paper toward him. "I want you to buy five hundred shares from each of them. The price may vary a few points. Whatever it is, pay it. Here are seven signed checks. I shall buy myself as many as I can without spoiling the market. You had better start out in about a quarter of an hour and see to this. You have my private ledger?"

"Yes."

"Open an account with Hardwell; a quarter of all the shares I buy are to be in his name, and a quarter of all the profits I make in dealing in the shares is to be credited to him."

"A fairly generous arrangement for Mr. Hardwell," Aynesworth remarked.

"There is nothing generous about it," Wingrave answered coldly. "It is the arrangement I made with him, and by

which I propose to adhere. You understand what I want you to do?"

"Perfectly," Aynesworth answered. "I still think, however, that much the wiser course would be to send an expert to the mine first."

"Indeed!" Wingrave remarked politely. "That is all, I think. I shall expect to see you at luncheon. If you are asked questions as to why you are dealing in these shares to such an extent, you can say that the friend for whom you are acting desires to boom copper, and is going on the low price of the metal at the moment. They will think you a fool, and perhaps may not trouble to conceal their opinion, after they have finished the business. You must endeavor to support the character. I have no doubt but that you will be successful."

Aynesworth moved toward the door.

Once more Wingrave called him back. He was leaning a little forward across the table. His face was very set and cold.

"There is a question which I wish to ask you, Aynesworth," he said. "It concerns another matter altogether. Do you know who sent the wireless to Doctor Travers, which brought him to New York to meet his wife?"

"I do not," Aynesworth answered.

"It was sent by some one on board the ship," Wingrave continued. "You have no suspicion as to who it could have been?"

"No," Aynesworth answered firmly. "At the same time, I do not mind telling you this: If I had thought of it I would have sent it myself."

Wingrave shrugged his shoulders.

"It is, perhaps, fortunate for the continuation of our mutual relations that you did not think of it," he remarked quietly. "I accept your denial. I shall expect you back at one o'clock."

At a few minutes after one the two men sat down to luncheon. Wingrave at that time was the possessor of six thousand shares in the Royal Hardwell Copper Mine, which had cost him, on an average, two dollars twenty-five.

The news of the dealing, however, had got about, and, although derision was the chief sentiment among the brokers, the price steadily mounted.

A dozen cables were sent out to the mine, and on receipt of the replies, the dealing became the joke of the day. The mine was still deserted, and no fresh inspection had been made.

The price dropped a little. Then Wingrave bought a thousand more by telephone, and it rose again to four. A few minutes before closing time he threw every share he possessed upon the market, and the next morning Royal Hardwell stood at one dollar seventy-five.

For a week Wingrave pursued the same tactics, and at the end of that time he had made twenty thousand dollars. The brokers, however, now understood, or thought they understood, the situation. No one bought for the rise; they were all sellers.

Wingrave at once changed his tactics. He bought five thousand shares in one block, and sold none. Even then the market was only mildly amused. In a fortnight he was the nominal owner of sixteen thousand shares in a company of which only ten thousand actually existed.

Then he sat still, and the panic began. The shares in a company which every one believed to be worthless stood at thirty dollars, and not a share was offered.

A small pandemonium reigned in Wingrave's sitting-room. The telephone rang all the time, the place was besieged with brokers.

Then Wingrave showed his hand. He had bought these shares to hold; he did not intend to sell one. As to the six thousand owed to him beyond the number issued, he was prepared to consider offers.

One broker left him a check for twenty thousand dollars, another for nearly forty thousand.

Wingrave had no pity. He had gambled and won. He would accept nothing less than par price. The air in his sitting-room grew thick with curses and tobacco smoke.

Aynesworth began by hating the whole business, but insensibly the fas-

cination of it crept over him. He grew used to hearing the various forms of protest, of argument and abuse, which one and all left Wingrave so unmoved.

Sphinxlike, Wingrave lounged in his chair and listened to all. He never condescended to justify his position, he never met argument by argument. He had the air of being thoroughly bored by the whole proceedings. But he exacted always his pound of flesh!

On the third afternoon Aynesworth met on the stairs a young broker whom he had come across once or twice during his earlier dealing in the shares. They had had lunch together, and Aynesworth had taken a fancy to the boy—he was little more—fresh from Harvard, and full of enthusiasm. He scarcely recognized him for a moment. The fresh color had gone from his cheeks, his eyes were set in a fixed, wild stare; he seemed suddenly aged. Aynesworth stopped him.

"Hello, Nesbitt!" he exclaimed. "What's wrong?"

The young man would have passed on with a muttered greeting, but Aynesworth turned round with him, and led the way into one of the smaller smoking-rooms. He called for drinks, and repeated his question.

"Wingrave has me six hundred Hardwells short," Nesbitt answered curtly.

"Six hundred! What does it mean?" Aynesworth asked.

"Sixty thousand dollars, or thereabouts," the young man answered despairingly. "His broker won't listen to me, and Wingrave—well, I've just been to see him. I won't call him names! And we thought that some fool of an Englishman was burning his fingers with these shares! I'm not the only one caught, but the others can stand it. I can't, worst luck!"

"I'm beastly sorry," Aynesworth said truthfully. "I wish I could help you."

Nesbitt raised his head. A sudden light flashed in his eyes; he spoke quickly, almost feverishly.

"Say, Aynesworth," he exclaimed, "do you think you could do anything with your boss for me? You see—it's ruin, if I have to pay up. I wouldn't mind—for myself, but I was married four months ago, and I can't bear the thought of going home—and telling her. All the money we have between us is in my business, and we've got no rich friends or anything of that sort. I don't know what I'll do if I have to be hammered. I've been so careful, too! I didn't want to take this on, but it seemed such a soft thing. If I could get off with twenty thousand I'd keep my head up. I hate to talk like this. I'd go down like a man if I were alone, —but—but—oh, confound it all——!" he exclaimed, with an ominous break in in his tone.

Aynesworth laid his hand upon the boy's arm.

"Look here," he said, "I'll try what I can do with Mr. Wingrave. Wait here!"

Aynesworth found his employer alone with his broker, who was just hastening off to keep an appointment. He plunged at once into his appeal.

"Mr. Wingrave," he said, "you have bitten a young broker named Nesbitt."

Wingrave glanced at a paper by his side.

"Yes," he said. "Six hundred short! I wish they wouldn't come to me."

"I've been talking to him downstairs," Aynesworth said. "This will break him."

"Then I ought not to have done business with him at all," Wingrave said coolly. "If he cannot find sixty thousand dollars, he has no right to be in Wall Street. I dare say he'll pay, though. They all plead poverty—curs!"

"I think Nesbitt's case is a little different from the others," Aynesworth continued. "He is quite young, little more than a boy, and he has only just started in business. To be hammered would be absolute ruin for him. He seems such a decent young fellow, and he's only just married. He's in an awful state down-stairs. I wish you'd have another talk with him. I think you'd feel inclined to let him down easy."

Wingrave smiled coldly.

"My dear Aynesworth," he said,

"you astonish me! I am not interested in this young man's future or in his matrimonial arrangements. He has gambled with me and lost. I presume that he would have taken my money if I had been the fool they all thought me. As it is, I mean to have his—down to the last cent!"

"He isn't like the others," Aynesworth protested doggedly. "He's only a boy—and it seems such jolly hard luck, doesn't it?—only four months married! New York hasn't much pity for paupers. He looks mad enough to blow his brains out. Have him up, sir, and see if you can't compromise!"

"Fetch him," Wingrave said curtly.

Aynesworth hurried down-stairs. The boy was walking restlessly up and down the room. The look he turned upon Aynesworth was almost pitiful.

"He'll see you again," Aynesworth said hurriedly. "Come along."

The boy wrung his hand.

"You're a brick!" he declared.

CHAPTER XVI.

Wingrave glanced up as they entered. He motioned Nesbitt to a chair by his side, but the young man remained standing.

"My secretary tells me," Wingrave said curtly, "that you cannot pay me what you owe."

"It's more than I possess in the world, sir," Nesbitt answered.

"It is not a large amount," Wingrave said. "I do not see how you can carry on business unless you can command such a sum as this."

Nesbitt moistened his dry lips with his tongue.

"I have only been doing a very small business, sir," he answered, "but quite enough to make a living. I don't speculate, as a rule. Hardwells seemed perfectly safe, or I wouldn't have touched them. I sold at four. They are not worth one. I could have bought thousands last week for two dollars."

"That is beside the question," Wingrave answered. "If you do not pay this, you have cheated me out of my profits, for I should have placed the commission with brokers who could. Why did you wish to see me again?"

"I thought that you might give me time," Nesbitt answered, raising his head and looking Wingrave straight in the face. "It seems rather a low-down thing to come begging. I'd rather cut my right hand off than do it for myself, but I've—some one else to think about, and if I'm hammered, I'm done for. Give me a chance, Mr. Wingrave! I'll pay you in time!"

"What do you ask for?" Wingrave said.

"I thought that you might give me time," Nesbitt said, "and I'll pay you the rest off with the whole of my profits every year."

"A most absurd proposal," Wingrave said coolly. "I will instruct my brokers to take twenty thousand dollars down, and wait one week for the balance. That is the best offer I can make you. Good day!"

The young man stood as though he were stunned.

"I—I can't find it," he faltered. "I can't, indeed."

"Your resources are not my affair," Wingrave said. "I shall instruct my broker to do as I have said. If the money is not forthcoming, you know the alternative."

"You mean to ruin me, then?" Nesbitt said slowly.

"I mean to exact payment of what is due to me," Wingrave said curtly. "If you cannot pay, it seems to me that I am the person to be pitied—not you! Show Mr. Nesbitt out, Aynesworth."

Nesbitt turned toward the door. He was very pale, but he walked steadily. He did not speak another word to Wingrave.

"I'm beastly sorry," Aynesworth said to him on the stairs. "I wish I could help you."

"Thank you," Nesbitt answered. "No one can help me. I'm through."

Aynesworth returned to the sitting-room. Wingrave had lit a cigarette, and watched him as he arranged some papers.

"Quite a comedy, isn't it?" he remarked grimly.

"It doesn't present itself in that light to me," Aynesworth answered.

Wingrave blew the smoke away from in front of his face.

"Ah!" he said, "I forgot that you were a sentimentalist. I look upon these things from my own point of view. From yours I suppose I must seem a very disagreeable person. I admit frankly that the sufferings of other people do not affect me in the slightest."

"I am sorry for you," Aynesworth said shortly. "If there is going to be much of this sort of thing, though, I must ask you to relieve me of my post. I can't stand it."

"Whenever you like, my dear fellow," Wingrave answered. "I think that you would be very foolish to leave me, though. I must be a most interesting study."

"You are—what the devil made you!" Aynesworth muttered.

Wingrave laid down his cigarette.

"I am what my fellows have made me," he said slowly. "I tasted hell for a good many years. It has left me, I suppose, with a depraved taste. Ring up my brokers, Aynesworth. I want to speak to Malcolmson. He had better come round here."

The day dragged on. Aynesworth hated it all, and was weary long before it was half over. Every one who came was angry; and a good many came whom Wingrave refused to see. Just before five o'clock, young Nesbitt entered the room unannounced. Aynesworth started toward him with a little exclamation. The young man's evident excitement terrified him, and he feared a tragedy. Malcolmson, too, half rose to his feet. Wingrave alone remained unmoved.

Nesbitt walked straight up to the table at which Malcolmson and Wingrave were sitting. He halted in front of the latter.

"Mr. Wingrave," he said, "you will give me my receipt for those shares for fifty-seven thousand six hundred dollars."

Wingrave turned to a paper by his side, and ran his forefinger down the list of names.

"Mr. Nesbitt," he said. "Yes! sixty thousand dollars."

The young man laid a slip of paper upon the table.

"That is a certified check for the amount," he said. "Mr. Malcolmson, please give me my receipt."

"Ah!" Mr. Wingrave remarked. "I thought that you would find the money."

Nesbitt bit his lip, but he said nothing till he had the receipt, and had fastened it up in his pocket. Then he turned suddenly round upon Wingrave.

"Look here!" he said. "You've got your money! I don't owe you a cent. Now I'm going to tell you what I think of you!"

Wingrave rose slowly to his feet. He was as tall as the boy—long, lean, and hard. His face expressed neither anger nor excitement, but there was a slight, dangerous glitter in his deep-set eyes.

"If you mean," he said, "that you are going to be impertinent, I would recommend you to change your mind."

Nesbitt for a moment hesitated. There was something ominous in the cool courage of the older man. And before he could collect himself, Wingrave spoke again.

"I presume," he said, "that you chose your own profession. You knew quite well that there was no place in it for men with a sense of the higher morality. It is a profession of gamblers and thieves. If you'd won, you'd have thought yourself a smart fellow, and pocketed your winnings fast enough. Now that you've lost—don't whine. You sat down willingly enough to play the game with me. Don't call me names because you lost. This is no place for children. Pocket your defeat, and be more careful next time."

Nesbitt was silent for a moment. Wingrave, cool and immovable, dominated him. He gave a little laugh, and turned toward the door.

"Guess you're right," he declared; "we'll let it go at that."

Aynesworth followed him from the room.

"I'm awfully glad you're out of the scrape," he said.

Nesbitt caught him by the arm.

"Come right along," he said. "I haven't had a drink in the daytime for a year, but we're going to have a big one now. I say, do you know how I got that money?"

Aynesworth shook his head.

"On easy terms, I hope."

They sat down in the American bar, and a colored waiter in a white linen suit brought them whisky and Apollinaris in tall tumblers.

"Listen," Nesbitt said. "My brain is on the reel still. I went back to my office, and if it hadn't been for the little girl, I should have bought a revolver, by the way. Old Johnny was there waiting to see me—no end of a swell—Phillson, the up-town lawyer. He went straight for me.

"'Been dealing in Hardwells?' he asked.

"I nodded.

"'Short, eh?'

"'Six hundred shares,' I answered. There was no harm in telling him, for the Street knew well enough.

"'Bad job,' he said. 'How much does Wingrave want?'

"'Shares at par,' I answered. 'It comes to close on fifty-seven thousand six hundred dollars.'

"'I'm going to find you the money,' he said.

"Then I can tell you the things in my office began to swim. I'd an idea, somehow, that he was there as a friend, but nothing like this. I couldn't answer him.

"'It's a delicate piece of business,' he went on. 'In fact, the fewer questions you ask the better. All I can say is there's a chap in Wall Street got his eye on you. Your old dad once helped him over a much worse place than this. Anyhow, I've a check here for sixty thousand dollars, and no conditions, only that you don't talk.'

"'But when am I to pay it back?' I gasped.

"'If my client ever needs it, and you can afford it, he will ask for it,' Phillson answered. 'That's all.'

"And before I could say another darned word he was gone, and the check was there on my desk."

Aynesworth sipped his whisky and Apollinaris, and lit a cigarette.

"And they say," he murmured, "that romance does not exist in Wall Street. You're a lucky chap, Nesbitt."

"Lucky! Do you think I don't realize it? Of course, I know the old governor had lots of friends on the Street, but he was never in, in a big way, and he got hit awfully hard himself before he died. I can't understand it, anyway."

"I wouldn't try," Aynesworth remarked, laughing. "By the bye, your friend, whoever he was, must have got to know pretty quickly."

Nesbitt nodded.

"I thought of that," he said. "Of course, Phillsons' are lawyers for Malcolmson, Wingrave's broker, so I dare say it came from him. Say, Aynesworth, you don't mind if I ask you something?"

"Not at all," Aynesworth answered. "What is it?"

"Why the devil do you stop with a man like Wingrave? He doesn't seem your sort at all."

Aynesworth hesitated.

"Wingrave interests me," he answered. "He has had a curious life, and he is a man with very strange ideas."

Nesbitt finished his drink, and rose up.

"Well," he said, "he's not a man I should care to be associated with. Not but what I dare say he was right, upstairs. He's strong, too, and he must have a nerve. But he's a brute for all that!"

Nesbitt went his way, and Aynesworth returned up-stairs. Wingrave was alone.

"Have we finished this miserable business?" Aynesworth asked.

"For the present," Wingrave answered. "Mr. Malcolmson will supply you with a copy of the accounts. See that Hardwell is credited with a quarter share of the profits. Our dealings are over for the present. Be prepared to

start on Saturday for the West. We are going to look for those bears."

"But the mine!" Aynesworth exclaimed. "It belongs to you now. Aren't you going out to examine it?"

Wingrave shook his head.

"No," he said, "I know nothing about mines. My visit could not teach me anything one way or the other. I have sent a commission of experts. I am tired of cities and money-making. I want a change."

Aynesworth looked at him suddenly. The weariness was there, indeed—was it his fancy, or was it something more than weariness which shone out of the dark, tired eyes?

CHAPTER XVII.

"Four years ago to-night," Aynesworth said, looking round the club smoking-room thoughtfully, "we bade you farewell in this same room!"

Lovell, wan and hollow-eyed, his arm in a sling, his once burly frame gaunt and attenuated with disease, nodded.

"And I told you the story," he remarked, "of—the man who had been my friend."

"Don't let us talk of Wingrave to-night!" Aynesworth exclaimed, with sudden emphasis.

"Why not?" Lovell knocked the ashes from his pipe, and commenced leisurely to refill it. "Why not, indeed? I mean to go and see him as soon as I can get about a little better."

"If your description of him," Aynesworth said, "was a faithful one, you will find him changed."

Lovell laughed a little bitterly.

"The years leave their mark," he said, "upon us all—upon all of us, that is, who step out into the open, where the winds of life are blowing. Look at me! I weighed two hundred and fifty pounds when I left England; I had the muscles of a prize-fighter, and nerves of steel. To-day I turn the scales at a hundred and forty, and am afraid to be alone in the dark."

"You will be yourself again in no time," Aynesworth declared cheerfully.

"I shall be better than I am now, I hope," Lovell answered; "but I shall never be the man I was. I have seen—God grant that I may some day forget what I have seen! No wonder that my nerves have gone! I saw a Russian correspondent, a strong, brutal-looking man, go off into hysterics; I saw another run amuck through the camp, shooting right and left, and finally blow his own brains out. Many a night I sobbed myself to sleep! The men who live through tragedies, Aynesworth, age fast. I expect that I shall find Wingrave changed."

"I would give a good deal," Aynesworth declared, "to have known him when you did."

Lovell nodded.

"You should be able to judge of the past," he said, "by the present. Four years of—intimate companionship with any man should be enough!"

"Perhaps!" Aynesworth declared. "And yet I can assure you that I know no more of Wingrave to-day than when I first was attracted to him by your story, and became his secretary. It is a humiliating confession, but it is the truth."

"That is why you remain with him," Lovell remarked.

"I suppose so! I have often meant to leave, but somehow, when the time comes, I stay on. His life seems to be made up of brutalities, small and large. He ruins a man with as little compunction as one could fancy him, in his younger days, pulling the legs from a fly. I have never seen him do a kindly action. And yet, all the time I find myself watching for it. A situation arises, and I say to myself: 'Now I am going to see something different.' I never do, and yet I always expect it. Am I boring you, Lovell?"

"Not in the least. Go on! Anything concerning Wingrave interests me."

"It is four years ago, you know, since I went to him. My first glimpse of his character was the cold brutality with which he treated Lady Ruth when she went to see him. Then we went down to his country-place in Cornwall. There was a small child there, whose

father had been the organist of the village, and who had died penniless. There was no one to look after her, no one to save her from the charity-schools and domestic service afterward. The church was on Wingrave's estate; it should have been his duty to augment the ridiculous salary the dead man had received. Would you believe it, Wingrave refused to do a single thing for that child! He went down there like a vandal, to sell the heirlooms and pictures which had belonged to his family for generations. He had no time, he told me coldly, for sentiment!"

"It sounds brutal enough," Lovell admitted. "What became of the child?"

"One of her father's relations turned up, after all, and took care of her," Aynesworth said. "Wingrave knew nothing about that, though. Then, on the voyage across the Atlantic, there was a silly, pretty little woman on board, who was piqued by Wingrave's indifference, and tried to flirt with him. In a few days she was his slave! She was going home to her husband, and you would have thought that any decent fellow would have told her that she was a little fool, and let her go. But not Wingrave! She was landing with him at New York, but some one among the passengers, who guessed what was up, sent a wireless to her husband, and he met us at the landing-stage."

"Nothing came of that, then?"

"No; but it wasn't Wingrave's fault. Then he began dealing with some shares in a mine—the mine you know! They were supposed to be worthless, and one boy, who was a little young to the game, sold him too many. Wingrave was bleeding these brokers for hundreds of thousands of dollars, and the boy came and asked to be let off, by paying his whole fortune, to escape being hammered. Wingrave refused! I believe if the boy hadn't just been married, he'd have blown his brains out!"

Lovell laughed.

"I don't envy you your job," he remarked. "Is there nothing to set down on the credit side of the ledger?"

"Not much," Aynesworth answered. "He is a fine sportsman, and he saved my life in the Rockies, which makes me feel a bit uncomfortable sometimes. He has a sense of justice, for he heard of this mine from a man in prison, and he has kept accounts, showing the fellow's share down to the last half-penny. But I have never yet known him to speak a kindly word, or do a kindly deed. He seems intent upon carrying out to the letter his own principles—to make as many people as possible suffer for his own broken life. Now that he is back here, a millionaire, with immense power for good or for evil, I am almost afraid of him. I wouldn't be Lady Ruth or her husband for something."

Lovell smoked thoughtfully for a time.

"Wingrave was always a little odd," he remarked, "but I never thought that he was a bad chap."

"Go and see him now," Aynesworth said. "Tell me if you think he wears a mask, or whether he is, indeed, what he seems."

The hall-porter entered the room and addressed Aynesworth.

"Gentleman called for you, sir," he announced.

"It is Wingrave!" Aynesworth declared. "Come and speak to him."

They descended the stairs together. Outside, Wingrave was leaning back in the corner of an electric brougham reading the paper. Aynesworth put his head in at the window.

"You remember Lovell, Mr. Wingrave?" he said. "We were just talking when your message came up. I've brought him down to shake hands with you."

Wingrave folded his paper down at the precise place where he had been reading, and extended a very limp hand. His manner betrayed not the slightest interest or pleasure.

"How are you, Lovell?" he asked. "Some time since we met."

"A good many years," Lovell answered.

"Finished your campaigning?" Win-

grave inquired. "Knocked you about a bit, haven't they?"

"They very nearly finished me," Lovell admitted. "I shall pick up all right over here, though."

There was a moment's silence. Lovell's thoughts had flashed backward through the years, back to the time when he had sat within a few feet of this man, in a crowded court of justice, and listened through the painful stillness of that heavy atmosphere, charged with tragedy, to the slow unfolding of the drama of his life. There had been passion enough then in his voice and in his eyes, emotion enough in his twitching features and restless gestures, to speak of the fire below! And now, pale and cold, the man who had gripped his fingers then, and held on to them like a vise, seemed to find nothing except a slight boredom in this unexpected meeting.

"I shall see you again, I hope," Wingrave remarked at last. "By the bye, if we do meet, I should be glad if you would forget our past acquaintance. Sir Wingrave Seton does not exist any longer. I prefer to be known only as Mr. Wingrave, from America."

Lovell nodded.

"As you wish, of course," he answered. "I do not think," he added, "that you need fear recognition. I myself should have passed you in the street."

Wingrave leaned back in the carriage.

"Aynesworth," he said, "if you are ready, will you get in and tell the man to drive to Cadogan Square? Good night, Mr. Lovell."

Lovell reentered the club with a queer little smile at his lips. The brougham glided up into the Strand, and turned westward.

"We are going straight to the Barringtons'?" Aynesworth asked.

"Yes," Wingrave answered. "While I think of it, Aynesworth, I wish you to remember this: Both Lady Ruth and her husband seem to think it part of the game to try and make a cat's-paw of you. I am not suggesting that they are likely to succeed, but I do think it possible that one of them may ask you questions concerning certain investments in which I am interested. I rely upon you to give them no information."

"I know very little about your investments—outside the mine," Aynesworth answered. "They couldn't very well approach a more ignorant person. Are you going to help Barrington to make a fortune?"

Wingrave turned his head. There was a slight contraction of the forehead, an ominous glitter in his steel-gray eyes.

"I think," he said, "you know that I am not likely to do that."

The two men did not meet again till late in the evening. Lady Ruth's rooms were crowded, for it was the beginning of the political season, and her parties were always popular. Nevertheless, she found time to beckon Wingrave to her before they had been in the room many minutes.

"I want to talk to you," she said a little abruptly. "You might have come this afternoon, as you promised."

Lady Ruth was a wonderful woman. A well-known statesman had just asked a friend her age.

"I don't know," was the answer, "but whatever it is, she doesn't look it."

To-night she was almost girlish. Her complexion was delicate and perfectly natural; the graceful lines of her figure suggested more the immaturity of youth than any undue slimness. She wore a wonderful collar of pearls around her long, shapely neck, but very little other jewelry. The touch of her fingers upon Wingrave's coat-sleeve was a carefully calculated thing. If he had thought of it, he could have felt the slight appealing pressure with which she led him toward one of the smaller rooms.

"There are two chairs there," she said. "Come and sit down. I have something to say to you."

CHAPTER XVIII.

For several minutes Lady Ruth said nothing. She was leaning back in the farthest corner of her chair, her head

resting slightly upon her fingers, her eyes studying with a curious intentness the outline of Wingrave's pale, hard face. He was either unconscious of, or indifferent to, her close scrutiny, and had simply the air of a man possessed of an inexhaustible fund of patience.

"Wingrave," she said quietly, "I think the time has gone by when I was afraid of you."

He turned slightly toward her, but did not speak.

"I am now possessed," she continued, "of a more womanly sentiment. I am curious."

"Ah!" he murmured, "you were always a little inclined that way."

"I am curious about you," she continued. "You are, comparatively speaking, young, well looking enough, and strong. Your hand is firmly planted upon the lever which moves the world. What are you going to do?"

"That," he said, "depends upon many things."

"You may be ambitious," she remarked. "If so, you conceal it admirably. You may be devoting your powers to the consummation of vengeance against those who have treated you ill. There are no signs of that, either, at present."

"We have excellent authority," he remarked, "for the statement that a considerable amount of satisfaction is derivable from the exercise of that sentiment."

"Perhaps," she answered. "But the pursuit of vengeance for wrongs of the past is the task of a fool. Now, you are not a fool. You carry your life locked up within you, as a strong man should. But there are always some who may look in through the windows. I should like to be one."

"An empty cupboard," he declared. "A cupboard swept bare by time and necessity."

She shook her head.

"Your life," she said, "is molded toward a purpose. What is it?"

"I must ask myself the question," he declared, "before I can tell you the answer."

"No," she said; "the necessity does not exist. Your reckless pursuit of wealth, your return here, the use you are making of my husband and me, are all means toward some end. Why not tell me?"

"Your imagination," he declared, "is running away with you."

"Are you our enemy?" she asked. "Is this seeming friendship of yours a cloak, to hide some scheme of yours to make us suffer? Or——" She drew a little closer to him, and her eyes drooped.

"Or what?" he repeated.

"Is there a little left," she whispered, "of the old folly?"

"Why not?" he answered quietly. "I was very much in love with you."

"It is dead," she murmured. "I believe that you hate me now."

Her voice was almost a caress. She was leaning a little toward him; her eyes were seeking to draw his.

"Hate you! How impossible!" he said calmly. "You are still a beautiful woman, you know, Ruth."

He turned and studied her critically. Lady Ruth raised her eyes furtively, but dropped them at once. She felt herself growing paler. A spasm of the old fear was upon her.

"Yes," he continued, "age has not touched you. You can still pour, if you will, the magic drug into the wine of fools. By and by I must not be selfish. Aren't you rather neglecting your guests?"

"Never mind my guests," she answered. "I have been wanting to talk to you alone for days. Why have you done this? Why are you here? What is it that you are seeking for in life?"

"A little amusement only," he declared. "I cannot find it, except among my own kind."

"You have not the appearance of a pleasure-seeker," she answered.

"Mine is a passive search," he said. "I have some years to live; and of solitude—well, I have tasted at once the joys and the depths."

"You are not in love with me any longer, are you?" she asked.

"I am not bold enough to deny it,"

he answered, "but do not be afraid that I will embarrass you with a declaration. To tell you the truth, I have not much feeling left of any sort."

"You mean to keep your own counsel, then?" she asked.

"It is so little to keep," he murmured; "and I have parted with so much."

She measured the emotion of his tone, the curious, yet perfectly natural indifference of his manner; and she shivered a little. Always she feared what she could not understand.

"I had hoped," she said sadly, "that we might at least have been friends."

He shook his head.

"I have no fancy," he declared, "for the cemeteries of affection. You must remember that I am beginning life anew. I do not know myself yet, or you. Let us drift into the knowledge of one another, and perhaps——"

"Well? Perhaps?"

"There may be no question of friendship."

Lady Ruth went back to her guests, and, with the effortless ease of long training, she became once more the gracious and tactful hostess. But in her heart the fear had grown a little stronger, and a specter walked by her side. Once during the evening her husband looked at her questioningly, and she breathed a few words to him. He laughed reassuringly.

"Oh, Wingrave's all right, I believe," he said; "it's only his manner that puts you off a bit. He's just the same with every one. I don't think he means anything by it."

Lady Ruth shivered, but she said nothing. Just then Aynesworth came up, and with a motion of her fan she called him to her.

"Please take me into the other room," she said. "I want a glass of champagne, and on the way you can tell me all about America."

"One is always making epigrams about America," he protested, smiling. "Won't you spare me?"

"Tell me, then, how you progress with your great character study."

"Ah!" he remarked quietly, "you come now to a more interesting subject."

"Yes?"

"Frankly, I do not progress at all."

"So far as you have gone?"

"If," he said, "I were to take pen and paper and write down, at this moment, my conclusions so far as I have been able to form any, I fancy that they would make evil reading. Permit me!"

They stood for a few minutes before the long sideboard. A footman had poured champagne into their glasses, and Lady Ruth talked easily enough the jargon of the moment. But when they turned away, she moved slowly, and her voice was almost a whisper.

"Tell me this," she said; "is he really as hard and cold as he seems?"

"I believe he is," Aynesworth answered. "I can tell you that much, at least, without breach of faith. So far as one who watches him can tell, he lives for his own gratification; and his indulgence in it does not, as a rule, make for the happiness of other people."

"Then what does he want with us?" she demanded almost sharply. "I ask myself that question until—I am terrified."

Aynesworth hesitated.

"It is very possible," he said, "that he is simply making use of you to reenter the world. Curiously enough, he has never seemed to care for solitude. He makes numberless acquaintances. What pleasure he finds in it I do not know, but he seldom avoids people. He may be simply making use of you."

"What do you think yourself?"

"I cannot tell," Aynesworth answered. "Indeed I cannot tell."

She left him a little impatiently, and Aynesworth joined the outside of the circle of men who had gathered around Wingrave.

The latter was answering questions readily enough, if a little laconically. He was quite aware that he occupied in society the one unique place to which princes might not even aspire—there was something of divinity about his

millions, something of awe in the tone of the men with whom he talked.

Women pretended to be interested in him because of the romance of his suddenly acquired wealth—the men did not trouble to deceive themselves or any one else.

A break-up of the group came when a certain great and much-talked-about lady sent across an imperative message by her cavalier for the moment. She desired that Mr. Wingrave should be presented to her.

They passed down the room together a few moments later, the marchioness, wonderfully dressed in a gown of strange turquoise blue, looking up at her companion, and talking with somewhat unusual animation.

Every one made remarks, of course, and exchanged significant glances and unlovely smiles. It was so like the marchioness to claim, as a matter of course, the best of everything that was going.

Lady Ruth watched them with a curious sense of irritation, for which she could not altogether account. It was impossible that she should be jealous, and yet it was equally certain that she was annoyed.

If Wingrave resisted his present fair captor, he would enjoy a notability equal to that which his wealth already conferred upon him. No man as yet had done it. Was it likely that Wingrave could wear two crowns? Lady Ruth beckoned Aynesworth to her.

"Tell me," she said, "what is Mr. Wingrave's general attitude toward my sex?"

"Absolute indifference," he declared promptly, "unless——"

He stopped short.

"You must go on," she told him.

"Unless he is possessed of the ability to make them suffer," he answered, after a moment's hesitation.

"Then Emily will never attract him." she declared almost triumphantly, "for she has no more heart than he has."

"He has yet to discover it," Aynesworth remarked. "When he does, I think you will find that he will shrug his shoulders—and say farewell."

"All the same," Lady Ruth murmured to herself, "Emily is a cat."

Lady Ruth spoke to one more man that night of Wingrave—and that man was her husband. Their guests had departed, and Lady Ruth, in a marvelous, white dressing-gown, was lying upon the sofa in her room.

"How do you get on with Wingrave?" she asked. "What do you think of him?"

Barrington shrugged his shoulders.

"What can one think of a man," he answered, "who goes about like an animated mummy? I have done my best; I talked to him for nearly half-an-hour at a stretch to-day, when I took him to the club for lunch. He is the incarnation of indifference. He won't listen to politics; women—or tales about them, at any rate—seem to bore him to extinction; he drinks only as a matter of form, and he won't talk finance. By the bye, Ruth, I wish you could get him to give you a tip. I scarcely see how we are going to get through the season, unless something turns up."

"Is it as bad as that?" she asked.

"Worse," her husband answered gloomily. "We've been living on our capital for years. Every acre of Queen's Norton is mortgaged, and I'm shot if I can see how we're going to pay the interest!"

She sighed a little wearily.

"Do you think that it would be wise?" she asked. "Let me tell you something, Lumley. I have only known what fear was once in my life. I am afraid now. I am afraid of Wingrave. I have a fancy that he does not mean any good to us."

Barrington frowned, and threw his cigarette into the fire with a little jerk.

"Nonsense!" he exclaimed. "The man's not quite so bad as that. We've been useful to him. We've done exactly what he asked. The other matter's dead and buried. We don't want his money, but it is perfectly easy for him to help us make a little."

She looked up at him quietly.

"I think, Lumley, that it is dangerous," she said.

"Then you're not the clever woman

I take you for," he answered, turning to leave the room. "Just as you please. Only it will be that or the bankruptcy court before long."

Lady Ruth lay quite still, looking into the fire. When her maid came, she moved on tiptoe, for it seemed to her that her mistress slept. But Lady Ruth was wide-awake, though the thoughts which were flitting through her brain had, perhaps, some kinship with the land of dreams.

CHAPTER XIX.

"Any place more unlike a lawyer's office I never saw!" the girl exclaimed as she entered. "Flowers outside and flowers on your desk, Mr. Pengarth! Don't you have to apologize to your clients for your surroundings? There's absolutely nothing, except the brass plate outside, to show that this isn't an old-fashioned farmhouse, stuck down in the middle of a village. Fuchsias in the window-sill, too!"

He placed a chair for her, and with a sigh of relief laid down the deed which he had been examining. It really was very hard work pretending to be busy.

"You see, Miss Juliet," he explained, with twinkling eyes, "my clients are all country folk, and it makes them feel more at home to find a lawyer's office not very different from their own parlor."

She nodded.

"What would the great man say?" she inquired, pointing to the rows of black tin-boxes which lined the walls.

"Sir Wingrave Seton is never likely to come here again, I am afraid," he answered. "If he did, I don't think he'd mind. To tell you the truth, I'm rather proud of my offices, young lady."

She looked around.

"They are nice," she said decidedly, "but unbusinesslike."

"You're going to put up the pony and stay to lunch, of course? I'll ring for the boy."

She stopped him.

"Please don't," she said. "I have come to see you—on business."

Mr. Pengarth, after his first gasp of astonishment, was a different man. He fumbled about on the desk, and produced a pair of gold spectacles, which he adjusted with great nicety on the edge of his very short nose.

"On business, my dear!" he repeated. "Well, well, to be sure! Is it Miss Harrison who has sent you?"

Mr. Pengarth's visitor looked positively annoyed. She leaned across the table toward him, so that the roses in her large hat almost brushed his forehead. Her wonderful brown eyes were filled with reproach.

"Mr. Pengarth," she said, "do you know how old I am?"

"How old, my dear? Why, let me see! Fourteen and—why, God bless my soul, you must be eighteen!"

"I am nineteen years old, Mr. Pengarth," the young lady announced with dignity. "Perhaps you will be kind enough to treat me now—er—with a little more respect."

"Nineteen!" he repeated vaguely. "God bless my—nineteen years old!"

"I consider myself," she repeated, "of age. I have come to see you about my affairs."

"Yes, yes," he said. "Quite natural."

"For four years," she continued, "I seem to have been supported by some relative of my father's, who has never vouchsafed to send me a single line or message, except through you. I have written letters which I have given to you to forward. There has been no reply. Have you sent on those letters, Mr. Pengarth?"

"Certainly, my dear; certainly."

"Can you tell me how it is that I have had no answer?"

Mr. Pengarth coughed. He was not at all comfortable.

"Your guardian, Miss Juliet, is somewhat eccentric," he answered; "and he is a very busy man."

"Can you tell me, Mr. Pengarth, exactly what relation he is to me?"

There was a dead silence. Mr. Pengarth found the room suddenly warm,

and mopped his forehead with a large silk handkerchief.

"I have no authority," he declared, "to answer any questions."

"Then, can you tell me of your own accord why there is all this mystery? Why may I not know who he is? Why may I not write to him? Am I anything to be ashamed of, that he will not trust me even with his name? I am tired of accepting so much, and not being able to offer even my thanks in return. It is too much like charity. I have made up my mind that if this is to go on, I will go away and earn my own living."

"Rubbish!" he exclaimed briskly. "What at?"

"Painting," she declared triumphantly. "I have had this in my mind for some time, and I have been trying to see what I can do best. I have quite decided, now, to be an artist."

"Pictures," he declared sententiously, "don't sell."

"Mine do," she answered smiling. "I have had a check for three guineas from a shop in London for a little seapiece I did in two afternoons."

He regarded her admiringly.

"You are a wonderful child!" he exclaimed.

"I am not a child at all," she interrupted warmly, "and you can just sit down and write to your silly client and tell him so."

"I will certainly write to him," he affirmed. "I will do so to-day. You will not do anything rash until I have had time to get a reply."

"No," she answered graciously. "I will wait for a week. After that—well, I might do anything."

"You wouldn't leave Tredowen, Miss Juliet!" he protested.

"It would break my heart, of course," she declared, "but I would do it, and trust to time to heal it up again. Tredowen seems like home to me, but it isn't really, you know. Some day, Sir Wingrave Seton may want to come back and live there himself. Are you quite sure, Mr. Pengarth, that he won't be angry to hear that we have been living at the house all this time?"

"Certain," Mr. Pengarth declared firmly. "He left everything entirely in my hands. He did not wish me to let it, but he did not care about it being altogether uninhabited. The arrangement I was able to make with your guardian was a most satisfactory one."

"But surely he will come back himself some time?" she asked.

The lawyer shook his head sorrowfully.

"I am afraid," he said, "that Sir Wingrave has no affection for the place whatever."

"No affection for Tredowen," she repeated wonderingly. "Do you know what I think, Mr. Pengarth? I think that it is the most beautiful house in the world."

"And yet you talk of leaving it!"

"I don't want to go," she answered, "but I don't want to be accepting things all my life from some one whose name even I do not know."

"Well, well," he said, "you must wait until I have written my letter. Time enough to talk about that later on. Now, if you won't stay to lunch, you must come and see Richard, and have some cake and a glass of wine."

"How sweet of you!" she exclaimed. "I'm frightfully hungry. Can I do anything to stop growing, Mr. Pengarth? I'm getting taller and taller. Just look at me!"

She stood up. She was head and shoulders taller than the little lawyer, slim as a lath, and yet wonderfully graceful. She laughed down at him and made a little grimace.

"I'm a giraffe, ain't I? And I'm still growing. Do show me your garden, Mr. Pengarth. I want to see your hollyhocks. Every one is talking about them."

They were joined in a few minutes by a prim, dignified little lady, ridiculously like Mr. Pengarth, whom he called sister, and whom Juliet called Miss Rachel. Juliet walked down the garden between them.

"Sister," Mr. Pengarth said, "Juliet has come to-day to see me on business. In effect, she has come to remind me that she is grown up."

"Grown up!" Miss Rachel protested vigorously. "Rubbish!"

"I am nineteen years old," Juliet declared.

"And what if you are?" Miss Rachel replied briskly. "In my young days we were in the nursery at nineteen."

"Quite so," Mr. Pengarth assented, with relief. "You took me by storm just now, Miss Juliet. After all, you are only a child."

"I am old enough to feel and to mean all that I said to you, Mr. Pengarth," she answered gravely. "And that reminds me, too, there was something else I meant to ask you."

"Sister," Mr. Pengarth said, "have you ordered the wine and the cake?"

"Bless me, no!" Miss Rachel cried. "It shall be ready in five minutes."

She entered the house. Mr. Pengarth stooped to pick some lavender.

"The only time I ever saw Sir Wingrave Seton," she said, "was on the day before I was told that a relative of my father's had been found, who was willing to take charge of me. There was a younger man with him, some one very, very different from Sir Wingrave. Do you know who he was?"

"A sort of secretary of Sir Wingrave's, I believe, dear. I never met him. I was, unfortunately, away at the time they came."

"He was very kind and nice to me," the girl continued; "just as nice as Sir Wingrave was horrid. I suppose it was because they came on that day, but I have always connected him somehow with this mysterious relative of mine. Mr. Aynesworth didn't help to find him, did he?"

"Certainly not," the lawyer answered. "The instructions I had came first from Mr. Aynesworth didn't help to find It was he who appeared to have made the necessary inquiries."

"Horrid old man! He used to make me feel that I wanted to cry, every time that I saw him."

"Miss Rachel is calling us," the lawyer said, with obvious relief.

"New cake," Juliet declared; "I can smell it. Delicious!"

CHAPTER XX.

"There are two letters," Aynesworth announced, "which I have not opened. One, I think, is from the Marchioness of Westhampton, the other from some solicitors at Truro. They were both marked private."

Wingrave was at breakfast in his flat. Aynesworth had been in an adjoining room sorting his correspondence. Wingrave accepted the two letters, and glanced through them without remark. But whereas he bestowed scarcely a second's consideration upon the broad sheet of white paper, with the small coronet and the faint perfume of violets, the second letter apparently caused him some annoyance. He read it through for a second time, with a slight frown upon his forehead.

"You must cancel my engagements for two days, Aynesworth," he said. "I have to go out of town."

Aynesworth nodded.

"There's nothing very special on," he remarked. "Do you want me to go with you?"

"It is not necessary," Wingrave answered. "I am going," he added, after a moment's pause, "to Cornwall."

Aynesworth was immediately silent.

"Be so good as to look out the trains for me," Wingrave continued. "I cannot go until the afternoon. Perhaps, if you are not too busy, you will see that Morrison packs some things for me."

He moved to the writing-table and wrote a few lines to the marchioness, regretting that his absence from town would prevent his dining with her on the following day.

Then he studied the money column in several newspapers for half an hour, and telephoned to his broker.

At eleven o'clock he rode for an hour in the quietest part of the park, avoiding, so far as possible, any one he knew, and galloping whenever he could. It was the only form of exercise in which he was known to indulge, although the knowledge of English games which he sometimes displayed was a little puzzling to some of his acquaintances.

On his return, he made a simple but correct toilet, and at half past one met Lady Ruth at Prince's Restaurant.

Lady Ruth's gown of dove color, with faint touches of blue, was effective, and she knew it. Nevertheless, she was a little pale, and her manner lacked that note of quiet languor which generally characterized it. She talked rather more than usual, chattering idly about the acquaintances to whom she was continually nodding and bowing.

Her face hardened a little as the marchioness, on her way through the room with a party of friends, stopped at their table.

The two women exchanged the necessary number of inanities, then the marchioness turned to Wingrave.

"You won't forget that you are dining with me to-morrow?"

Wingrave shook his head regretfully.

"I am sorry," he said, "but I have to go out of town. I have just written you."

"What a bore!" she remarked. "Business, of course."

She nodded and passed on. Her farewell to Lady Ruth was distinctly curt. Wingrave resumed his seat and his luncheon without remark.

"Hateful woman!" Lady Ruth murmured.

"I thought you were friends," Wingrave remarked.

"Yes, we are," Lady Ruth assented; "the sort of friendship you men don't know much about. You see a good deal of her, don't you?"

Wingrave raised his head and looked at Lady Ruth contemplatively.

"Why do you ask me that?" he asked.

"Curiosity."

"If I do," he remarked, "you should be grateful to her."

"Why?"

"It may save you a similar infliction."

Lady Ruth was silent for several moments.

"Perhaps," she said at last, "I do not choose to be relieved."

Wingrave bowed, his glass in hand. His lips were curled into the semblance of a smile, but he did not say a word. Lady Ruth leaned a little across the table.

"Wingrave," she asked, "do you know what fear is? Perhaps not. You are a man, you see. No one has ever called me a coward. You wouldn't, would you?"

"No," he said deliberately, "you are not a coward."

"There is only one sort of fear which I know," she continued, "and that is the fear of what I do not understand. And that is why, Wingrave, I am afraid of you."

He set down his glass, and his fingers trifled for a moment with its stem.

"You have not yet explained yourself," she reminded him. "Of all people in the world, you have chosen us for your presumptive friends. Why? You hate us both. You know that you do. Is it part of a scheme? Lumley is investing money on your advice. I am allowing myself to be seen about with you more than is prudent, considering all things. Do you want to rake out the ashes of our domestic hearth—to play the part of melodramatic villain? You are ingenious enough and powerful enough."

"You put strange ideas into my head," he told her lightly. "Why should I not play the part that you suggest? It might be amusing, and you certainly deserve all the evil which I could bring upon you."

She leaned a little across the table toward him. Her eyes were soft and bright, and they looked full into his. The color in her cheeks was natural. The air around him was faintly fragrant with the perfume of her clothes and hair.

"We couldn't leave off playing at the game—and act it, could we?" she murmured. "We couldn't really—be friends?"

TO BE CONTINUED.

Breaking Into Literature

Cheston Syer

In this very amusing little sketch Mr. Syer describes how a disappointed but persistent author finally contrived to get his rejected manuscript in print. His method, however, will hardly commend itself to disappointed authors generally

To the Story-teller Publishing Co.

Dear Editur: I am sending you along with this a story which aint never been published; nor any part of it, in whole or parcel, borrowed from anything what has.

It is entitled, as you will discover, Lise and Me, and is founded largely on facts which have took place, cause me in the title is yours truly in the flesh and Lise is my Lise; the one I have bowed down to and worshiped, aye these many years. So if there is anything in that old saw bout truth being stranger than fiction I dont see any reason why Lise and Me aint going to gladden the hearts of your readers at regular rates. Also I expect to get fifty of Sam Stringer's coin. Stringer is the town wag and he thinks he fergot mor'n most of knows. He bet me fifty I couldnt write a story that would be published. Now thats just the situation and I dont make any beans in telling you bout it. I want you to know I have confidence in myself and feel that Lise and Me aint no story that will be chucked into an envelope and fired back with regrets.

I am a life-long subscriber to the *Story-teller* and will anxiously watch for the appearance of Lise and Me.

Yours truly,

Zeke Bender.

Mr. Zeke Bender.

My dear Bender: Your making the bet of fifty with your friend Stringer reminds me of a certain class of people who rush in where angels fear to tread. We always have a niche in our hearts for subscribers, especially old ones, but a hundred-to-one-shot plunger can hardly expect a poor editor to protect his bets.

To be frank with you, Zeke, "Lise and Me" do and say so many unreasonable things, I am sure the readers of the *Story-teller* would not stand for it, even as fiction. I would suggest that you try again, if I were not positive that the napkin-wrapped talents passed you by your forefathers were more akin to agriculture than literature.

Pay up your bet like a man, Zeke, and forget about it. Then go in to win Lise. If she persists in sitting on your neck when you wrestle with her for a kiss, stop wrestling and use subterfuge. Make her think your love is growing cold; that her kisses are not wanted. If my size-up of Lise is near correct, you will, in little time, have her "head of gold" upon your necktie, and it will be placed there voluntarily.

This is all disinterested advice that I would hand out to any old subscriber.

Yours, etc.,

Ed. *Story-teller.*

To the Story-teller Publishing Co.

Dear Editur: Yours to hand. It aint so hard when you let a fellow down light this way. What makes me riled is to be jolted by one of them printed slips. Just the same all this aint getting Lise and Me published and thats what I want and what I'm agoing to do if it takes a leg. It aint so much the money or the glory in seeing my work in print as it is the way Stringer will take on. That fellow, friend Ed-

itur, would bullyrag me whenever and wherever he got the chance forevermore. I read somewhere once bout a father who was giving his son advice. He said Son, git there. Always git there. Honest if you can but always git there. Thats me Mr. Editur. This story has just got to be published if I dont get a copeck for it. Stringer aint going to give me the whipsaw in a little thing like this—nosirree. So please get busy and tell me by the mail coming back that as a present you will accept and publish Lise and Me.

Much oblige for your advice bout Lise. You mean well I know, but the trouble is you dont know Lise. If I'd start playing any parts that was not natural around Lise she'd just naturally rap me on the head with the thing that happened most convenient to her hand. Life would be of the kind called strenuous. No no Paulina, not your Uncle Ezekial. Its me for the simple life. If your advice factory for old subscribers aint exhausted a few small reams concerning the how to publish Lise and Me will be the most appreciated by,

Yours etc.,
ZEKE BENDER.

MR. ZEKE BENDER.

DEAR ZEKE: If I bandied words with all literary aspirants as I am doing with you, I would require about seventeen stenographers, and my assistant would have to do all my regular work. The way I am treating you is the exception, not the rule, let me tell you. Why I make you an exception I hardly know myself. Certain it is that being an old subscriber has nothing to do with it. That fact was merely mentioned in jest. The subscribers to the *Story-teller,* new and old, always receive, we are sure you will admit, full value for their money, and we in nowise feel under obligation beyond making the *Story-teller* the best that brain and talent can produce.

Your determination to produce "Lise and Me" cannot alter our previous decision. Neither do I see any way around unless you take recourse to the advertising department. We always stand ready to pay fairly for what we consider good stories.

In case you decide, in order to get the best of your friend Stringer, to publish "Lise and Me" at regular advertising rates, I would be willing to edit your work—that is to say, correct your English and punctuation, and cut it down in such a way that you would not come out loser.

Lise may be of that kind called the Amazon, but if you were to stay away from her for a week or ten days at a time and incidentally be seen with some other girl, I may again be wrong but I can't help but think it would somewhat alter present conditions.

Yours, etc.,
Ed. *Story-teller.*

TO THE STORY-TELLER PUBLISHING CO.

DEAR EDITUR: Yours to hand. For ways that are dark and tricks that are vain the wily Editur is peculiar. You are giving me straight goods all right I guess, and I want Lise and Me in print and whether it goes through in the regular way or through the advertising department dont cut much figger. Put me wise on the way to go ahead and I'm your right willing slave.

In your capacity as Editur your advice seems hefty with wisdom but when you talk about Lise you just seem to me plumb loco. I'd no more let Lise see me with some Dolly Varden than I'd drink arsnick. Dont know but what if I had to do one or the other I'd take the arsnick. I wouldn't then be so sure of hell afterwards.

Yours
ZEKE BENDER.

MR. ZEKE BENDER.

DEAR MR. BENDER: "Lise and Me" has been turned over to this department for attention, and I herewith enclose you rate card. Your story contains, approximately, six thousand words, but our editor informs us that he can revise same so that the cost to you for publication, at our regular lineal rate, will be only forty-five dollars. This will leave you five dollars of

Stringer's money, save you your own fifty, and you will also have the satisfaction of publishing a story over your own name.

This figure applies to the space that would be necessary by the use of nonpareil type. If you wished brevier, there would be an additional cost.

As a favor to you, we will forget to mark your story as advertising matter, which would be customary under ordinary circumstances. Trusting we will in due course receive your remittance and order for publication, we are,

Yours, etc.,
STORY-TELLER PUB. CO.
ADV. DEP'T.

TO THE STORY-TELLER PUBLISHING CO.

GENTS: Yours to hand. You'll find tucked in with this letter the forty five necessary to introduce yours truly to the literary world as one of their kind —a manufacturer of short stories. It sure does seem tough though to have to break in this way. But to correl Stringers fifty and have the horse-laff on him is worth forty five and then some. I sure feel powerful good and keen when I think of Stringer. But when I try to figure out how Lise is going to take this literary ambition of mine in which she so prominently figures, I somehow have an immediate desire to connect with the cup that cheers.

Yours etc.,
ZEKE BENDER.

(*A month or so later.*)

TO THE STORY-TELLER PUBLISHING CO.

DEAR EDITUR: Its me for the tall piney. The Storyteller come today and Lise and Me, the way you fixed it, sure did me proud. But you juggled some of them scenes so that Lise seems to have taken some exception. Anyhow bout two hours after the carriers cart left her paper she calls up me over phone and says, Is that you Zeke Bender? Tis I, my honeybunch, I sent back.

Then says she, she says, as soft as cotton, Can you come over Zeke dear. I wants to see you right bad.

Says I, My dear I'm not feeling well.

Says she, I'm sorry cause I hates to kill a sick chicken, they always seem so helpless like.

As I said, friend Editur, its me for the deep timber till Lise cools off. Stringer seemed to smell a nigger in the pile but that story with your trulys name hanging to it left no pegs to hang ifs or buts on.

Yours truly,
ZEKE BENDER.

THE FAMILY SPOONS

WHILE rummaging through the drawers of a bookcase in her daughter's room in search of some writing-paper the other day, Mrs. Wimberling came upon a bundle of letters tied with a pink string and emitting a faint perfume.

She untied the bundle and glanced through several of the letters.

Then she picked them up, went down-stairs, and confronted her daughter.

"Eunice," she said, in a high state of indignation, "who is the idiot that you're corresponding with, I'd like to know? Of all the lovesick trash I ever saw this is absolutely the worst. I shall consider it my duty to report the matter to your father if this thing goes any further. Who wrote these letters?"

"I am not going to lie to you about them, mama," said Miss Eunice serenely. "If you will put on your glasses and look at them again you will find that they're a lot of old letters papa wrote to you when you were a girl."

Faraday Bobbs, Free Lance

By Louis Joseph Vance

Author of "The Blood Yoke," "The Private War," Etc.

II.—AN EMPEROR UNAWARES

(*A Complete Story*)

THOUGH it was broad daylight, though the hour was no later than three o'clock of a peaceful summer's afternoon—and the more peaceful since it was likewise a Sunday—Mr. Faraday Bobbs, fully clothed save for his shoes, lay stretched at length upon the spotless counterpane of his bed in the Hôtel Royal Hungaria, sleeping the sleep of the justly travel-weary.

A twenty-four-hour jaunt, uninterrupted, across the Continent, in coaches such as it had pleased an inscrutable Providence to provide for the accommodation of the traveler whose need was urgent, and who might not wait for better, had worn upon Mr. Bobbs; and the need for sleep had grown so strong upon him that the bell-boy had no more than closed the door behind him than Bobbs, regardless, had thrown himself down to rest, and promptly slipped off into blissful unconsciousness.

Through the open window floated a vague murmur, a distant hum of sound from the boulevards, where Budapest paraded afoot and in carriages, and from the *rakparts*, the miles of quays, where it sunned itself around small iron tables and drank lager and consumed ices with a disregard for its internal economy truly German, however high might flame the jealous spirit of Magyar patriotism.

Through the window, too, came a gentle breeze to cool the flushed, tanned cheeks of the sleeper, and to stir, as with unseen fingers, the reddish-brown hair which was his abomination—since, he complained, it was neither the one thing nor the other, although the all-wise head of the passport bureau at Washington had decided that it was an unqualified red, and had so described it in his passport, which made a fellow feel something guilty, as if traveling under false pretenses, disguised, incognito.

But now Mr. Bobbs slept, careless of his hair's color; and the lines that fatigue had graven in his square-jawed, open, and honest countenance smoothed themselves away and vanished altogether, and there remained only the network of fine wrinkles that humor had creased beneath his eyes.

The drowsy, heated hours dragged, the sun declining, a touch of evening coolness stealing into the air; and still Mr. Bobbs did not stir, but lay as a log, inert, breathing deeply.

Left to himself, he would have slept the round of the clock; but the breeze that, as has been indicated, found itself burdened with so many other things that afternoon, presently bore to the sleeper's ears the sound of one singing—or, at least, it is charitable so to put

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This series began in the April number, which can be obtained through any newsdealer. Price ten cents.

it—a full, round, husky voice, that rose and fell and drawled and wailed and whooped in a tender ecstasy of sentiment:

"Teesin', teee-sin', I wuz oooonly teeeeeesin' you-oo-oo." .

And now Mr. Bobbs stirred restlessly, and moaned in his sleep.

"Teeesin', teesin'——"

The sleeper groaned again; an expression of acute suffering crossed his face—as the shadow of a cloud sweeps over a sunlit meadow.

"Of cawss yeou-oo knew-oo——"

Mr. Bobbs' lips opened and closed convulsively, his hands twitched, his lashes fluttered rebelliously, heavy with sleep.

"I wuz oh-oooh-nly teeeesin' yeou—oo—OO!"

Mr. Bobbs sat up on the side of his bed and yawned stupendously, digging his clenched fists into eyes reluctant to open. As he did so, again the voice took up the tender declaration; and—"Great Scott!" said Mr. Bobbs, in the accents of one startled out of a year's growth. "Lord bless the man! what in thunder is he trying to do with that fog-horn?"

He arose and went to the window, leaning out with his weight upon both hands on the sill, and stared across the courtyard. "Where is he?" grumbled Faraday. "Show him to me, and I'll eat him alive! That voice," he asserted with conviction, "hasn't been off the Bowery three months."

Be that as it might—whether or no—the voice continued, flinging abroad to the world the burden of its owner's passion; and presently the interested Mr. Bobbs discovered the singer himself—a moon-faced, heavily mustached, swart, and stalwart person, with protruding eyes and a fixed expression of absolute inanity—perched, with elephantine grace, upon the sill of a window across the court, and some distance toward the rear of the building.

Bobbs shook his fist at the fellow openly; but his protest went unnoticed, for the love-lorn one had eyes for nothing, it seemed, beyond a window over across from him, whereat Mr. Bobbs sagaciously divined the serenader glimpsed the form of his beloved.

And, there being nothing else to do about it, Bobbs, with a grin, and mentally promising himself the pleasure of the singer's acquaintance—were they not fellow-countrymen, after all?—turned back into his room and, now to the refrain of "Louisiana Lou," washed, changed his linen, and brushed up, preparatory to descending to the table d'hôte.

As he opened his door, another was banged farther down the corridor. Inasmuch as it was quite a feminine, thoroughly ladylike bang, and was followed by the swish of skirts and the tapping of heels, Mr. Bobbs surmised that, in all probability, he was to be ravished with the vision of the other American's inamorita. And when the woman swept past him, with her head up, her cheeks aflame, her eyes blazing—why, then Bobbs was very sure that he had been correct in his deduction.

Not that alone, but he was otherwise moved. The woman in the case was distinctly pretty, and carried herself with an air not only of indignation, but also of culture and breeding, and even in the brief glimpse that he had of her, Bobbs was convinced that whatever the pretensions of his infatuated compatriot, they were misplaced and doomed to ultimate and complete disappointment. More, he was prepared to do his part, uninvited, toward bringing about that consummation so lamentable, if, as he gathered, the other American's attentions were unwelcome and were persisted in.

But it was with a smile—for he knew the type well—that he locked his door and followed the woman down-stairs to the dining-hall.

When Bobbs entered the hall the girl was already seated at a distant table—with the length of the floor between herself and the doorway. And in this maneuver the American discerned design—even as he gathered its cause from the frequent apprehensive glances which she sent toward the door, upon the appearance of one or another of the table d'hôte's patrons, and her conse-

quent sighs—subdued, inaudible—of relief when she realized that not yet was her persecutor come.

And, watching her with covert interest and admiration—which he did not fear to do, since she had no eyes for aught save her plate and the doorway—Bobbs was again struck with the fine and splendid quality of her looks, the refinement and modesty of her carriage; and he wondered not alone that she should be unaccompanied by female companion or male protector, but that the eyes of her admirer should have looked so high. It must be patent to all others that the woman of his choice was beyond and above him in every essential particular.

Her nationality was a matter for conjecture—conjecture unrewarded, unless he chose to adopt the phrase-monger's *mot,* that a beautiful woman is the property of no one people, but the world's delight. If anything, he would have thought her French, though the soft and tender sweetness of her beauty was something English, and at war with the subdued, seductive smartness of dress and bearing so entirely Parisienne.

She ate sparingly and hastily, with, as has been said, a fearful eye to the door; and Bobbs, watching her, had no need to watch for her tormentor; her eventual, quickly repressed start was a sufficient signal to the American.

He looked up, half turning in his chair. The charmed one ambled in bulkily, fat cheeks red and beaming with recent application of soap and water, bold features contorted into a smirk of complacency and calflike adoration. The expansive proportions were encased in a serge suit of a glaring blue, relieved by a waistcoat of brilliantly figured silk—red and green predominating. A wisp of linen collar—no more—confined a neck of massive modeling, and held down a cravat of vivid scarlet, which had been pushed aside not to dim or hide the luster of a diamond—"Or a near-diamond?" Bobbs carped—as large and as blue as a robin's egg.

Shoes that shone like the sun, with soles half an inch thick, topped with pearl-buttoned, yellow spats, added the finishing touch to the costume—and completed the classification. Though, to tell the truth, it had needed only one full glance at that swarthy, red face, with its jet-black, waxed, and perfumed mustache, its coarse nose, popping eyes, and oily hair, to assure Bobbs that the resemblance he had noted was not accidental. And the photographer-errant went gallantly to the rescue of the shrinking, lonely figure at the far table.

He arose, pushing back his chair and extending a cordial hand. "Why, Captain Schmitt!" he cried. "Who would have expected to run across you here? Surely"—as the man paused unwillingly, reluctant eyes wavering—"I can't be mistaken—surely this is Captain Schmitt of the Tenderloin Station, in the old days. You haven't forgotten Bobbs—Stumpy Bobbs, the boys called me—who used to do the police courts for the *Sun?*"

The countenance of the burly ex-czar of the Tenderloin lit up with pleasure. After all, Bobbs considered, it was not a bad face—stripped of its coarseness, its overweening conceit, its abnormal vanity, there were discernible indications of humor, easy-going tolerance, and a sort of faithfulness.

"Well, I guess not!" returned the ex-police-captain, enfolding Bobbs' hand in a fist like a ham. "How are you, boy, and how does the world use you?"

"Sit down—sit down!" Bobbs protested violently. "We'll have a talk about old times. My, but it's like a whiff of old Broadway to see you, captain! Sit down and tell me all about it. What brings you here? And what are you drinking?"

Schmitt's eyes glistened. He could not refuse. With a final look of piteous appeal to the girl whose unconsciousness of his existence was stupendous, he yielded. After all, a talk with an old acquaintance was better than a problematical snubbing. He was beginning to be a prey to suspicions that his ardent advances were the least trifle unwelcome to their object—though it was monstrously incredible that this should be so, to one of his irresistible personal charms.

"Well, I don't mind if I do," he assented graciously. "But the wine's on me. Not a word, not a word"—impressively—"I'm on my vacation, you know, and nothing but money to spend—on my friends." And he glanced significantly toward a certain quarter.

But the girl had risen and was leaving the room. His face lengthened with disappointment as she passed their table without acknowledging his existence by so much as the flicker of an eyelash. "Sa-ay," he whispered hoarsely, bending toward Bobbs, his eyes on the retreating figure of her; "sa-ay, did you ever see a prettier stepper 'n that? Sa-ay, I'm a goner on her, and that's a fact."

"And the lady?" Bobbs smiled encouragingly.

"Aw, give her time, give her time!" retorted the captain waggishly. "I never seen her before I come here day before yestiddy. But she's a winner, all right, and it's me for her—to the limit, boy. She can have anything she wants, if she'll only be Mrs. Schmitt."

"Aren't you looking far ahead?"

"Aw, I don't know. Me, I'm Schmitt—when I wants anything, I generally gets it—see?"

He prattled on childishly — and drank. In an hour—for Bobbs could invent no serviceable pretext to escape—he was Bobbs' lifelong friend, and going to show him the time of his life. An American, Bowery-born and raised, of German parentage, he had been touring the old country, visiting relatives; and now was off "on his lonely," as he had it, making an unofficial inspection of the police arrangements of the great cities of the Old World.

"And, say," he concluded, with a heavy wink, "I can put you next to some good stuff in your line, boy. I'm right in with the bunch that's makin' the trouble here—whatchercall 'em?—the Separatists. Students, you know, and the rest of that gang—army officers, and the whole bunch. I'll introduce you as me friend, and there won't be nothing too good for you. You can go anywhere you please and get all the stuff you can use. That's straight!"

II.

Just beyond the shadow of the northernmost bastion, where the sunlight fell strong and clear, yet bland, the girl paused. For a moment she stood looking down from the heights, as if admiring the view; then, with hasty glances to the right and left and rear, she assured herself that she was unobserved, and sat down in a little, grassy hollow of the counterscarp.

Behind her rose the bastions of the northern enciente, frowning protectingly down upon loyal Buda. Before, in the immediate foreground, the ditch lay, rank-grown with weeds and lush grasses; she could have dropped her pencil to its bed. Beyond the scarp, the glacis sloped, a long, smooth, green, and treacherous declivity, to the street far below.

But beyond these a glorious prospect unrolled itself in the clear golden light of the flawless afternoon—Buda and Pest, a sea of roofs riven by the intense blue ribbon of the Danube, with its bordering miles of magnificent quays. To the northwest, behind the minarets of the mosque—Sheik Gul-Baba's tomb—that flaunts the crescent of the infidel in the face of a Christian people, beyond the truly imperial bulk of the imperial baths on the Budai Rakpart, Margaret Island divided the river's waters, like an emerald on a strip of bluest velvet.

The girl sat for a moment, as if in silent ecstasy, contemplating this splendor—herself more fair than anything in all the picture, for the sunlight was not more golden than her hair, nor the Danube more intensely yet softly blue than her eyes; and the wine in the air—and maybe something else in the way of an emotion—had put a rare color in her cheeks. Garbed soberly, all in black, yet with a billowy flounce of violet petticoat framing her small feet, she made a strange and sweetly serious figure in the shadow of the grim fortress.

Then, presently, and as if abstractedly, she slowly stripped off her long gloves and unsnapped the band around her sketching-pad. Arranging the

parasol to shield the paper, she set to work—swinging in the long lines of the landscape with an assured touch, blocking in masses of shadow with a skilful pencil; and working very swiftly. From time to time she glanced to this side or that, with the air of one who would not welcome interruption; but saw no one, and continued her work.

Only, if one had been near enough to observe, he would have seen that, after the first crude beginnings of her ambitious sketch were pinned to paper, she pushed the sheet aside, and now confined herself to a rapid sketch of something which she could not see—despite the fact that she paused now and again to glance off toward the Danube, as though continuing her former drawing.

She had passed through the fortress itself ere seeking this secluded nook, sauntering idly here and there, and looking with naive eyes at this or that point of interest, murmuring vaguely ingenuous replies to the courteous explanations of the artillery captain who, at first sight, had detailed himself for her guide, and who, to be sure, was regretful enough to receive her final, formal bow and see her pass out of his sphere of influence.

And now the quick, sure strokes of her pencil were reproducing, with remarkable accuracy, the essential details of the inner fortifications—bastion, enciente, the disposition of the heavy guns, and what-not. It appeared that the young lady possessed a retentive memory, together with an observant, penetrating eye. She spared her sketches few details of moment.

The shadows lengthened as she sat there, and the sun fell behind the western battlements; and so she was spared the anxiety which she would have felt had the shadow of Mr. Bobbs fallen athwart her pad.

He had approached along the parapet and discovered her without any noticeable emotion—save that the ghost of a smile curled the corners of his firm, straight lips. But at sight of her he stopped, and, with his head a bit to one side, appeared to admire the scenery, although in reality looking directly down upon her and wondering how he might best introduce himself. For he had a word to say to her for her own good.

A breeze came—a slight, languid breath from the west, that grew and blew in fitful puffs. Before the girl could safeguard against it, it had whipped two rough plans from beneath her hands and sent them whirling down into the moat.

She rose with a little gasp of dismay, took a step after them, and drew back fearfully, with the sheer declivity of the counterscarp yawning at her feet; and stood there, brows thoughtfully ruffled, and a finger pressed to her lips, debating how she should go about it to recover the drawings.

For recover them she must—she must—or all was lost! In fancy she saw the dungeons of the fortress gaping for her, and horror quickened the beating of her heart and blanched her cheek as she tried to picture herself dragging out the balance of her days in the living tomb of a military prison, or in the more terrible confinement of a penal settlement.

But she was here, and they—the papers—there, full twenty feet away; but as good as a mile, for the twenty feet were vertical; and once at the bottom of the ditch and the papers concealed or destroyed, how was she, encumbered by her skirts, handicapped by her frail strength, to win back to the top?

And the evidence was damning, damning! If another found the sketches, she was sure to be connected with their manufacture; she had even shown the artillery captain her sketch-book, making the light and apparently thoughtless statement that she wished to try her novice skill upon the view from beneath the ramparts. And then——

"Mademoiselle?"

She turned with a start—and she herself only knows with what a wrenching of her nerves and violent fluttering of her heart—and recognized the man who had approached, his footfalls made noiseless by the long grass, and now

stood at her elbow, hat courteously raised, and keen, gray eyes searching her own. He was her benefactor of the evening before, by whose intervention alone, she felt, she had been saved the disagreeable necessity of snubbing and rebuffing in a public place the odious American who had of late made himself her shadow.

Bobbs smiled at her reassuringly. "If you'll permit me——?" he suggested; and then, before she could remonstrate, he was already scrambling down the counterscarp, and an instant later had the drawings in his hand.

It was all accomplished so swiftly that she had hardly time to think. The single expedient of flight that presented itself to her mind she had scarcely time to weigh and reject ere the papers were in Bobbs' possession—with her peace of mind—and he was looking up at her with a smile.

And then the light came back to her eyes, and her heart began to beat more deliberately; for, without looking, Bobbs had folded the two sheets and placed them in his pocket. And perhaps—there was the chance—she might get them from him, after all, without his having the opportunity to examine and to recognize their nature. Already he was ascending—with some difficulty, it is true, but still with remarkable address and agility.

It was a chance; she grasped at it as a drowning man at a straw. When at length he stood again beside her, laughing and breathless, she put forth her hand with an eagerness almost too apparent. "Oh, thank you, thank you!" she cried—in French, the language that he had used. "You are very good! My poor little sketches—I would not have lost them nor—nor have had anybody see them for the world!"

"So I — ah — surmised," drawled Bobbs. And he smiled again provokingly, stepping a pace back as he whipped the drawings from his pocket and, an inch out of her fingers' reach, deliberately looked them over.

"So I surmised, mademoiselle! And that is why"—still good-humored, in the face of her outraged and furious glare —"why I take the liberty of inspecting them!"

"How—how dare——"

"Why"—in unaffected surprise that she should ask such an obvious question—"I wanted to be sure, Mademoiselle Jervary!" And he tendered her them with a bow.

White-lipped with fright and fury, she took them, her blazing eyes still on his. Twice her lips moved without sound ere she managed to enunciate: "You—know—me, monsieur?"

"I took the trouble to make inquiries at the hotel, mademoiselle. *That* was easy. And then, from one thing or another, I put two and two together and guessed the nature of your business in Budapest. For instance, I happened to be looking when you thought that no one was, last night, on the Franz Josef Quay, when, you know, you passed that note to old Bestheim—Bestheim"—with a quiet laugh—"who is known to every journalist on the Continent for the emperor's confidential agent. Permit me to censure you, mademoiselle," Bobbs continued gaily, "for blundering."

She was quick to compose herself, quick to steel herself to meet the situation; Bobbs admired her immensely for it. The resourcefulness of woman was always a wonder to him—particularly of such a woman as this: one of that sisterhood who, beautiful, brilliant, and cynosures of admiration, move yet in underground and devious ways on affairs of weight and state, learning and keeping secrets that, disclosed, would send half the thrones in Christendom tottering to their fall.

"And what do you want?" she demanded crisply. "What is your price?"

"Your cooperation," announced Bobbs. "Don't let us misunderstand one another, mademoiselle. With your permission, let us sit down here and talk it over."

"Cooperation?" she repeated, somewhat surprised to find herself acceding to his request. "How do you mean? And who"—with a directness that he liked—"are you?"

"I've a business card," he said; and

handed her a pasteboard neatly inscribed:

> MR. FARADAY BOBBS,
> Staff-photographer,
> *Bannister's Weekly*, New York.

"Oh!" The relief in her eyes was unquenchable. She turned to him, sparkling. "You are an American?"

He bowed: "And you, mademoiselle?"

"An Austrian."

"Austria is famed for its beautiful women," he observed gravely.

"And America for its—enterprising journalists!" she countered.

"I'm glad you didn't say handsome," he commented plaintively. "However, this is not business. I need your assistance, and I think you need mine."

"In what manner?"—archly. It was evident that she did not believe him, yet that he did not displease her. Indeed, she would have been gracious to almost any one—even that insufferable person, the American police-captain—in her then mood of gratitude and relief. For intuitively she understood that Bobbs would never betray her.

"Just this way: It is my business to get photographs—as you have gathered. To-morrow night there is to be a big Separatist meeting in a certain hall in Pest—ostensibly a student's meeting; in reality, the speeches to be made are expected to bring the movement to a crisis. Now, I wish to take a flash-light picture of that meeting."

He paused, eying her significantly; but she showed no signs of comprehension, and from this he knew that he was in possession of information a secret to the government and its spies.

"And how does that concern me?" she asked wonderingly.

"Because I depend upon you to get me into the hall. An introduction is necessary; Captain Schmitt will give it to me—he is hand in glove with these fellows—on conditions."

"Captain Schmitt?"

"Your ardent admirer."

"That *dreadful* person!"

"Exactly. Let me tell you. He was once a police-captain in New York City. Now he is a fugitive from justice, under indictment in his former home on several counts. He dare not return. But he is rich; graft—if you know the meaning of the word, mademoiselle—has made him wealthy. He has fallen in with these students and Magyar army officers, and they are bleeding him to their hearts' content—meanwhile making much of him. So he contemplates settling down here to a career of ward politics almost as exciting as he enjoyed in little old New York."

Bobbs laughed again. "So there we stand. Schmitt confessed all this to me last night. He is mad to meet you, and trusts me to bring it about. I would have refused to attempt it—certainly, mademoiselle!—but that I saw the chance to use him, to our mutual benefit."

Again she frowned in perplexity. "But how? To our mutual benefit—but how? I do not follow——"

"Perhaps because mademoiselle was born to lead. But I would give you a copy of the photograph."

"And still I am at a loss, monsieur."

"I fear that I am very stupid in explaining. Yet in some instances it is best not to be too explicit. But I am sure that his majesty, Franz Josef, Emperor of Austria and King of Hungary, would be glad to have a photograph of the gentleman scheduled for the principal speech to-morrow night."

"Ah!" said Mademoiselle Jervary thoughtfully.

"A very great gentleman, mademoiselle, who is traveling a long distance from his home to espouse and set the seal of his approval upon the Separatist movement—a gentleman who would have cause to welcome the dismemberment of the dual monarchy for—let us say—domestic reasons."

The girl did not reply. The eyes that

sought the Danube were deeply meditative. They sat for some moments in silence. And then Bobbs:

"A gentleman of such rank and station in life, mademoiselle, that he will travel, appear, and speak incognito. Would not you like to take a portrait of him, in his disguise, to your emperor?"

"And it involves just what, monsieur?"

"The unpleasant necessity of meeting and tolerating Captain Schmitt. It will be only for an evening, mademoiselle—for by midnight, the picture taken, we must both be out of Budapest."

"That is very true," she agreed. "Monsieur Bobbs"—turning and offering her hand to seal the compact, with a gesture, an air of *camaraderie* absolutely charming—"I think I am very fortunate in having met you!"

"Mademoiselle!" murmured Bobbs, bending over the hand. "And now"—rising—"I fancy we had best get back to the hotel and the table d'hôte."

III.

In a little green chair, with a little green table before him, Mr. Bobbs bared his forehead to the breeze and regretfully lighted a cigarette—regretfully because he was thinking longingly of the corn-cob pipe in his room at the Hôtel Magyar Királyi. Cigarettes are little satisfaction to the tongue seasoned to a corn-cob; yet if one finds it necessary, or expedient, or even pleasurable, to sit in the open air, one must regard the prejudices of one's neighbors. And unless one is a student, one will smoke either a cigar or a cigarette; to the student the porcelain pipe builded on the plan of a stunted Dutch-oven is permissible.

But the cigars of the German and the Hungarian are an abomination and a stench in the nostrils of civilization; so, after all, Mr. Bobbs had chosen wisely.

It was quite dark, but not a starless night—a faint and even pallid glow suffused the skies, against which the huge, crouching shape of Blocksberg, with its worn-out citadel across the river, loomed like a monster of the night, silently overlooking the brilliant city.

Before Bobbs the asphaltum of the quay was set with little trees in tubs, all very neatly and precisely arranged; and beneath them were other little iron tables, painted green, with little green chairs identically like his own. Buda had come across the river, and Pest was already there, taking the air and eating queer-colored ices and listening to the little tinkling fountains. Waiters, bearing trays, threaded the mass of promenaders and dispensed steins and the ubiquitous ices with prodigious skill and amiability.

The cool of night was in the air, and peace—the peaceful atmosphere of good and moderate living and subdued gaiety that marks Budapest and sets it distinctively apart from other Continental cities. Even the boisterous parties of students, who, arm-in-arm, marched up and down, rudely jostling the townspeople and ogling the townspeople's daughters, seemed not out of place, nor too boisterous.

Yet Bobbs noted in their demeanor a heightened note of recklessness, something beyond the ordinary; even as he noted a swagger in the bearing of the army officers, whose swords, rather than being caught up at their sides, as usual, trailed bravely over the pavement and clanked a martial accompaniment to their owners' footsteps. And there seemed to be a feeling, electric in quality, of suspense in the air, affecting all classes of society—so that even the most staid of citizens behaved as if keyed to a higher tension of expectancy. Great things were in the air. To-morrow or to-morrow's morrow—who knew?—Hungary might be striking the shackles of Austrian, or Hapsburg, domination from its wrists and be girding up its loins, preparing to fare forth on an independent national way of its own.

To-morrow there might be war, red war, grinning upon the horizon. But what of that? To-day is to-day; and it is well to have peace while one may; well to cluster around little green tables and watch the promenaders and the

dark waters streaking past the coping —the black Danube now, mirroring in its polished surface the high, aloof stars, together with the prismatic lights, like pearls on a string, that outline the long spans of the five municipal bridges.

Presently Mr. Bobbs sat upright, impatient, in his chair, threw his cigarette from him, and said distinctly and with some heat: "The devil!" It appeared that he was not pleased, that he was waiting—waiting for a certain thing to take place; and that to no end. "I'll lay a dollar to a doughnut," offered Mr. Bobbs softly, "that the ass has gone off and got good *and* soused."

And a moment later, without visible signs of disappointment that he had lost his bet—"Well," he said, as a heavy hand fell upon his shoulder, "where the deuce have you been keeping yourself?"

Captain Schmitt, with a ponderous sigh, dropped into a convenient chair—which fortunately was constructed of stout iron—and preened himself with visible satisfaction. He was in evening clothes, with improvements original with himself—such as three tremendous diamond shirt-studs and a neat and genteel red bow-tie—and Bobbs admitted mentally that Solomon in all his glory would have been left at the post by the ex-ruler of the Tenderloin.

"Said I'd be here, didn't I?" demanded the captain with some asperity. "And I'm here, ain't I, boy? That's me, Schmitt—always there with the goods. I hope," he continued, with unconcealed eagerness, "that you can say as much for yourself, beau."

"Oh, I don't know," replied Bobbs languidly. "If you mean Miss Jervary —why, she is going along with us tonight, all right. Now are you happy?"

"Happy? Happy? Boy," said the captain solemnly, "you can have anything in the world that Schmitty can buy you. Say, on the level, now?"

"She's waiting for us at the hotel. Why, captain, you lucky dog, she fairly jumped at the chance to meet you."

"Honest? But" — distrustfully — "how did you work it, beau?"

"Oh, I met her yesterday afternoon, while you were off gallivanting with your colonel of infantry in his red devil wagon, captain. If you had only shown up last night, now—what *have* you been doing with yourself?"

The captain sighed. "Lending the colonel money—mostly," he replied. "He got into me for three hundred, altogether. But, say, it was worth it, all right. I've had the time of my life, boy, and don't——"

He bent forward over the table, bubbling with particulars of his twenty-four-hour debauch; and a gust of his sodden breath hit Bobbs squarely in the face. In some haste, and turning away to conceal his emotion, the younger man arose. "But come along," he insisted. "Miss Jervary will be getting impatient. It's after eight now, and—didn't you say your meeting was scheduled to open up at nine?"

"Sure—but, look here, beau. How's this about taking her along? What for?" And the captain hung back distrustfully.

"She wants to go—that ought to be enough for you," Bobbs parried lightly. "But you're to be congratulated on winning a prize, all right, captain; she's what you call a high-stepper, and"—pausing impressively — "education! Why, man, she's a writer. That's why she wants to go to see the students—local color for her stories. How's that?"

"No! Is that right?" The captain whistled long and low. "Say, that's great. And"—ambling excitedly after Bobbs—"she likes my style, hey? Wait a minute, beau. How do you think she'll take to me in this get-up? All right, hey?"

"Fine, captain, fine—but come along. You don't want to waste any time, you know."

IV.

When the cab stopped, Bobbs jumped out and turned, offering his hand to Mademoiselle Jervary. But the burly captain was not to be deprived of any of his privileges; and he stumbled out, brushed Bobbs from his way, turned with an air, and pawed at the young

lady. An instant later Bobbs saw the back of the captain's neck flush crimson, even in the dim light from the street-lamp; and knew that the woman had accepted her gallant's arm. On the sidewalk she clung timidly—consummate little actress that she was!—nestling closely to the captain in apparent alarm.

Well, indeed, she might; for the entrance to the hall was dense-packed with a struggling, swaying, cursing mob—men for the most part—madly fighting for foothold in the building, that already must have been crowded to suffocation.

Even Schmitt, inured as he was by long experience to the sight of men en masse, was a little appalled. "Say," he muttered, "where's them Johns Darms, anyway? I'd give a farm to have Grogan and Doolan and Hartz here with their nightsticks. Say, they wouldn't do a thing to this mob—not a thing!"

But his former wardsmen were not available, and after an instant's doubtful pondering, for it was apparent that to gain entrance to the *halle* by the front door would involve risk of life and limb, the captain's face cleared.

"Say, I got to leave you a minute," he announced. "I'll toddle round to the stage door. I guess I'll find some of my friends there, and they'll fix it up for us all right."

"Very well," Bobbs assented amiably; "if you will trust mademoiselle with me for so long."

"Aw, g'wan!" laughed the infatuated man roguishly; and waddled off.

Bobbs stepped back to the cab and paid the fare. "And, here"—he detained the driver—"do you want to earn one hundred kronen to-night?"

"Excellency!" said the man reproachfully. Such a question!

"Then, after we have entered the *halle,* drive around to the stage door and wait. When we come, whip up the minute we are in the cab and drive like the devil to the West Railway Station. Don't stop for anything. Do you understand? Here are ten kronen to bind the bargain."

He turned away just in time. Schmitt was returning, wearing an air of chastened triumph. "Here, what you doin'?" he demanded suspiciously.

"Settling with the cabby."

"Say, now," with a glance at the girl, "you hadn't ought to do nothing like that. After this"—playfully—"just remember that Schmitty he pays the freight. But come along—I got it all fixed. We're going to have a stage box." He took possession of the girl's hand, drawing it through his arm. Bobbs fell in on her other side.

"And say," remarked the captain in an audible aside to the young man; "you wouldn't think it cost me another hundred to fix it up for me friends with the boys, would you? But that's all right. Hang the expense! That's me—Schmitt."

Bobbs permitted himself a smile into the darkness. "It seems a shame," he mused, "to play him so. And yet——"

After all, he felt called upon to feel little compunction on the captain's account. Schmitt was a man without shame or morals or remorse himself; and the money that he scattered so freely had been foully gained.

A score of yards brought them to the stage door; they passed into the murky, stifling atmosphere of a theater, behind the scenes, threaded a tortuous corridor, and were abruptly introduced into the full glare of footlights striking up into the stage box. Bobbs frowned. This was not well for his plans; the publicity, the fierce light, were more than he had counted upon.

Still, he felt that it was for the best, perhaps; had they been compelled to occupy seats on the floor of the house, he would have reluctantly admitted the necessity of relinquishing his scheme. For the innumerable round tables were wedged tight in a howling mass of Magyar patriots, from which escape would have been a flat impossibility. While in the box, besides the captain's party, there were but three others—men, apparently, of dignity and weight in the land; men hardly so excitable as those in the mob.

The low-ceiled, heavily raftered

room, paneled in dark wood, rang with the shouts and groans of the audience, and now and again with laughter, and a long and thunderous roll, like the beating of some tremendous kettle-drum, caused by the pounding of hundreds of steins upon the wooden tables —a mark of approval evoked by some telling point in the speaker's discourse. Ill-ventilated, the air hung thick with smoke—motionless, dense, stale with the exhalations of thousands of excited men.

Upon the stage, standing by the table in the center of a semicircle of revolutionary ringleaders, the speaker, young Kossuth, swayed the audience to his will, not alone by the magic of his name and the magnetism of his personality, but by soaring flights of matchless oratory. When he had ceased and retired, the spellbound mob raised a ten minutes' pandemonium, and was only stilled by the announcement of the next speaker, the fiery Magyar Deák.

Him they permitted to go, not without a demonstration, but with more willingness; it was plain that they awaited, and with some impatience, one greater than even Deák. A pause ensued—a pause of strained expectancy.

Then, quietly, a man appeared at the rear of the stage—a commanding figure, of rather more than middle height, curiously attired. A rusty and ill-fitting frock coat, obviously not designed for its present wearer, seemed to contribute to his apparent discomfort. His gray-striped trousers were very old, and very baggy at the knees. A cheap and flaming tie lightened the almost funeral gloom of his waistcoat—black, like the coat, and if anything more shabby. Disreputable spats, shoes run down at the heel and cracked across the uppers, and a worn and shiny derby completed a costume as incongruous to the man as could have been designed by the most fantastic imagination.

For, beneath the husk of clothes, he was obviously sleek, well-cared for, well-fed. The full, round, smooth cheeks, with their high color, the too thick and sensual lips, the clear blue eyes beneath the reddish brows, the white, immaculate, plump hands—these testified that the stranger moved in a walk of life immeasurably higher than that whose livery he wore.

And Bobbs was faintly amused by the thoroughness with which the disguise had been wrought. Even the hair, parted in the middle and falling in a bang on either temple, seemed rebellious; and the heavily waved mustache drooped only by persuasion; it seemed ever on the watch for an opportunity to curl martially at the ends.

In a dead silence, without introduction, the man moved down to the edge of the platform. His eyes roved over the assemblage, he pulled nervously at his mustache, and began to speak in a tone so low as to be almost inaudible.

In a moment, however, enchanted by the sound of his own voice—as always —he forgot his incognito. His words rang in sonorous periods. His stooped shoulders—obviously held so by will—straightened. He stood erect, smiling down at his hearers. In a pause, filled by riotous howls of approval—for he was advocating without condition the instant dissolution of the Dual Monarchy—a thoughtless hand swept across his brows, pushing aside the bang, and, as carelessly, as if by custom, his thumb and forefinger caught the ends of the mustache and twirled them upward.

Bobbs leaned toward the girl. Their eyes met—his from the front of the box, hers from her station near its door, at the captain's side.

Imperceptibly the young man nodded. With a movement almost too quick for the eye to follow, he produced a small black, leather-covered box from his pocket, pressed a spring, and opened it with a sharp click—which fortunately passed without notice in a burst of applause. An instant later he stood upright, training the camera upon the speaker. And——

"Now!" he cried clearly.

The interruption brought the speaker to an outraged stop. He turned, facing the box squarely. Instantaneously a sheet of white, vivid flame leaped from behind Bobbs.

There was an instant's pause of stupefied amazement. Bobbs turned, snapping the camera shut and dropping it into his pocket. The corner of his eye caught the flutter of skirts through the dense cloud of gray smoke that still swirled from the pan of the flash-pistol which the woman had dropped to the floor.

She, then, was escaping; and he had not a breath's space to lose.

He took a step forward, brushing past one of the petrified auditors in the box, and put his fist squarely in the mouth of another, who, with outstretched hands, was on the point of rising to detain him.

The man went back like a log, falling upon and knocking Schmitt against the partition. Bobbs struck down another pair of hands, and dashed out through the door.

A furious, incoherent howl signalized his escape. The mob was on its feet now, knocking down tables, chairs, smashing steins and heads, stampeding madly for the stage. The momentary pause of stunned surprise, upon which Bobbs had calculated, had saved him. He gained the stage door, bucking, with all the fervor of his American football days, through a mass of men not yet recovered or aware of what had happened.

The cab stood at the curb; and Mademoiselle Jervary was on the point of entering. Bobbs gave her an arm and climbed in after her. "Drive!" he yelled to the cabby. "Drive like—blazes!"

And—"Bless the intelligent fellow!" he murmured, mopping his face with a handkerchief. "This will be worth more than a hundred kronen to me!"

The girl sank back upon the cushions and gave way to hysterical bursts of laughter. Bobbs glanced at her, grinned, and produced his watch.

"Eleven-forty," he said. "We've just time to catch the express for Vienna."

She calmed somewhat under the seriousness of his tone. "Will we make it, do you think?" she gasped apprehensively.

"Oh, beyond doubt," assented Bobbs. "The cabby is a jewel, mademoiselle, and you—you have been invaluable!"

"You have succeeded, then—you are sure?"

"Certain sure. I caught him in the very act. Our train reaches Vienna by five, at the latest. By the time you have taken a little nap, mademoiselle, I will have your copy ready for you to take to the emperor."

"It is wonderful—wonderful!" she cried. "Who but you, monsieur, would have had the audacity to plan and execute such a coup?"

"I give it up," Bobbs told her gravely. "But I'm afraid that it circumscribes my sphere of activity for awhile, at least. If Bill of Germany ever finds out who snapped him in the act of advising a Magyar audience to break with Austria—and, by the way, I don't think he'll ever do it again—playing Haroun-al-Raschid in another monarch's domains is risky business, he'll find——

"But, as I was saying, if he ever fixes this lese-majesty upon me, Faraday Bobbs, I guess I had better take my blue dishes and play quite some distance from Berlin for a few years."

He laughed soberly. The girl sat forward, abruptly, and put a hand upon his arm. And she looked deep into his clear, straightforward, gray eyes.

"Monsieur," she declared fervently, "you are—splendid!"—too warmly for Bobbs' mental comfort.

Nevertheless — "Mademoiselle," he protested, "*you* are adorable! But here is the station, and we are barely in time! I must ask you to hurry."

A Plunge Into the Unknown

By Richard Marsh

Author of "The Ape and the Diamond," "The Whistle of Fate," Etc.

CHAPTER XVII—(*Continued.*)

THERE was a hurried farewell between the mother and her son. She let him out through the front door, lingering with him for a moment in the hall, then returned to the little room in which Otway had remained.

"Mr. Otway, if all turns out well——"

"All will turn out well; make up your mind that it shall, and it will. God is on the side of resolution."

"If all does turn out as we would desire, how shall I ever thank you?"

"Ah. Mrs. Thornton, there's the crux. I'll show you the way in which to thank me all in good time. Don't imagine, for a single instant, that I'm a disinterested philanthropist! I'm more like a sixty-per-center, as you'll discover later on.

"In the meantime I would ask you to give me your very kind attention for the space of about a minute. I've left at the station parcels-office—or what, I presume, passes as such—a Gladstone bag. Here's the ticket for it. Please get it into your possession at the earliest possible moment. Open it; here's the key. You will find inside a leather wallet, containing a large number of bank-notes; keep them in safe custody. The rest of the contents—which chiefly consist of clothes—be so good as to store in some convenient spot.

"Possibly at some unexpected moment—it may be to-morrow, the day after, next week; I am afraid I cannot tell you exactly when—I shall reappear, and I may want that money, those clothes, in a hurry; so, in the exceeding goodness of your heart, have them where they'll be just handy. You understand?"

"I understand, and will do just as you tell me. But, in the meantime, what is it you propose to do?"

"In the meantime——"

"Hush! Isn't that some one in the garden?"

"In the meantime, Mrs. Thornton, I intend to give that person, or persons—I think there's more than one—in the garden, the slip, just as, I fancy, they intend that I shan't. We'll see which intention is carried into the fullest execution. The game of hide-and-seek is commencing, in which the first move ought to come from me. Since that window through which I came appears to be blocked, isn't there another point from which I can make a start?"

"There is the back door; it is on the other side of the house. If you cross the kitchen garden you will find a gate which will lead you into the paddock, and on the other side of the paddock is a lane which will take you to Chelsfold Wood; but, in the darkness, at this time of night, what you will do when you get there—if you ever do get there—I don't know."

"Nor I either, till the moment for action comes. I generally find that then a way opens. Trust in God, Mrs. Thornton, and keep your powder dry; Old Noll's motto wasn't a bad one. I think I'll try that back door of yours. You understand what I said about that Gladstone bag?" She nodded; it

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This story began in the December issue. The back numbers can be obtained through any newsdealer. Price ten cents each.

seemed to be beyond her power to speak. "Ah! they're trying the window! When they find it's latched they'll turn their attention to the front door. Now's the time for that back door, if you'll lead the way."

They had been speaking in whispers; now they stole out of the room on tiptoe. As they went another effort was made from without to force the window open. The two grotesquely contrasting figures passed through the stone-floored scullery to the servants' entrance. Here Mrs. Thornton paused to murmur:

"Some one may be waiting outside."

"Is there no point from which we can reconnoiter?"

"There's a little window on your right; perhaps I shall be able to see."

There was no light where they were. Mrs. Thornton had guided him through the shadows with her hand upon his wrist. Now she moved a little away from him to where, as he supposed, there was a window, though from where he stood nothing could be seen. Presently she returned and whispered:

"It is so dark that it is difficult to make out anything, but I don't think any one is there."

"We'll chance it—'nothing venture, nothing win.'"

"I will unfasten the door; keep quite still."

She opened the door, but so noiselessly that he only knew that it was open because the cool night air blew against his cheeks.

"Now, quick! as silently as you can; they are perhaps still on the other side of the house. Keep straight on, and you will see the paddock gate shining white in the darkness! God go with you!"

"God stay with you—for Elsie's sake!"

He held her cool, trembling hand for a moment, and was gone. So soon as he was through the door she shut and bolted it—still not making a sound. When it was shut she sank on her knees and leaned her head against it and prayed, the tears trickling through her withered fingers.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE CRY IN THE NIGHT.

Luck went with George Otway at first. He made his way as best he could over what seemed vegetables of different sorts.

"That's a cabbage!" he told himself. "And that's another! Hello! surely that's a row of potatoes, it nearly sent me sprawling; and there's a second—I'm in the middle of a potato-patch." He paused to listen. "It's a wonder they don't spot me; it seems to me that I'm making noise enough to wake the dead. What's that? beans, as I'm a sinner!—that bean-stick nearly gouged my eye out! It seems to me that if one has to cross this kitchen garden in the darkness it would be better to survey it in the daylight first." He perceived a suggestion of white gleaming through the shadows. "I suppose that is the gate. It is: I may thank my stars I have got as far as this alive. Now for the wonders of the paddock beyond."

Here he found it easier going, only stumbling now and then over what might have been roots of trees. Presently he brought himself up against a hedge.

"This won't do—I can't get over this; I take it that there's another gate which leads into the lane."

Feeling his way along the hedge he came to one. In another second he was in what he presumed to be the lane, though the light was still so bad, that, ignorant of the landmarks by means of which country-folks find their way in the darkness, remembering what Mrs. Thornton had said, he could only make a vague guess at his whereabouts.

"I don't think she told me whether—to reach that wood—I ought to go to the left or to the right; this light's so deceptive that I shouldn't be much wiser if she had. Anyhow, here goes to chance it; for me one point's about as good as another."

When he had gone some little distance along the lane, he came to a cottage which stood by the roadside. An open door showed a lighted room beyond. On the door-step a child was

standing—a girl of about eight or nine. At sight of her he stopped, thinking to ask of her the way; it felt so stupid to be out in the darkness there, knowing nothing of his surroundings or where it was that he was going.

"Can you tell me, little girl, where this road leads to?"

As he spoke he advanced a little toward her, coming into the patch of light which shone through the open door, so that she could see his form and figure. The moment he did so, screaming like a creature possessed, she rushed back into the cottage.

"Why," exclaimed Otway, "what's the matter with the child?"

A woman appeared in the girl's place; a big, burly female, holding an infant in her arms.

"Who are you?" she demanded roughly. "What do you want?"

"I was only inquiring——" he began.

She did not wait for him to finish. Directly she caught sight of him, with an exclamation, she did as the child had done—drew back into the house; only, unlike the child, she shut the door behind her as she went. He could hear her turning the key in the lock and shooting the bolt. It was done so suddenly that it took him by surprise.

"That's rural civility to wayfarers! it's a recollection of the countryman's remark in *Punch:* 'There's a stranger; heave half a brick at him.'" Then, in an illuminating flash, it dawned upon him what it meant. "By George, what an idot I am! It's his majesty's uniform; if I hadn't forgotten that I had it on!"

It was odd, but he had. In the hurry and scurry of the last few moments it had wholly escaped his attention that he was in felon's attire. The child had seen this dreadful figure coming at her out of the darkness, and, ignorant of what it meant, had screamed and fled. The mother, wiser—if not much—had at least understood that this was the livery of crime. For all she could tell, this escaped felon was some desperate, murderous villain. In that lonely place her natural instinct was to put the protection of the door between herself and him.

So Otway was left out in the road to reflect how much clothes might be made to mean to a man.

"Well, it doesn't seem as if it would be of much use to press my inquiries there; that village mother might take my perseverance as clear proof of my natural depravity. If she has a gun, and were to take it into her head to shoot at me, I'm not sure that she wouldn't be justified of the law. Some one has said that all men are rogues. I take it from this beginning that I am embarked on the road which will make it clear, beyond all doubt, how very inconvenient it is to have been proved one. The worst of it is that, if any outwardly honest person does come along, that worthy woman will tell her dreadful tale; the hue and cry will be raised; and I shall have the whole countryside at my heels. After all, where's the harm of it? It will give them something to talk of for the rest of their lives!"

With this philosophic reflection, George Otway pursued, if it could not be exactly called his way, then, at any rate, the way, and that with a degree of speed which seemed to suggest that he was as willing as not to put as wide a space as possible between that countryside and his heels.

It was impossible, under the circumstances, to arrive at an accurate perception of distances; but when he had gone, as far as he could judge, about four miles without seeing a sign of a human habitation or meeting a living soul, it began to seem to him that he had had enough of the road.

Moreover, he was tired. He had been up practically the whole of the night before; had been traveling throughout the day, and in the course of the day a good deal had happened.

He was becoming conscious of a desire for rest and for sleep. No useful purpose would be served by his tramping through the night. The morning would find him wearied out and out. In that condition he would not be like-

ly to be so much the master of his wits as might be desirable.

He was hungry, too, and thirsty. So far excitement had enabled him to be oblivious of the fact that, with the exception of a hastily swallowed roll and butter at Liverpool, and an almost equally hasty lunch at Victoria, he had had neither bite nor sup.

He was beginning to feel that he would give one of Ebenezer Pullen's bank-notes for a crust of bread and cheese and a pint of ale; but food seemed unattainable. Even if he had had any money in his one pocket, which was in his jacket—and it was empty—so far as he knew there was not a place anywhere from which anything could be purchased; and even had there been, it was doubtful if they would have sold to such a customer. The probabilities were, if food and drink had been procurable, that the only way by which he could have obtained them was by theft.

Hunger and thirst he must put up with; but rest and sleep might be within his reach, and that was something.

He had been conscious for some little time that the road on either side had been lined with trees. A murmuring sound, as of waves breaking on a gently shelving shore, had hinted at a breeze stealing through a multitude of leaves. He thought of what Mrs. Thornton had said about Chelsford Wood. This might be it through which the road was passing. Few better places to take one's ease than under the cover of a giant tree.

He scrambled through what seemed to be a ragged and ill-kept hedge upon his right, to come almost immediately in contact with the trunk of a tree. He did not stop to consider. He just subsided on to the ground at the foot, to find himself couched on what felt like a bed of moss. Before he suspected that unconsciousness was so close at hand he was fast asleep.

And from slumber he was roused by he knew not what. He found himself sitting up straight, listening. He asked himself what he was listening for. There was about him that sound in silence which is the note of a summer's night among trees; that curious commingling of quiescence with movement. It was so still that the faintest noise was audible; and yet the more his ear became accustomed to the atmosphere the more he understood that the place was full of noises.

There was, first, that most languorous of harmonies, the sighing of the air among the leaves and branches, the underwoods, the grasses, and the bracken. He could hear its refrain filling all the world, afar off, round about him.

And then there were the movements of the woodland creatures—his accustomed ear began to distinguish them; the flight of the night birds, the humming of insects, even the passing of the moths; the sounds of small feet moving like velvet pads over the ground; of unseen forms scurrying through vegetation—these things seemed to make the predominant stillness more obvious. In the silence of the summer night to what was he listening?

All at once, in sufficiently surprising fashion, the answer came. He sprang to his feet with a sudden bound; some one had called to him.

"George Otway! George Otway!"

Who could it be? What did it mean? Not once, but twice, his name came to him, as distinctly as he had ever heard it in his life, from among the trees. Not loudly, but with a penetrating clearness which set him trembling.

From what direction had it come? From a distance, or from close at hand? It was a question which, for the life of him, he could not answer. The speaker might have been behind the next tree; or, madness though it seemed, a hundred miles away.

All was still. It must have been imagination. It was ridiculous to suppose that any voice could convey to his mind the impression that it was coming to him from a distance—the absurdity of the thing!—of hundreds of miles. He must have woke out of some sort of dream, and the dream had followed him out of slumber. For a full minute he stood there, with clenched fists, wide-open eyes, straining ears. And then it came again—the voice!

"George Otway! George Otway!"

If anything, it was clearer this time—louder than before; yet still not so much loud as clear; with a strange acuteness which, as at first, set him all trembling. It was like a cry of pain.

But from whom did it come—and whence? It must come from among the trees—it must! That suggestion of distance, which was stronger than before, was the sheerest absurdity. He could not hear some one calling to him from the other side of the world as, it seemed, he had done. He was the victim of a trick; of some hallucination. Some one, who had discovered his whereabouts, was leading him into a trap.

Yet—what a note there had been in it of pain! Surely nobody could have feigned that; it must have been an expression of natural suffering. And where had he heard the voice before? He racked his brain in an effort at recollection.

It came again—once! only once! But what a voice!

"George Otway!"

This time the loudness of the cry was more marked than the clearness, though it was clear enough. It came ringing through the forest like a shriek. Beyond doubt some poor creature was suffering, in pain, in infinite distress. That cry could only have been torn from some anguished breast. Some one was in frightful need of instant help. It was worse than folly to stand there, hesitant. He dashed into the cruel, shrouding darkness, shouting as he went blundering among the trees:

"Who is it? Where are you? What do you want?"

No one answered. A cock pheasant rose with a discordant clatter into the air. He had startled all the creatures of the forest, so that the place was filled with the tumult of their vociferous alarm. But to his inquiries there was no response. And, presently, perceiving the futility of what he was doing, he paused in his wild career.

Momentary reflection showed him plainly what nonsense it was to suppose that any one knew he was sleeping in that forest; that any one could know. There were only two persons who could even guess. It was a million to one against Frank Thornton's doing that. And as for his mother, she had endeavored to direct him to Chelsford Wood. But, in the first place, she certainly could not know that he had reached it; he himself did not know. And, in the second, the voice had emphatically not been hers, though it had been a voice which he knew, and knew so well.

"Stuff! rubbish! bosh!"

He began to load himself with opprobrious epithets, telling himself that his wits were wool-gathering; that, like some raw cockney, he had allowed himself to be fooled. What he had heard had been some creature of the woodland which his excited fancy had transformed. He tried to think of some bird or beast whose cry could have caused him to be so crassly mistaken. Through his mind there flitted stories which country people tell, of the owl bewildering bibulous stragglers by hooting "Who-o-o! who-o-o!" amid the funereal trees. Some such trick his fancy must have played him. The explanation lay, no doubt, in just as simple a direction.

And yet, considering that this must be so, it was strange in what a state of agitation he still was; he whom it required so much to agitate. Although the night air was cool and sweet, he was damp with perspiration. It was as if every nerve in his body had been pricked with a pin; he was still all of atremble. The reason, doubtless, was that his nervous system had been working at high pressure for some time, so that now, in the unusual environment in which he found himself, it had only needed a little thing to unhinge him altogether.

Of course, that was the reason; there could be no other. It was foolish to seek for remote causes when the real ones were obviously close at hand. What he wanted, for brain and body, too, was rest—more rest. Let him get to sleep again as soon as he could. Sleep was the sovereign healer. And let him hope that, this time, he might not dream. Since it was useless, in that

Egyptian darkness, to try to select a resting-place, he did as he had done before—he sank down just where he was, and courted slumber.

This time vainly; for hardly had his limbs touched the ground than the cry came again—and again—and again; rising, with each repetition, in a crescendo scale:

"George Otway! *George Otway!* GEORGE OTWAY!"

As a mere example of the power of the human voice, the effect was sufficiently amazing; the entire forest seemed to ring with it. It filled the air to the exclusion of all other sounds. And in it the note of pain was so insistent that, to the startled man, it seemed to penetrate to the very marrow in his bones.

The notion that that cry—that expression of human anguish—could proceed from a bird or beast became, on the instant, too preposterous for sober consideration. Some one wanted help; some one—no matter how the knowledge had been acquired—who knew that he was there. Though he had to search the forest through, it was for him to render it.

It was out of the question that he should allow such an appeal to go unanswered, cost him what it might. So once more he went crashing blindly though the trees, shouting as he went:

"I'm coming. Fear nothing. I'll be with you in a minute. Only endure a little longer."

It was as if his soul was crying to this other soul.

But the same thing happened as before—the farther he went the clearer it became to him what a wild-goose chase this was on which he was engaged. The same questions returned to him with added force—from whom could the cry have come?—and from where? It must have come from the forest; or, at least, from the immediate neighborhood. And yet there was something tugging, not at his intellect, but at his heart-strings, which told him that it came from a distance which—relatively—was infinite. And—again as before—the farther he went the stronger this conviction became; until, at last, staying his advance, as if assured of its futility, he put his hand up to his bewildered head, inquiring of himself:

"What does it mean! what does it mean!"

And, in that instant, he understood—that is, in a degree. For, while he pressed his palms against his throbbing temples, the cry was repeated, this time with a new and most amazing addition:

"George Otway! Come to Elsie! Come!"

Then he knew that soul had, indeed, cried unto soul, and that this was the voice which, sleeping and waking, he had heard so much of late—the voice of the girl whom he had seen on the previous night in that hideous house in Sefton Park, and who had been snatched from his sheltering arms. Of a surety, well might he ask himself what it meant; how it came about that, in that woodland place, he should hear her crying to him in the night. And, while he wondered, her voice came to him again; if anything, louder, clearer still:

"Help! help! help!"

In what dire extremity she was—in what an agony of distress—that she should call to him like that from afar? He did not ask himself how this miracle had happened; how, apparently, the ordinary course of nature had been turned aside to permit of this strange, incredible thing. Inquiries of that sort might come later on. At present the only point of interest with which he was concerned was how he could render the help of which, plainly—as it seemed to him—she stood in such instant, pressing need.

Clad like a felon—wearing the insignia of another's shame—bedaubed, disfigured, penniless, he could do nothing. He was worse than helpless. With all hands against him, what could his hand do for another? The first thing necessary was to relieve himself of those prison rags. Then, attired in his own clothes, money in his pocket, something might be done, and should be, quickly.

The difficulty was to get within reach

of that Gladstone bag. Possibly by now, if Mrs. Thornton had followed his instructions implicitly, it was at the vicarage. He had but to return there. The hunters, finding that their quarry was away, might have given up the search; all might still be well.

But to return was not easy. If he waited till the morning the whole country would be on the alert; every creature in it would be on the lookout for him; to elude them all would be impossible. While, in the darkness, not knowing where he was—having lost all sense of direction—how was he to find the way?

Yet it would have to be found. It was the more practicable, less perilous adventure of the two. In the daylight he would not dare to move a step. Darkness would lend him that thing of all others most to be desired—cover. He might pass through the night, no one knowing of his going or of his coming. It was worth trying. He would try!

His trouble began before he took his first step; he had to ask himself in which direction it should be taken. Which was the way out of the wood? He turned slowly round, muttering objurgations beneath his breath. All ways were the same to him. Where he stood he could scarcely see his hand before his face. For all he could tell he might be in the heart of the forest, or on the edge; on the side nearest to the lane by which he had come, or a mile from it.

But it was no use dallying. He would have to move in some direction. So he moved. As he moved he caught his foot against some unseen obstacle; he went head foremost to the ground. As he fell his head struck against what was perhaps a tree-stump. For a second or two he lay half stunned. When he raised himself, still shaky, a voice rang through the darkness:

"Who goes there? Halt!"

There was no question this time as to hallucination, nor any doubt as to the direction from which the voice might come. The utterance had about it the unmistakable ring of authority; the speaker was probably within a dozen yards of where he stood.

He had fancied, as he had been lying on the ground, struggling against the obscuration of his faculties, that mysterious movements were taking place quite close to where he was. This was what those movements had portended. An enemy was upon him—a gamekeeper, a policeman—he knew not what.

Trying to get the better of his dizziness—to collect his senses—he moved toward a tree which was within reach of his hand, crouching close up to the trunk.

The voice came again.

"Is that you, Frank Thornton? We hear you. Don't try to move, or we shall fire."

"We?" Then there were more than one—the enemy was upon him in force.

Just then something happened which showed him that the game was up; that escape was hopeless; that that help for which that cry in the night had asked would have to be postponed till God alone knew when.

A dog—seemingly a puppy—came round the trunk of the tree, sniffing at his legs, making that fuss which only a foolish pup would do. Unless he took the creature by the throat, and there and then choked the life right out of him, the prison doors would soon be slamming in his face. And the chance of doing even that was suddenly at an end, for all at once the shutter of a lantern was turned, a gleam of blinding light was flashing in his face, and out of the darkness two prison warders emerged, each with a gun in his hand.

He arrived at his resolution on the instant. He threw out his hands, with a laugh.

"You've got me! It's a fair catch!" he cried.

Directly after there were gyves upon his wrists.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE VILLAGE LOCKUP.

George Otway spent the remainder of that night in the local lockup, his captors supposing him to be Frank

Thornton, the escaped felon. On the way one of the warders said to him jeeringly:

"So you haven't had such a very long run, after all!"

"No," answered George, "I haven't."

He laughed. He would have been in the best of spirits had he not continually seemed to hear Elsie's voice calling for help—to his mind this fresh adventure on which he was entering promised so much amusement. At the moment they were tramping through the pitch-black lanes. He was not only handcuffed, but to each wrist a chain was fastened, which was attached to a warder's belt on either side of him. The warder on his right flashed his lantern in his face. Suspicion was in his tone.

"You're a cool hand if you can laugh like that in the mess you're in. You'll take a bit of watching. Don't think you can give us the slip a second time."

"I'm sure I can't."

Otway laughed again. The officer gave a tug at his chain as one might tug at a dog when one desires to keep it in order.

The prisoner was still. He was wondering if his disguise would not be penetrated by the local police. They surely knew the vicar's son too well to be deceived by a stranger. As it turned out, he need not have anticipated anything of the kind. It seemed likely that the village only boasted a single policeman. That dignitary had accompanied the search-party, was with them still—was, indeed, only a foot or two in front—showing the way through the strange country and the darkness, lantern in hand.

The lockup proved to be the nearest cottage. Their guide opened the door with a key which he took from his trousers pocket. As they entered, a voice—a feminine voice—called to them from somewhere above:

"Tom, is that you?"

"Yes, Pollie; it's me. You go to sleep. I expect I shall be up all night, I shall."

There was a touch of importance in the speaker's voice which was possibly intended to be impressive. If so, it apparently failed to impress the lady overhead.

"Up all night? That's a nice thing! How does any one suppose you're going to do your duty if you're up all night and all day, too? You haven't had hardly a wink of sleep the whole of this last week to my certain knowledge. You'll be killing yourself before long if this goes on; that's what you'll be doing."

The policeman did not seem as if he were in any imminent danger of a tragic end, nor did he seem as if his recent days and nights had been so sleepless as the voice above declared. He was a large, corpulent man, who looked as if he had as easy a time as a representative of the law could reasonably expect, even in a Sussex village. Beyond doubt, jobs like the one in hand did not come his way every day; or, probably, for the matter of that, every year. As he replied to the unseen speaker his manner took on even an extra shade of dignity. He, at any rate, was conscious of the solemnity of the occasion.

"I've got to do my duty. That's enough. You go to sleep. Let's have no more of it."

But the lady above was not to be so easily silenced.

"Well, I never did! The idea of your talking to me like that, Tom Parsons! I never knew when I married a policeman that I was going to be treated as if I were dirt; and me not yet married to you six months!"

There was something audible above which sounded as if it were a sob; if it was, the lady must have had an extremely sensitive nature. However that might have been, the mere sound seemed to touch Mr. Parsons to the quick. He looked about him with obvious irresolution; husbands of six months' standing are, sometimes, sympathetic.

"I ain't treating you as if you were dirt."

The sounds above continued. Indeed, they became more conspicuous; the very voice was broken.

"Then I don't know what you are a-

doing, Tom Parsons; that I don't." A pause; then an inquiry: "Have you got young Mr. Thornton?"

"We have, of course; what do you think?"

"Surely to goodness you ain't all alone with him down there!"

"Certainly not; don't be so ridiculous. There's three warders from Lewes jail."

"Then I should think they could let you come to bed. Surely it don't take four great, strong men to look after one young gentleman; I don't think much of them three warders from Lewes jail if it does."

The outspoken expression of opinion seemed to disconcert Mr. Parsons as much as it amused the three officers alluded to. One of them took upon himself to answer.

"You're quite right, Mrs. Parsons. We're quite capable of looking after our prisoner ourselves; we should be a queer lot if we weren't, and we won't keep your husband from you another minute. We're married men ourselves, and we know how hard it is on a lady, what's all alone in bed, to be deprived of the society of her husband."

"Do you hear that, Tom Parsons? Are you coming up-stairs?"

"Yes, I do hear; and I'm not a-coming. I hope I know what's due to myself better than that, if you don't. I'm surprised at you, Pollie, I really am; going on like this when you know what a serious matter this is I've got on hand. Why, if I was to let these gentlemen sit up here all alone by themselves it might go against me all the rest of my life. You don't want to ruin your husband, do you, Pollie?"

Apparently this pathetic appeal was not without effect. The next remark was of a different tenor.

"I can't make out what they want to bring him here for at all. Why can't they take him straight off to Lewes jail instead of putting the responsibility on you?"

The warder who had previously spoken explained:

"There's no responsibility on your husband, ma'am; not a little bit. The responsibility's all ours; we're the responsible parties. As for taking him to Lewes straight away, it's not to be done. For one thing, there's no trains, and we can't take him all the way in a fly. We'll clear him off by the very first train in the morning, we promise you that; but in the meantime I'm afraid we shall have to claim Mr. Parsons' hospitality."

"That's all right," broke in Mr. Parsons. "I understand exactly how it is. I'm no dunderhead. No more's my wife; she'll understand, too, when she gives herself time to think things over. Now, Pollie, you go straight off to sleep, and be a good girl."

"It's all very well for you to talk about going off to sleep, but it's another thing for me to do it." A pause. Then a sudden variation. "And look here, Tom Parsons, don't you go emptying that barrel of beer. It'll be over a week before the brewer comes, and the barrel's more than half empty as it is."

The lady above evidently had the gift of saying plainly what she had to say. At this further demonstration of her powers in that direction there was silence below. Mr. Parsons looked as if his wife's eloquence was bearing on him a little hardly. The three warders exchanged glances with each other. Then they glanced at him, and as they glanced they winked, and as they winked he winked, too. His fresh-colored face took on a somewhat brighter hue; he grinned, thrusting his thumbs inside his belt. He assumed what he doubtless meant to be a soothing tone.

"Now, Pollie, don't you worry; the beer won't hurt us."

"No—I'm more afraid of your hurting the beer."

"My dear! my dear! it isn't like you to be talking like this. Anybody'd think you begrudged a couple of pints."

"I don't want you to swallow a couple of gallons and leave us to go dry until the brewer comes."

"That's all right, my girl; we ain't boozers, none of us—especially when engaged on a serious job like this—or

we shouldn't be a-occupying the positions we are a-occupying. You turn over, and you'll be asleep before you know it."

The same suspicious sounds which had been heard before became distinctly audible again.

"Aren't you even coming up-stairs, Tom, to say good night?"

The eldest warder of the three clapped the policeman on the shoulder.

"That's what the lady wants; she wants you to go up-stairs and say good night. Giving her a kiss or two won't do you no harm, and from what I can see I shouldn't be surprised if it did her good."

The shamefaced Mr. Parsons, acting on this hint, departed, with the evident intention of appeasing—if possible—his almost too demonstrative wife. So soon as he had left the room, the same warder said, addressing Mr. Otway—he was a gray-haired man, with a not unpleasant face:

"You see, policemen have got hearts as well as other men."

"I never for a moment thought they hadn't."

"No; perhaps not, but there's lots of you chaps do think so. And they think us warders are like the screws they call us after—hard and sharp, and without any sort of feeling."

"I assure you that so far as I am personally concerned it is quite the other way. I am confidently expecting to receive at your hands the very kindest treatment."

The warder's eyes twinkled; the lines of his mouth became more distinctly defined.

"Ah!—that's another question. You knew what you had to expect before you started on your little jaunt this afternoon, or you ought to have known, if you didn't. If you're wise, what you've got to do now is make the best of things, and give us as little trouble as you can."

Otway nodded.

"So I suppose." He added, with a smile: "But I always do try to make the best of things."

There was something in the quality of the smile which the officer apparently disliked. His manner all at once became a trifle surlier.

"That's all right. Then you won't mind our putting these ornaments round your ankles. Those legs of yours seem as if they can cover the ground; we don't want to have no more running after you just yet awhile."

He had taken from a capacious pocket in the tail of his coat what looked like an extra large sized pair of handcuffs. They were joined together by a brightly polished curb chain perhaps a foot in length. The warder held them out in front of him as if they were pleasant to look at.

"Pretty, I call them—and useful, too. Not heavy, yet they'd take some breaking. Scarcely scale over a pound; but if a chap was fastened with a six-inch cable he couldn't hardly be safer held. I don't say that there isn't anything a bit heavier and a trifle less elegant where we're going to; in fact, I shouldn't be surprised if you were to make the acquaintance of something a good deal heavier before very long; you'll probably find some one who'll be of opinion that you'll be all the better for it. But in the meantime this is a handy little trifle; you won't be able to get rid of it so easy as perhaps you think. It'll at any rate keep you safe until the first train in the morning, and that I'll swear. Stand still there while we put 'em on."

George Otway stood still. Click! click! the fetters were snapped about his ankles; he found himself unable to move in any direction more than a few inches at a time. The gray-haired warder contemplated the result with obvious approval.

"I don't fancy you'll be able to do much running away while you've got those on."

"I don't fancy that I shall!"

George Otway laughed. The whole situation struck him as exceedingly comical; it seemed almost incredible that all this while no one was finding him out. His likeness to the absent man must be much greater than he had imagined. The three warders eyed him

a little sourly—his trick of easy laughter was evidently one for which they had an instinctive distaste. The shortest of the three commented on it—a stocky fellow, with short, bristly, black beard and aggressive eyebrows.

"You're easily amused."

"You think so? I'm not so sure of that. Generally I find it rather hard to be amused."

"Lawyer, are you? Got something to say every time. I know your sort—turned the key on plenty of 'em in my time. Perhaps you won't have so much to say by the time we've done with you!"

The speaker's looks and manner expressed extreme disapprobation. The policeman's steps were heard lumbering down the stairs. He reappeared in the room.

"Sorry if I have kept you waiting," he said; "but, the truth is, it's the key that I was after—the key of the lock-up. Keep it up-stairs, I do. As I haven't had occasion to use it for awhile it seems, somehow, to have got mislaid. But I've found it."

He flourished a huge key in their faces as if to prove that that was so.

The stocky little man glared at the constable, and said dryly:

"Seems to me, Mr. Parsons, you've got your own way of doing things round these parts; wouldn't quite do for Lewes jail."

There was something in this speech which the policeman resented. His manner became suddenly huffy.

"When I'm going to apply for a situation in Lewes jail, I'll remember to ask you to tell me just what's wanted; but I wasn't thinking of applying, as I knows of. This ain't Lewes jail."

The gray-haired warder endeavored to appease him.

"No offense, Mr. Parsons; no offense! You're better off where you are, I can tell you that."

Behind the constable's back the speaker winked at the irascible little man, who pursed his lips, as if he found it difficult to restrain himself from answering back. The policeman was still aggrieved.

"That's as may be. My ways please my official superiors, and if they don't please them as are not my official superiors, it seems to me, as far as I am concerned, that that's neither here nor there."

"Quite right, Mr. Parsons; quite right. You know your duty; of course you do."

The gray-haired man was aiming a perfect battery of winks at the little man, who was stolidly staring straight in front of him, as if he saw nothing.

"I ought to. I've been in the force going on for seven years without a mark against me, and this is my second sole charge."

"I shouldn't be surprised if you was a sergeant before long, Mr. Parsons—that I shouldn't. It's men like you what's wanted in the upper ranks."

At this the stocky little man allowed himself to indulge in a transitory grin which was pregnant with the most dire significance, but it was of such a very fleeting nature that it had vanished before the policeman turned.

"Here's the lockup for you. Lock's a bit stiff—wants a new one, that's my belief—so I've told 'em over at headquarters, but they don't seem to be in no particular hurry to give me one."

Mr. Parsons had been opening—with some difficulty—a massive door which had been let into the wall at one side. As he swung it back upon its hinges, a sort of large, bare closet was revealed beyond. The gray-haired warder entered it, with an inquiring air.

"So this is the lockup, is it? That's a good solid door you've got there."

"It is solid."

"More solid than these walls seem to be." He was tapping them with the butt of his carbine. "What's beyond?"

"My garden."

"Why, they seem to be only one brick thick."

"That's all." Mr. Parsons indulged in a burst of frankness. "It don't take much to get through that wall, I can tell you that."

"So I should say. Strikes me that a heavy man has only got to lean back sudden to find himself outside."

"It's not to be done so easy as that—not quite so easy, it ain't. Still, it is to be done. I've only been here four months myself. The man who was here before I was, he got a chap in here one night fighting drunk. He must have hit out in the middle of the night, because he pretty well brought the whole place down about his ears. In the morning they found him fast asleep in the garden."

"Did they? That sounds as if he was in the country. And I suppose the man that was here before you heard nothing of what was going on?"

"Not a sound; slept like a top through it all. It must have come down with no more noise than if it was a pack of cards."

"When they rebuilt it, didn't they cover it with a sheet of paper, so as to make it stronger?"

"Just used the same bricks over again; laid 'em in fresh mortar—that's all they did. It cost eighteen and tuppence; I've seen the bill."

"Have you? Cost as much as eighteen and tuppence, did it?"

"You see, it's this way: we never have desprit characters hereabouts; never! never heard tell of one! No one's ever locked up round here; there's never no one to lock up. It's all done by summons—that's how it's done. Why, I've only locked up one party the whole going-on-for seven years I've been in the force, and that was a boy as threw a stone through a grocer's window what his mother owed a bill to. If I was to lock up anybody, I should take him over to Selston—that's what I should do."

"Oh, you would, would you? It's a pity you didn't mention these facts before you brought us here. How far might Selston be from this?"

"A good nine miles by the road, and a bit over."

"Is it? I think we'll stay where we are till the first train leaves in the morning. Thornton, you come here."

The warder was still in the lockup of whose powers of safe-keeping such flattering things had been said.

George Otway went to him.

"You sit there." He pointed to a board, which, running across one end, was intended to serve as a seat. "You've heard what Mr. Parsons has been saying, so don't you lean back too heavily against this wall. We're not going to shut that door—we're going to leave it wide open. One of us will always be right bang in front of it, and he'll have a gun. We've all got guns. See! there's mine!"

He thrust the muzzle of his carbine right under Otway's nose.

"And they're loaded, our guns are. If you lean back too heavy, or so much as move off this seat without permission, they'll be pointed straight at your head. We were entitled to shoot you down like a rabbit in the wood there. A prison-breaker's got no rights—we officers can shoot him at sight. If you give us any more of your tricks, we'll shoot you. We'll load you up with lead, as sure as you're alive; so the more clearly you understand that the more comfortable you're likely to be."

By way of answer, Otway laughed again.

"Thanks for telling me; it's very good of you to make the position so plain."

"Mind it is plain, that's all. I wouldn't laugh quite so much if I was you. There's nothing to laugh about in the scrape you're in that I can see. Now, down you sit."

Mr. Parsons spoke.

"I don't know that that seat will hold a man of your weight."

Otway sat down. The board creaked as he did so, but it was only as the strain came on it first.

"It's a bit creaky, perhaps, but I think its constitution will stand the shock. I only hope you gentlemen won't shoot if it does let me down. By the way, Mr. Parsons, I don't remember to have seen you before."

"And I don't remember to have seen you. Seeing that I've only been here four months; and that, so far as I know, you haven't set foot in the place since I have been here, and that I came from pretty near the other side of the country, I don't see how I could have seen you."

This explained how it was that the village constable had failed to perceive, at a glance, that he was not Frank Thornton. But there still remained the fact that the warders had been taken in also; so, with an eye to enlightenment, he pursued his inquiries with the same light-hearted air:

"Nor do I remember to have encountered either of you three gentlemen. Surely we were not companions in the train."

The gray-haired warder answered, with, in his tone, more than a touch of crustiness:

"If we three gentlemen, as you put it —or either of us—had been your companions in the train, we'd have kept you in the train—you wouldn't have got out of it alive; you can take my word for that."

The stocky little man announced:

"If you'd tried on any of your games with me there'd have been an end of one of us; I rather fancy there'd have been an end of you. I may be wrong; but I never have been wrong in a thing of that sort as yet."

The third warder, who seemed to be a silent sort of person, gave his view of the position in a very few words.

"No prisoner ever got away alive from an officer who was worth his salt, and I don't care who hears me say it."

The gray-haired warder shook his head.

"I don't know that I'm prepared to quite go so far as that myself, prisoners having given even good officers the slip for the time—only for the time, mind!—to my certain knowledge. But nothing of the kind has happened to either of us three so far, and we're not proposing that it should happen now."

"We're not," agreed the little man.

The third warder said nothing; he only examined the trigger of his carbine.

CHAPTER XX.

THE WARDER GOES.

There was a momentary silence. The three warders stood together in front of the open lockup, eying George Otway, seated on the board at the other end, as if he were some strange creature. Each held his carbine by the muzzle, the butt resting on the floor. The prisoner wondered what would happen in case of an accidental discharge. The probability seemed to be that there would be one warder less, or else there would be a surprise for Mrs. Parsons overhead.

The policeman leaned in easy attitude against the wall. His interest in the proceedings was almost ostentatiously slight, as if he wished to let the others understand how completely he was conscious that the prisoner was not his.

Presently the gray-haired warder drew the back of his hand across his lips. As Mr. Parsons happened to be looking at the ceiling, possibly thinking of the lady who was above it, the gesture went unnoticed. On its being repeated, still without attracting attention, he tried speech instead.

"Dry work this."

"It is dry work," agreed the stocky man.

The third warder only looked as if it were. Mr. Parsons said nothing; he continued to gaze at the ceiling. It really seemed as if the bucolic intellect —in the person of a rural representative of the law—was a little difficult to penetrate. With a sigh, as of delicate regret, the gray-haired warder came more directly to the point.

"Mr. Parsons, didn't your good lady say something about a barrel of beer?"

Then Mr. Parsons began to awake to the situation. Bringing his eyes down from the ceiling, he fixed them on the gray-haired warder's face.

"She did say something about less than half a barrel."

"Half a barrel I understood her to say, of as good beer as ever came into the house."

"It is good beer."

"Ah!" The gray-haired warder sighed again. The rustic mind was very slow. "Mr. Parsons, me and my two friends here haven't had so much as bite or sup not since early this afternoon. You mightn't think it, but it's a fact."

"Not since early this afternoon?"

"Not since early this afternoon. That's a good long time ago, as I needn't tell you, and we've done some moving about; and, so far as grub's concerned, we're men of regular habits. The consequence is that, for what we're feeling, peckish isn't the word, nor yet dry, neither. We could put away anything."

"I could," agreed the stocky man.

The third warder, as usual, only looked as if he could.

"Now, Mr. Parsons, if you was to get us a nice plate of bread and cheese, and a good glass of ale, you might charge it to the county if you liked."

"Do you think the county'd pay?"

"Think?—I'm sure! We'll endorse your claim, that's what we'll do, and then the county'll pay you anything you like to ask—in reason."

"If I was sure the county'd pay!"

The silent warder was moved to unexpected eloquence.

"Look here, Parsons, if you've got any doubts about the county, sooner than sit up all night starving with hunger, and parched with thirst, I'll pay you for your stuff out of my own pocket; a price that'll give you a handsome profit, too. I've got money."

"So far as that goes," observed the gray-haired warder with dignity, "we've all of us got money."

"Of course we have!" exclaimed the stocky man.

"How much——" Mr. Parsons, having got so far, paused, to presently proceed, with an amount of hesitation which still suggested doubt: "How much beer could each of you chaps do with?"

"About a pailful," declared the silent man, then added: "I could do with two."

"Two pailfuls!" Mr. Parsons stared, apparently failing to suspect that there might be anything ironical in the speaker's proclamation of his capacity. "You won't get two pailfuls here, nor yet one. My missus tells me that there ain't hardly more than a gallon left in the cask; and the brewer, he won't be round for more than a week."

The third warder, having been driven into speech, showed himself to be possessed of a flow of language.

"The brewer! Ain't there publics? If the publics was open, do you think we'd trouble you? They will be open by the time you want a sup in the morning. If three chaps was to come to my place, same as we've come to yours, I wouldn't see 'em sinking for want of a drop of ale—no, I'm not that sort."

Mr. Parsons remained, seemingly, in silent contemplation. The three warders watched him anxiously; never before had they realized how slow the bucolic mind—and body—could be. Then he announced the decision at which, by such laborious processes, he had arrived.

"I'll go and draw a pint apiece, that'll be two quarts—my missus has got a jug as just holds it."

The tension on the warders' faces relaxed; the gray-haired one heaved a sigh of sincere relief. He hailed the policeman as he was going.

"That's more like it, Mr. Parsons; I knew you were a man on whom we could rely. Fill the jug up to the top, never mind about a head on it; let it be all beer. And, look here, don't forget the bread and cheese. And, by the way, you might bring a mouthful of bread and cheese for that chap in there." He motioned to Otway. "We're not going to stand him beer, but a mug of water wouldn't do him any harm."

When the constable had departed in search of the much-desired refreshment, the gray-haired warder's manner became quite genial.

"Now, chaps, gather round; let's get chairs. It don't cost no more to sit than to stand—at least, I hope Mr. Parsons won't charge us no more—and we've had about enough of standing for just once in awhile. We can all of us keep an eye on our gentleman inside there while we're sitting down—while we're enjoying a glass of as good ale as ever came inside this house."

Here the gray-haired warder winked.

Four wooden chairs were placed in a semicircle fronting the open lockup. The warders placed themselves on three

of them. The fourth was left for Mr. Parsons. Some minutes, however, elapsed before he returned. They could hear his lumbering movements in the room beyond. The third warder gave expression to the common feeling.

"I hope he ain't found that cask emptier than he thought."

"I hope not," echoed the stocky man, with every appearance of sincerity.

There came the sound of a running tap.

"That's not beer," surmised the gray-head.

They listened.

"No," pronounced the silent man; "that's water. I hope he's not putting water into that beer to make up for any shortage."

The anxiety on their faces returned. Seemingly they were racked by a haunting fear that their host might be guilty of anything. When his portly form appeared in the doorway, bearing a number of articles before him on a tray, each man turned to him with looks of severity.

"Glad to see you, Mr. Parsons," announced the gray-head. "We was just beginning to be afraid that you weren't coming."

The policeman said nothing. He placed his tray on a small, round table, which was covered with American cloth. With much deliberation he handed a plate of bread and cheese to each of the warders, and a fourth to Otway, together—in his case—with a large earthenware mug full of water.

"Thank you, Mr. Parsons. It's very good of you to take so much trouble; this bread and cheese looks delicious."

It did look appetizing, and the prisoner drank from his mug with every appearance of unqualified enjoyment. Mr. Parsons filled four similar jugs with ale out of a large white jug which had a bull's head to serve as a spout. He handed each man one. The gray-haired warder received his with a beaming smile.

"That's the stuff, Mr. Parsons; that's the right kind of ale. Never saw a drop of beer which gave greater pleasure to my eye. Now, gentlemen, I'll give you a toast. Here's to the County Police Force, coupled with the name of its excellent representative, Mr. Thomas Parsons."

Each man drank to the toast, including Mr. Parsons himself, who appeared to be unconscious of there being anything incongruous in his doing so. He wiped his lips with the back of his hand.

"Much obliged," he said. "Same to you."

The three warders seemed relieved, as if a weight had been lifted off their chests.

"That's a drop of good ale, that is," declared the gray-head. "There's nothing like it."

"First-rate ale," admitted the silent man.

For the first time the stocky warder permitted himself to differ. He was smacking his lips with the air of a connoisseur; there was a suggestion of doubt about his eyes.

"Seems to me it's a trifle bitterish. I may be wrong, but there it is."

His gray-haired colleague laughed.

"It's your stomach what's bitterish, that's what it is. It's so long since it's had anything inside it that it's forgotten what good ale is. I like my beer to have a nip in it, I do, so that I can feel I'm swallowing something as it goes down my throat. Well, gentlemen, I'm going to give you another toast"—he winked—"which will help you to empty what's left in your mugs, so as not to keep our friend, who's anxious to fill 'em up again, waiting. I ask you to drink to a lady who's an ornament to her sex, and just the wife for a future sergeant of police, if not an inspector. Need I say, in this company, that I'm alluding to Mrs. Thomas Parsons? Here's to her!"

And there was to her, Mr. Parsons again joining in drinking to the toast. So heartily was it honored, that by all four of them the mugs were emptied, each one tilting up his own particular mug, so that the last remaining drops might be drained into his mouth.

The effect produced by the prolonged libation was of an extraordinary kind,

one which was undoubtedly unexpected by the drinkers.

No sooner, for instance, had the gray-haired warder assimilated the last remaining drop than a startled look came on his face, to be immediately followed by one more peculiar still. He half rose form his seat.

"There's something the matter," he mumbled.

Apparently something choked his utterance; at least, he got no further than those four words. Instead of concluding his sentence, he made a sort of paralytic grab at his carbine, which he had leaned against the back of his chair, only to send it clattering to the floor. Fortunately it was not discharged upon the spot. In what seemed to be an effort to stay its progress he himself went after it, falling in a sort of helpless lump right on top of the ill-treated weapon. The empty beer-mug dropped from his hand and was smashed to pieces.

Where he had fallen the warder remained, uttering, for a second or two, a series of groans. Then he was still.

His companions were affected with even greater celerity than he had been. The stocky man's hands descended on either side of him, his body slipped forward on the chair, his head fell back, his mouth opened; in a flash he seemed to have sunk into stertorous slumber.

The silent officer, who had complained of the bitterish taste, appeared to have been stricken by a painful physical sensation. Clapping his hands to the pit of his stomach, an internal spasm appeared to twist him right round in his chair, toppling it over, with him on top of it, so that he lay quite still, athwart the seat of the chair, in about as uncomfortable a position as he could very well have chosen.

The policeman was overcome more quickly than either of the others; he just collapsed onto the floor, as if the bones had been taken clean out of him.

The transformation had been so sudden, so unexpected, and so complete, that Mr. Otway felt for a moment incapable of believing the evidence of his own eyes. One instant the four men had been sitting there in front of him, drinking jovially together; the next they were lying there like so many senseless logs. He stared, and stared, and stared. Then, as none of them showed any disposition to move, he muttered to himself:

"It occurs to me that there must have been something radically wrong with the constitution of the best drop of beer that ever came into the house; it's lucky that they confined me to water."

All at once he heard a creaking sound. Some one was descending the stairs.

"Hello! The plot thickens! Who comes now?"

Although he could see nothing from where he was, he was aware that the door which led into the passage had been opened with as little noise as possible.

As a matter of fact, a young woman had put her head into the room—by no means a bad-looking young woman, either. The accident that her hair was hanging down her back, and that she seemed to have put on her clothes in a hurry, was not in any way prejudicial to her personal appearance.

After she had taken a survey of the condition of affairs inside the room, she inquired in a voice which was rendered tremulous probably by a mixture of agitation and apprehension:

"Is that you, Mr. Frank?"

Otway unhesitatingly replied:

"Pray step right in; always pleased to receive visitors."

That the newcomer had an intimate acquaintance with the tone of Frank Thornton's voice was immediately disclosed by the astonishment she showed as Otway answered.

"That's not Mr. Frank's voice!" she cried.

Coming hurriedly forward into the room, advancing to the open lockup, she stared at its occupant. The disguise did not deceive her for a single second.

"You're not Mr. Frank! Who are you?"

"I hope that I'm the next thing to being Mr. Frank, since I believe I have

some title to call myself Mr. Frank's best friend."

The woman began to wring her hands, seemingly on the verge of tears.

"But—I don't understand!—they told me he was here!"

"I flatter myself that if it hadn't been for me he would have been here. As it is, I trust that long ere this he's safe in London. We've changed clothes; that's the explanation of the mystery, my dear woman. I chanced to meet him at the vicarage, flying for something dearer than life, so I took his place and he took mine. As the gentlemen on the floor didn't happen to be in the secret, here I am."

"Is it true what you're saying? Are you sure you're his friend? Is he really safe?"

"Yes—to all three of your questions."

"Oh, what have I done! If I'd only known, I wouldn't have moved a finger!"

"Then, possibly, it's fortunate for me that you didn't know. May I ask if I'm indebted for what has happened to Mr. Parsons?"

"Mr. Parsons? My Tom? Do you mean has he done this? The idea! Why, he wouldn't have done it for worlds; if he finds out, he'll feel like killing me!"

"May I inquire what it is you've done?"

"Done? Me? I've done nothing."

"Is that so? Then who has done something?"

"No one's done anything; no one! It's been an accident, that's what it's been, just an accident. I suffer dreadfully from faceache. I got some stuff which does it good and makes you sleep. I kept it in a jug. The jug happened to be hanging on the peg nearest to the barrel. I suppose my Tom didn't see that there was anything in the jug, and filled it up with beer."

"I see. And I suppose that the fact that you thought Frank Thornton was inside the lockup had nothing to do with the accident?"

The young woman showed signs of strong emotion.

"I've known Mr. Frank all my life; he's always been kind to me. The vicarage is the only service I've ever had. I went there when I first went out, and I stayed there till I was married; and Mr. Frank he's kissed me many and many a time—that was before I knew Mr. Parsons—it was only a way he had!"

"Just so. And not a bad way, either. Go on."

Mrs. Parsons peeped at him from behind the cover of her handkerchief, as if she were doubtful as to his meaning. She went on:

"And when I heard that he was at the mercy of those dreadful men, how could I tell that they'd be wanting beer, and that my Tom wouldn't see that there was something in the jug?"

"Precisely; how could you? We cannot command the prophet's foresight. By the way, Mrs. Parsons, I fancy that if you were to feel in that gray-haired gentleman's coat-tail pocket you'd find something which would relieve me of these ornaments with which he has loaded me."

The young woman, having no scruples about doing what she was told, soon produced a bunch of queer-looking keys.

"I'm afraid that I myself am rather helpless. Do you think you could unlock me?"

"Are you perfectly certain that you're Mr. Frank's friend?"

"Perfectly certain."

"And that he's safe?"

"Absolutely—that is, to the best of my knowledge and belief."

"Then I'll unlock you. I should think I did ought to be able to unlock a pair of handcuffs; I've not been a policeman's wife for nothing."

He thought of what Mr. Parsons had said about having only locked up one small boy in the whole of his official life. He wondered if she had acquired her knowledge by handcuffing her husband and then practising unlocking him. However that might have been, she showed herself deft enough at releasing him. Presently he was standing up, freed from his fetters.

"That's better; that's a great deal better. Mrs. Parsons, you have—wittingly or not—rendered me a great service, and one which I shall never forget. Whatever may come of this night's adventure, neither Mr. Parsons nor you shall suffer in the end."

"I do hope we sha'n't, especially Tom! He's as innocent as a babe unborn!"

"I give you my word, my dear woman, that neither he nor you shall suffer. Now there comes the question of clothes. I've had enough of this rig-out, although I've only had it on a few hours. If I go away in it I sha'n't be long at liberty. I've been looking at this gentleman who's lying across the chair. It strikes me that he's about my height and build; I might borrow his uniform and leave him mine in exchange."

Mrs. Parsons, wiping her eyes, looked up at him with a sort of embryo smile.

"The idea of your going away dressed like a prison warder!"

"It's not a bad idea, is it? I think I'll proceed to put it into execution if you won't mind stepping outside just for half a minute."

Mrs. Parsons stepped outside. The change was effected, and in a surprising short space of time. The fit was not all what it might have been, especially as regards the cap, but it served, and warders are not remarkable for the perfect fit of their uniform. He called to the lady without:

"Mrs. Parsons!"

She reappeared, now more disposed to smile than to cry. He displayed himself before her twinkling eyes.

"You see, I've managed. Do you think it will do?"

"Well, I never did! I never should have known you!"

"Then that's all right. I think you mentioned—accidentally—that Frank Thornton kissed you—once."

She had the grace to blush.

"But that was before I met my Tom!"

"Exactly. As I am acting as Frank Thornton's substitute, I feel that I should like to do what he would like to do. Good night, Mrs. Parsons."

He stooped and kissed her lightly on the cheek. Before she could remonstrate he was in the passage, unlocking and unbolting the door.

"A parting question: How shall I find the vicarage?"

"The vicarage? Turn to your left when you get outside, and keep straight on till you get to the end of the street, then it's the first house across the way. You can't help noticing it, because at the gate there's a lamp which is kept burning until the morning."

Without another word he opened the door, and the tall figure of a prison warder passed out into the night.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE DEMON KING.

When George Otway, in the disguise of a prison warder, having in mind Mrs. Parsons' words as to the constantly burning lamp at the gate, had found the vicarage, he was confronted by still another difficulty. There, sure enough, was the light at the gate, but the house itself was in darkness. He could only guess at the time; but as the month was October, and the faintest gleam of light was beginning to show itself on the eastern horizon, he judged it to be about five o'clock.

Since it was essential, if he wished to avoid recapture, that he should be out of the district before daylight, it was obviously desirous that he should gain admittance to the house with the least possible delay.

If Mrs. Thornton had acted on his instructions, and had had his bag brought from the station, he would be able to disencumber himself of his tell-tale uniform and start under as favorable conditions as possible—that is, if he could get at his bag. The difficulty lay in the "if."

It would hardly do to rouse the house, in the ordinary way, by ringing and knocking. Not only might the wrong person come to the door, but

more attention might be attracted than was at all desirable.

He would have tossed a handful of gravel at Mrs. Thornton's bedroom window, if he had known which was her window, but there again was the "if." He had not the faintest notion in which part of the house she slept. It would never have done to startle the maid-servant possibly half out of her senses by assaulting her bedroom window.

Possibly the safest method of effecting an entry would be by committing burglary. If he could only find a window which would let him through, by exercising care and making as little noise as need be, it was quite possible that he might do all that he wanted to do, and be away again before any one in the house awoke to the consciousness of his presence.

He thought that he might take it for granted that the bag was in the room in which he had changed clothes with Frank Thornton on the previous evening. But how was he to reach the room?

From without he could not even decide upon its whereabouts; he could not remember from which side it had looked out, and, in the darkness, all the windows seemed the same. If he was only inside he believed that he could find it on the instant.

Oh, for a convenient window!

The one which he had found open the night before was now locked, and—apparently—shuttered, too. Ingress could not be had through that.

Another promising window, with large, wide sashes, and a sill raised only a couple of feet above the ground, was also secured on the inside by means of shutters; he could see them dimly through the pane, which was obscured neither by blind nor curtain.

Probably the kitchen was on the other side. So far as he could make out, in the worse than uncertain light, the same conditions did not apply to the window which adjoined it—that was unshuttered. But it was a small one, the sill being perhaps five feet above the ground.

There was a knife in the warder's pocket. He tried the big blade first, to find that he could not reach the latch from where he stood.

While he was prowling about in search of something by means of which he could raise himself, his foot struck against what seemed to be a plant in a good-sized wooden box.

Without hesitation he picked it up in his arms. Although its weight was as much as he could stagger under, he managed to get it to the little window.

Ruthlessly turning it over, by means of mounting on the exposed side he found he could reach what he wanted. The big blade proved too thick to slip between the sashes, and he substituted the smaller one. Presently, after a little gentle manipulation, the hasp sprang back, with scarcely a sound.

In another second the window was open. So small, however, was the aperture thus exposed that it was only with difficulty he could insert his bulky form. Indeed, he stuck quite fast when he was half-way through, so that he was able to move neither backward nor forward; and it was only after some distinctly painful maneuvers and a considerable waste of time that he was able to gain his end.

"It feels to me," he said to himself, when at last he found himself inside, "as if every bone in my body was crushed out of shape. If I had quite realized how tight that window was, I doubt whether, even under the very pressing circumstances, I should have been disposed to tackle it; it's a wonder I didn't wedge myself so thoroughly as to insure my being ignominiously trapped. Now where am I? I've a notion it's the pantry. Where is the door? I'd give a five-pound note for a box of matches."

When he had found the door, and was on the other side of it, he was not much better off. The darkness was Egyptian. He discovered that he had been mistaken in supposing that he would be any better off when he had effected an entrance; he had not the vaguest idea which way to turn, or what to do.

So bewildered was he by ignorance

of his surroundings, that it was with a sense of actual relief he learned, all at once, that he had aroused the house. He heard a door being unlocked overhead. A dim light from above served to show that he was in a sort of passage, with the staircase on his right.

"Who's that down-stairs?" called a quavering voice.

In spite of the quaver he recognized the voice; it was Mrs. Thornton's. He answered, half beneath his breath:

"It is I—George Otway."

The information seemed to occasion the old lady surprise, not unmixed with apprehension.

"Mr. Otway! Are you sure that you are Mr. Otway?"

He moved toward the foot of the staircase, intending to give her ocular proof that he really was himself. So soon as she saw him she gave a stifled cry.

"You are not George Otway. You are one of those people from the prison, back again."

He ascended the stairs, reassuring her as he ascended.

"I give you my word, Mrs. Thornton, that I am George Otway. I have only changed my clothes once more. Instead of a felon, I am now a warder. If you did as I asked you, and my bag is in the house, within five minutes I shall have changed again into my own proper self."

The old lady still seemed shaking with fright. Clinging to the banisters with one hand, a lighted candle held in the other, an old faded dressing-gown thrown over her nightdress, she stood blinking up at him as if he had been some dreadful visitant.

"I had your bag brought down; it's in Frank's room."

"And which is that?" She moved the candle toward the door. "How shall I get a light?"

"Here are some matches. You will find a candle in the room." As he was going she cried to him, a note of sudden fear in her voice: "Mr. Otway, what are you going to do?"

He turned to her, surprised by the change in her voice and bearing; her worn face was working as if she was suffering from some disease of the muscles.

"Why, Mrs. Thornton, I'm going to do nothing; that is, nothing particular. I am only about to clothe myself in my own garments, and I assure you I shall be glad to do so. Then I will relieve you of my presence again as fast as I possibly can. My dear lady, why do you look at me like that, as if I were a ghost? Long ere this Frank should be in safety; everything is going well. I warned you that I might return at any moment, even as a thief in the night."

She shook her head feebly, as if her feelings were altogether beyond her powers of utterance.

"It isn't that," she muttered. "It isn't that."

Within a very few minutes he came out of Frank's room, clothed again in his own attire, and Mrs. Thornton was still upon the landing. She greeted him with an odd remark, spoken with an appearance of something more than disquietude, as if she had been referring to some unholy thing.

"Mr. Otway, they told me at the station that in a first-class compartment on the train by which you had traveled, two men had been found—murdered."

As she uttered the last word she dropped her voice in a fashion which had about it something which was almost ominous.

He started back, taken wholly by surprise. He had not reckoned that the news would have traveled quite so quickly.

"Murdered, Mrs. Thornton! But that's impossible! They certainly were not murdered."

Observing his discomposure she had apparently drawn from it her own conclusions, regarding him with accusatory eyes.

"I thought so! I thought so!" She repeated her words twice over. "It was not for Elsie's sake only that you came here! That Frank should be so indebted to you! My poor children! Go quickly, sir, before the avengers of blood are at hand, and may the Lord

have mercy upon you, for, apparently, you have placed yourself beyond the reach of man's help!"

They were not comfortable words to have ringing in his ears as he went out again into the silence and the darkness of the night. It was yet dark, and the light on the horizon was still but the faintest glimmer.

His plans were of the vaguest. The sudden alteration in Mrs. Thornton's manner, the evident desire which she had shown to be rid of him, to be relieved of the contagion of his presence, had affected him so unpleasantly that he had scarcely stayed to obtain from her explicit instructions as to the road by which he was to travel.

So he started forth on his fresh journeying in a state of great mental confusion and discomfort.

It was altogether beyond the range of possibility that Harvey and Rochambeau had been found murdered—none knew that better than he did. But was it possible that they had been found dead? He had done nothing which could have been responsible for bringing their careers to such a sudden termination; but, still, if they were dead he would be in a truly terrible position.

And that Elsie's mother should have imagined that he could have been guilty of such a crime! That she should, indeed, seemingly have taken it for granted that he had the blood of two men upon his hands! The sting lay in that—that she esteemed it as even conceivable that he could be such a wretch! Elsie's mother!

He strode on through the night, his fists clenched, his lips pressed tightly together, saying hard things of himself to himself, not knowing where he was going, or seeming to care.

How far he had gone or how long he had been about it he had no notion, when a sudden sound made him pause. A whirring, buzzing sound was coming toward him through the air.

"It's a motor," he decided.

It was yet at a considerable distance; only the perfect stillness which prevailed rendered it audible at all. Himself a motorist, acquainted with motorists' ways, his first thought was that it was some record-breaking gentleman, who was taking advantage of the deserted highways and the absence of the police to give his car its head.

A brief period of listening, however, showed that this could hardly be the case. His trained ear enabled him to perceive that the car was not only not going fast, but that it was varying its pace in a fashion which suggested eccentricity on the part of the motor or the chauffeur.

It would give a forward whiz, which would continue for a second or two, to suddenly change to a snaillike crawl, which would give place, as suddenly, to another whiz, returning to a snaillike crawl, followed by a regular burst for perhaps a dozen seconds, only to subside again into a more pronounced crawl than before.

This erratic method of progression, as was shown by the varying volume of sound, was repeated over and over again.

"Either some one is trying experiments on lines of his own, or there's something wrong with the works. I believe he's coming my way. He is. What wouldn't I give for a ride upon his car? Just the thing I'm wanting. If he'd only give me a lift he might dash across country in any direction he chooses. Is the fellow talking to himself?"

He was certainly talking to some one, and at the top of his voice. Presently he began singing, too. After an interval of perhaps another couple of minutes two vivid white lights appeared upon Otway's right, at a considerable distance from where he was standing.

"That shows how straight the road is; I should say that those lights must be the best part of a mile from where I am. What a row the fellow's making; he must be stark, staring mad. If so, he ought to be just the man for me."

Some one on the approaching automobile was singing, at the top of a sufficiently loud voice, snatches from a surprising variety of popular songs, passing from grave to gay, from the severe to the ultra-frivolous, with an

ease and rapidity which indicated, to say the least, a musical taste of an unusually cosmopolitan kind.

It almost seemed as if he was adapting the pace of his car to the style of his song, crawling along to the stately cadences of "Nazareth," flying to the lively strains of "Keep Off the Grass."

As he neared Otway he was bellowing something in German which, if his rendering was the correct one, went with a positively irritating drawl; and so slowly did his car move—with the apparent intention of keeping time to the song—that it scarcely seemed to move at all.

Otway hailed him when he was within a yard or two.

"Hello! What might that song be with which you're favoring the stilly night? It's strange to me."

The vocalist stopped both his singing and his car, answering the inquiry as if it were the most natural thing in the world that such a question should be addressed to him by a perfect stranger, in such a place, at such a time.

"That's a German students' song, in two-and-twenty verses. Each verse has two-and-twenty lines, and each line has to be sung three times over. It's adapted to an all-night sitting, since it takes all night to sing it through. And as the air's of no account and the words are meaningless it doesn't matter what state you're in when you're singing it. Who are you? You look as if you were a gentleman, and you sound as if you're one."

Otway's tone, as he replied, was dry.

"It's very good of you to say so. I've been listening to you for a quarter of an hour, wondering what sort of jaunt you were out on."

"Oh, I'm riding to the devil! There's nothing like a motor for an excursion of the kind. But at this time of the morning, what are you doing here listening to anything?"

"I'm beginning to wonder myself."

"The deuce you are! Then, if that's the sort of man I've met he ought to be fit company for a ride with me."

"Nothing would please me better. Where are you going?"

"To Southampton or to Dover, to Land's End or to John o'Groats, into the next hedge or ditch—it's all about the same to me."

"Then if that's the case, a whiz to Southampton would exactly suit my taste."

"A whiz, you say? Then, by jingo! you shall have it. I'll show you what a fifty horse-power can do when the road is clear. Up you come!"

TO BE CONTINUED.

THE FARMER'S MISTAKE

IT was a petty little branch railroad, running a train a day each way; but it was the best in the neighborhood, and the peaceable farmers had to put up with it. It was only in its infancy, but no doubt it would grow in time. It so happened, a little while ago, an old farmer was expecting a fowl-house to reach the local Grand Central Depot, and he got his wagon and trundled off to the—to him—hitherto unknown station to fetch it. Arrived there, he saw his purchase, loaded it onto his wagon, and started for home.

On the way he met a man in uniform with the word "Station Agent" on his cap.

"What the merry springtime have you got on that wagon?" he asked.

"My fowl-house, of course," was the reply.

"Fowl-house be jiggered!" was the justly indignant response, "that's the station!"

Mail Pouch No. 27

By Reginald Wright Kauffman

The unexpected bit of assistance which came to a reporter during a critical period of his career, thereby enabling the newspaper he represented to score a notable "beat" over its contemporaries

IN the language of the craft, I was "up against it." For a year I had been successfully performing the pleasant, though underpaid, rôle of "star man" on a Philadelphia newspaper, and now, going out on a story which had at first appeared of a simplicity beneath my powers, I had come face to face with a mystery which, it seemed, there was no unraveling. My professional pride was hurt, and my professional reputation was trembling in the balance.

The facts were these:

On Monday afternoon there had left Baltimore, upon one of the north-bound trains which go by way of Harrisburg, a certain United States mail-pouch which, for the sake of a name, we will call No. 27. It contained ordinary letters of ordinary importance and one envelope, unregistered, posted by a Baltimore contractor to a Pittsburg councilman, and enclosing, for reasons best understood by the two parties to the contract, ten fresh one-hundred-dollar bills—and the mail-pouch had gone astray.

My esteemed friend, Barry Gallagher—he was the contractor—had told me about it when I chanced upon him in the lobby of a Philadelphia hotel.

"It's a good story, my boy," he had said, "and I give ye the tip as free as air—providin' that ye don't mention me or me frien' in anythin' ye write about it."

"But," I had countered, "if I let you out, where does the story come in?"

"Story? Why, bless ye, it's all there! My letter's only a drap in the bucket. I made mention of it only by way of indicatin' how I came to know of the affair."

"Do you mean that there was more valuable mail in that pouch?"

"I mean that it doesn't matter a cent whether there was or there wasn't. The point is that one of Uncle Sam's mail-pouches has been stolen—that there's been a real, live mail-robbery here in the effete an' comparatively civilized East—and the contents of that same bag isn't one-two-three compared with the fact that your Uncle Samuel's dignity has been insulted and his sacred seals tampered with. What's more, that leather pouch, so to put it, has been et up—metal trimmin's an' all. It's just clean dropped out of existence like. The secret service men have been at work on the case for t'ree days, an' they can't learn a thing."

Well, I worked on it for three days more—took a train up to Harrisburg that very night, in fact—but at the end of that time I was as deep in the dark as anybody else.

What was worse, I had bungled matters in my first story. Convinced that the government detectives would soon run down the thief, I had begun by writing to my paper a despatch in which I had assumed a top-lofty attitude, treating the case as a perfectly simple one—so simple that only the conventional ethics of a none-too-ethical journalism forbade my telling all about it before the speedily forthcoming arrest was actually made. And then the arrest wasn't made at all. Day followed

day, and still there was "nothing doing."

Naturally, it was up to me to make good the promise of my initial despatch, and yet I was unable to do anything but spin out a daily story which was merely a semi-editorial condemnation of the stupidity of the secret service operatives.

Only these few points were certain:

The pouch had gone aboard the proper train at Baltimore—an express for Rochester that cut directly north by way of Harrisburg, leaving Philadelphia a hundred miles to the eastward and dropping its Western mail at the State capital, where it was always gathered up by a west-bound train from Philadelphia, fifteen minutes later.

The Baltimore post-office had the receipt for Pouch No. 27, signed by the mail-clerk on the north-bound train; and the clerk on that train had the receipt for the delivery of the pouch to the clerk who took it over at Harrisburg and should have kept it there in the station with its fellows until the arrival of the express for Pittsburg. That receipt, backed by a good record, cleared the train-clerk, and apparently "put it up to" the man at Harrisburg.

But the Harrisburg man seemed as mystified as any of us. He had been severely "sweated," of course, but to absolutely no purpose. The bags from the Baltimore train had, he was sure, been tossed upon his truck, as usual, that night. He had receipted for them, and then sat down on top of them—in the center of the station, under a lamp and within the gates—until, fifteen minutes later, the west-bound train had come along. Then he had descended to the platform and, in beginning to hand up the pouches to the train-clerk from Philadelphia, had noticed that there was one short.

Witnesses testified positively that, during the interval between the trains, the Harrisburg man had not left his charge. It was next to impossible for any one to have walked into the station and out again along the tracks. The gatemen, on the other hand, were sure that they would have noticed any one passing them with a cumbersome pouch in his arms. Yet Pouch No. 27 was gone—and, incidentally, Barry Gallagher's ten one-hundred-dollar bills along with it.

On the following Sunday night I sat behind the counter in the nearly deserted telegraph-office and began to start off another "fake" to my paper, but I had written only about five hundred words, when the operator at my elbow suddenly ceased "sending."

"Here comes something back for you," he grinned; and presently handed me the following:

BURTON, *Globe-Express* Staff Man, Harrisburg.

If you haven't got anything to say, don't say it. There's some real news yet in the world, and space isn't cheap. Also, if you can't get a real story to-morrow, come home, and we'll send Ledyard. FEALY.

That is the kind of a message which any newspaper reporter is likely to get from his chief at any time. I knew this, and I knew, moreover, that, as a rule, it means merely that the boss has had to eat a bad dinner, or that the office boys have been slow in bringing him his proofs. But you never think of these extraneous causes when you are sitting discouraged at the far-end of a telegraph wire; and, at this particular juncture, Fealy's words merely served as the last straw to break the back of my never iron-framed temper.

I could see the other men in the office snickering at my failure—for one man's "fall-down" is another man's assignment—and I pictured my disgraced return with that stuffed-shirt of a Ledyard coming into the field just as an arrest might at last be made, and taking all the impossible credit thereof to his own omniscience.

Well, I concluded, I simply wouldn't go back at all. I would solve this thing within a day, or make a cut for Chicago and pastures new. In a fit of that bravado which makes possible the charge of a forlorn hope, I slashed out the last paragraph of my story and brought it up sharp to the following conclusion:

The secret service operatives have proved

themselves absolutely useless. The case has all along been as clear as filtered water. And within the next twenty-four hours the *Globe-Express* will print the facts and name the criminal.

"There," said I, tossing the last page of my "copy" to the still grinning operator; "fire that into them and see how they like it."

He took up the sheet and went ticking away. Then his eye caught the concluding words, and his face changed from scorn to surprise.

"Gee!" he said. "Is this straight?"

"Never you mind about that," I told him. "My business is to write the news, and your business is to send it. I've attended to my work; see that you attend to yours as well."

I turned away and picked up my overcoat, wondering how I should set about my last endeavor and already inwardly regretting the awful bluff which I had just made. Very slowly I started for the door in the counter of the telegraph-office, on my way I knew not whither.

"Hold on," said the operator. "They're asking for you."

"Well," said I loftily—for, after all, I might as well play my part consistently—"what do they want?"

"They say," he began, reading from the instrument as it clicked out the words—"they say: 'Is Burton drunk, or only crazy?'"

"Tell them they'll find out all right when they get my story to-morrow evening."

He obeyed, and then:

"They want to know if you'll send the facts now, 'in confidence,'" he continued, beginning again to construe literally; "'and not necessarily for publication.'"

In answer, I grabbed a large press-blank, and hastily wrote:

FEALY, *Globe-Express*, Philadelphia.
Will send facts only when I'm ready to cause arrest. Good night. BURTON.

"There," I concluded; "if they ask for anything more, tell 'em I've gone out in a rush and the hotel people don't know where I am."

The plain truth was that I didn't myself know where to go. I merely made for the heart of the town, and the first man I met was Tom Foulke, of the secret service.

"Hello, Tommy!" I said as cheerfully as I could. "Anything new?"

He shook his head.

"No—an' if there was," he answered, "you wouldn't be the first to get it, after the way you've been roasting us."

That made me hot altogether.

"Oh, wouldn't I be?" I snarled. "Well, just you read the *Globe-Express* in the morning, and then maybe you'll notice that I don't need you."

And with that I hurried down the street at a pace meant to impress Tommy as that of a man on business of vital moment.

But I was, as I said at the start, completely "up against it." I hadn't an idea where to turn. Already I began to see the mad quagmire of folly into which my futile anger had led me. There was absolutely nothing that I could do to "make good," and now, in fancy, I began to see the horrid results of my utter failure.

There was left but a shameful retreat. I went to the station and bought a ticket to Chicago.

And then the luck turned.

The midnight train had just come in from New York—an express, bound West. A thin cue of people was leaving it, winding through the gates and up the long flight of steps at the top of which I was standing, and in the midst of those sleepy passengers I caught sight of a figure, one glimpse of which was like water in the desert.

A slim, lithe, youngish little woman, in a quiet, tailor-made walking-costume; a woman with a dark, quick face, and brown eyes that could see more at one glance than any other dozen picked pairs in the police forces of America. That was Frances Baird, the closest reasoner, the sharpest observer, the swiftest in action—in short, the best all-round detective that it has ever been my good fortune to work with in a long and checkered newspaper career.

If I told you her real name, there is no policeman or detective of experience

in the country who would not recognize it immediately, but here I must call her only Frances Baird.

Suffice it that she has been on the winning side in nearly every case of consequence during the past five years; that it was she who ran down the Humberts in their Spanish hiding-place; she who brought to light the initial truths in the Dreyfus *bordereau;* she who solved the mystery of the death of Lord Longacre; and she who first found the clue to the missing Saxe-Coburg crown jewels.

I have only to add that she was, from long acquaintance, an old friend of mine, and you will understand what her sudden appearance at this crisis meant to me.

"By Jove, Frank!" I cried, as I wrung her little gloved hand, "here's a chance in a thousand!"

She smiled that queer, half-knowing, half-perplexed smile of hers.

"You do seem rather glad to see me," she said.

"Glad? Why, it's like an answer to prayer!"

"Are matters as bad as that?"

"Rather. They must be, since the government's called you in."

"The government? Oh, I see! You're talking about the mail-pouch case."

"Of course I am. What on earth are *you* here for, if not for that?"

"Nothing much. A legislative-bribery affair. Get me a cab, please. I don't have to begin work for the purification of the commonwealth of Pennsylvania until to-morrow evening, and, if you really need me in this affair, we can begin talking as we drive to my hotel."

We did begin talking, but, beyond my own personal end of it, there was little that I could tell her in the way of news; for she always kept well enough abreast of any big case going, to jump in and take a hand on it at a moment's notice.

"Well," she said, when I had finished and we were standing at the desk in the hotel lobby, "is that all you've done?"

"Good heavens! Unless you can help me, I've lost my job! Isn't that enough?"

"Oh, *that's* enough, but in another way. It seems to me you haven't made the most of your opportunities."

"How so?"

"It's as plain as the nose on your face, Burton. You must be 'going back,' man! You have one great lead over the secret service men. Why don't you use it?"

I began to catch her drift.

"You mean Gallagher, the contractor?" I asked.

"Precisely. You know what they probably don't—that there were big bills in that pouch. Do the obvious thing for once—just as if you weren't a newspaper-man. Call up Mr. Gallagher and get the numbers of those bills. I'm going to wash up. You can meet me for supper in the café as soon as you've heard from him."

I did, but I rejoined her with a long face.

"No go?" she at once asked.

"None," I explained. "He says that the matter was a business transaction, but a business transaction between gentlemen, and that it would have made him feel like—like a municipal reformer to have taken down those numbers."

Frank laughed.

"Oh, well!" she replied, "there are other fish in the sea. Try this salad and let's talk it over. In the first place, who was the clerk on the north-bound Baltimore train?"

"A fellow named George W. Perlitz."

"George Washington, I'll bet a house and lot! That sort of a name's always against a man—seems to make him despair early in life of ever achieving a satisfactory comparison."

"But, Frank, where does Perlitz come in? The Harrisburg man got the pouch from him right here in the station."

"Where does he live, this Perlitz?"

"At Chambersburg—some distance south from here. But I tell you there is nothing to be done with him. Even if it was he who lifted the bag, you can't prove it, for he's got the Harris-

burg man's receipt for it, and, anyhow, how *could* he get that, if——"

She interrupted.

"Now listen," she began. "From all accounts, it's been absolutely proved that the bag couldn't have been stolen from the station. Therefore, it must have been stolen before it got here. One man might receipt for more than he got, but two men would not be likely to make the same mistake about the same bag in the same evening. Therefore, it's likely that the receipt in Baltimore, showing that the pouch went on this particular train, is correct. And thus, you see, that pouch must have been cribbed somewhere between this town and Baltimore. Hurry, the dim light, long acquaintance, and confidence —a thousand explanations—would do to account for the Harrisburg man's mistake in receipting for something he didn't get. In fact, he probably receipted without ever making a count—a mere matter of habit—nothing's more common in daily business everywhere; the only wonder is that it isn't taken advantage of more often. But, at any rate, the fact remains that the Harrisburg chap *could* have miscounted, whereas the pouch *couldn't* have been stolen from under his very eyes. Now, where's Perlitz's run?"

"Clear through — Baltimore to Rochester."

"Good reputation, of course?"

"The best."

"Yes—they all have. The longer I live, the more I find it true that nobody has so good a reputation as a bad man. A good reputation is a sure sign of moral weakness. I suppose there's no other clerk in his car?"

"No, but how did you guess that?"

"How else could he have stolen the pouch, unless, to be sure, the second man was a confederate? Where is this Perlitz now?"

"It's his time off. He's in Chambersburg."

"Then to Chambersburg we go first thing in the morning. Beastly little place. I was there three years ago on the track of the Pottstown bank robbers. But I guess it will be worth our while this trip. You needn't worry. Go to sleep in peace. You'll have your story to-morrow night, and make the first edition with it, too. I may even promise you a beat."

I was so sure of her that this cheered me. I slept soundly, I ate a hearty breakfast, and made the trip to Chambersburg in fairly high spirits in spite of the chilling effects of reading in the *Globe-Express*, under glaring headlines, my own prophecy of a speedy arrest.

Within an hour after our arrival at the little town we had learned enough to satisfy Frances Baird—or so she said—though it seemed to me that we had discovered little that was fresh, and nothing that was significant. George Perlitz was a most estimable young man. He had lived in Chambersburg for fifteen years; he was a devout member of the Presbyterian church, and he was engaged to marry the daughter of the Methodist minister. In fact, the wedding was to take place that very afternoon.

"Only one thing more," said Frank. "Just to make absolutely certain, we will call on the Presbyterian minister when we are sure that the Presbyterian minister is not at home."

"Why?"

"Because I want to see his wife. The minister's wife is always to be depended upon as the variorum and definitive edition of all the gossip about her husband's congregation."

Mrs. Peters proved no exception to this rule. We succeeded in catching her alone, and it required only the mildest of excuses to account for ourselves. As soon as she learned that we were in some way interested in the young mail-clerk, she broke out in a steady stream about him.

There was but one exception to be taken, from our point of view, to all that she had to say—it was a continuous current of praise. However, we got, with some patience, our chance at last.

"Of course," the old lady finally wound up, "I'd rather have had him marry some one in our own flock. If all good Presbyterians had only done

that, there would never have been any tinkering with the Westminster Confession. And Hattie Dawson is a rather flighty girl—as anybody'll tell you."

"Ah!" said Frank, but not too quickly, "I'm sorry to hear that of a clergyman's daughter."

"Well, ministers' families aren't what they were when I was a girl—my own father was pastor of Grace Church in Stroudsburg for forty years—and it's the truth that Hattie is a very worldly minded creature."

"Fond of finery, I suppose?" Frank hazarded.

"Fond?" And Mrs. Peters lifted her black-mittened hands to express the inadequacy of the word. "Why, it's my belief she'll eat up all his salary for gewgaws. They do say she deviled George so for a diamond engagement ring that he nearly went wild. But she declared that she wouldn't marry him till she'd got it, and she didn't, for he brought her one from Harrisburg only last Tuesday."

"From Harrisburg, you say?"

"Yes. I saw the ring and the box it come in myself. The girl was that proud of it she had to show it to the whole town."

"And do you remember the name on the box?"

"The jeweler's? Of course I do. It was Thorold's. He's the most expensive jeweler in Harrisburg, and Hattie wouldn't have looked at that ring if it had come from anywhere else."

Frank rose quickly.

"I think that will be about all, Mrs. Peters," she said. "We are much obliged to you—very much obliged, indeed. Good morning."

And before the poor woman could recover from her surprise at the abruptness of this termination to our visit we were safely in the street.

"How do you like it as far as you've gone?" asked Frank, as soon as we were well outside.

"Do you mean," I parried, "the fact that we are trying to break up this poor fellow's wedding?"

"Oh, no! That's nasty, of course—though perhaps Perlitz will be better off in jail than married to such a woman. However, I was merely referring to our progress in the case."

"I've no doubt," I answered, "that you're after the right man. You must be. But I don't see how I'm to get out of the hole with my paper. I promised to name the guilty person, and how am I to do that?"

"By naming Perlitz, of course."

"That's just it. We can't name him. He's guilty, all right, but there's not a court that would convict him. It can't be proved that the Harrisburg mail-agent receipted for more pouches than he really got. Perlitz secured the receipt for the correct number, and with that he's as safe from arrest as I am."

"Wait," said Frank. "And, in the meantime, tear up your ticket to Chicago—if you have to use it, I'll hand you twice the amount of the fare tomorrow. Here we are at the house." And she rang the bell at the place where, we had learned, Perlitz lodged.

There's no need of going deeply into the interview which followed. These things, in the details, are always rather unpleasant. Our suspect was a big, burly fellow, with a manner full of assertive righteousness, and, as soon as he learned the nature of our errand, he browbeat us frankly and openly.

I could see that he was as sure of himself as I was, and my companion took all the preliminary badgering as sweetly as a schoolgirl caught by her teacher. She just let him blow off all the steam he was charged with, and only when he was quite exhausted did she vouchsafe a word.

Then, however, she began.

"George Washington Perlitz, you emptied that pouch in your car, burned it and what letters you didn't want in the stove there, and scattered the ashes along the track. You're a thief, and you know it!"

He blew up again, and again she let him go. To change the figure, she kept on paying out rope, and finally he hanged himself.

"I don't care," he concluded, "what you think—I've got the Harrisburg man's receipt."

At that point she rose and faced him, her dark cheeks flushed, her eyes boring right into his, and her voice steady and calm.

"Yes," she replied, "but I've proved that the pouch wasn't stolen at Harrisburg, Mr. Perlitz. I've proved that in Pouch No. 27 there was a plain envelope addressed to Julius G. Meurcher, of Pittsburg. I've proved that in that envelope were ten fresh one-hundred-dollar bills. I've got the numbers of those bills from the man who sent them. And Mr. Thorold, the Harrisburg jeweler, will swear that on Tuesday evening last you handed him, in payment for a diamond ring, which is now in the possession of Miss Hattie Dawson, of Chambersburg, two one-hundred-dollar bills, numbers A14911984 and A14911985. Mr. Perlitz, those are the numbers of two of the bills which were in the envelope from Mr. Barry M. Gallagher, of Baltimore, for Mr. Julius G. Meurcher, of Pittsburg, in Mail-Pouch No. 27!"

That settled George Washington Perlitz, and fifteen minutes later we had turned him over to the local authorities on the strength of a written confession that he had made for me. A small bribe and the promise of giving them the full credit for so important a capture was all that was needed to get the Chambersburg police to promise to keep the thing dark until next morning, and so assure me an exclusive story for the *Globe-Express*—though Tommy Foulke protested afterward that the secret service had known the truth all along.

"But, Frank," I said, as the train bore us toward Harrisburg, "how could you know the numbers of those bills? You didn't see the jeweler, and Gallagher himself didn't know them."

"I didn't know them, either," she answered. "I don't know them now. But I've taken longer shots than that, and hit the mark in harder cases than this one. When you've picked the right man, you've always possessed yourself of the most powerful weapon against him."

"And what's that?" I asked.

"His own knowledge of his guilt," said she.

DONE INTO ENGLISH

A CERTAIN couple, having recently risen in the world, engaged a French cook. But Mr. Riche, though he liked the cooking, was not satisfied.

"My dear," said he to his wife, "I find it disagreeable not to know what is coming for dinner. The menu is made out in French; can't it be done in English?"

Mrs. Riche applied to Monsieur Alphonse, who shrugged his shoulders above his ears, but said he would do his best if she would get him a dictionary. Next evening they had a few friends to dinner, and this was the result of Monsieur Alphonse's studies:

Soup at the tail of the calf.
Salmon in curl papers.
Chest of mutton to the little peas.
Beef steak at the English.
Potatoes Jumped.
Ducks savage at sharp sauce.
Charlotte at the apples.
Turkey at the devil.
Fruits variegated.

The host and hostess agreed afterward that they had never presided at a more hilarious dinner-party.

At the Court of the Maharaja

By Louis Tracy

Author of "Karl Grier," "The Wings of the Morning," Etc.

CHAPTER XIV—(*Continued.*)

EXCEPT weary children, none slept. Gopal Singh, never so truly a prince as in this desperate hour, strove to inspire his doubting followers with confidence; the rebels were filled with a vague consciousness that the coming day would herald great events. The plague, nurtured on the fever in man's blood, flourished apace, and some there were who searched the packed bazaar for those who lay at the bottom of the dank and fetid moat, or strewed the track of the assailants across the courtyard and the Diwan-i-Am.

But, for the most part, death was elbowed out of consideration. There was *bhang* in plenty, and millets were served from some hidden stores not previously revealed. Barapore was happy, in its own way, and prepared to celebrate the Holi Festival in a manner not witnessed in India for many a year.

The sun rose over the hills, flooding city and lake with the pink glory that Turner first saw in Venice. Along the path of the besiegers came timid women holding aloft imploring arms lest the garrison should be moved to fire on them. These were wives seeking husbands, mothers asking for their sons. Ofttimes a heart-rending shriek would announce that the quest was only too successful.

Life still lingered in many of the fallen, and the women themselves made shift to carry the sufferers to safety, until the maharaja caused the announcement to be cried aloud that litters might be brought for the wounded, provided the bearers were unarmed.

He hoped that the passage of the maimed warriors through the bazaar might cool the ardor of the beholders, but he little dreamed of the counter irritant which was then approaching its climax—a spectacle, an event, arranged by a devilish ingenuity to inflame beyond restraint the fanaticism always latent in an Indian mob.

Shortly before noon all preparations for the cremation ceremony in the center of the square were completed. The funeral pile was now fully ten feet in height. Those who looked from the palace windows could easily see each feature of the structure. When the word went round that a procession was advancing through the bazaar, every one flocked to the available points of view.

Gopal Singh vainly advised the ladies not to expose themselves, for he suspected that some adroit ruse was concealed in this public method of paying honor to the remains of his cousin.

He was mistaken. Never were mourners in more deadly earnest than the organizers of the last rites rendered to the memory of the dead pretender. The vast crowd, gabbling and gesticulating round the pile of sandalwood and aloe, was gradually pressed back by men armed with *lathis*, or long, iron-shod sticks, until a considerable clear space was obtained. For some occult reason it was apparently intended that

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the watchers from the palace should have no ground of complaint that the press of sightseers obscured their view.

Then a procession could be heard advancing through the streets from the direction of Narayan Das' house. The maharaja wondered if he could possibly have been hoodwinked during the previous day's search. Whether he had been deceived or not, it was obviously intended now that there should be no mistaking the identity of the deceased. Narayan Das was borne from his dwelling-place with regal honor. Drums beat in mournful cadence. Men shouted some weird dirge. Players on stringed instruments scraped an accompaniment of wild sobbing music in a minor key.

The recollection came to Kate, unbidden, of a night of terror, of suffering not again to be endured, when that horrible Indian music formed the prelude to a sight that murdered her blind contentment. Marion, glancing at her friend, could not account for the sudden emotion that blanched her face and gave unnatural brilliance to her eyes.

"What is it?" she murmured softly. "What do you fear?"

"Only all that is past," was the answer. The heart-broken whisper was pathetic in its mystery. Marion's lips quivered. She choked back a rush of tears.

The procession filed slowly round the four-square structure of wood, and again it was noticeable that Gopal Singh and his maharani, if perchance they were gazing at the obsequies, would be given ample opportunity to see each detail of the ceremony, for the mourners passed needlessly aside to leave clear the field of vision.

The body of Narayan Das was wrapped in a cloth of gold, and carried high above the bearers' heads on a bier shaped like a ship. As the still form, lying there so curiously flat and motionless, passed through the crowd, a low murmur of comment, excitement, indefinite sympathy mayhap, swelled from innumerable lips, until the sound rose high and dominated the wailing of the singers and the high-pitched notes of the *sitars*.

Behind the body, after an open gap of some yards, there followed a man walking backward and holding in his hand a looking-glass. Immediately succeeding this incongruous figure came the wife of Narayan Das, arrayed in pure white silk, with face unveiled, and attended by two men who carried brass trays loaded with jewelry, rupees, even gold mohurs. As she advanced, the woman who mourned her departed husband glanced at times in the looking-glass to assure herself that her beautiful face in no way expressed any weakening of the dreadful resolution she had taken, and again she would take a handful of coins and gems from the trays to pitch them haphazard among the crowd.

From Gopal Singh her white-clad form drew an exclamation of amazed anger, of quick fear.

"Oh, this is monstrous!" he cried. "They have persuaded Chand Kour to commit *satti*."

Kate knew Narayan Das' wife well. She was but a girl of twenty, a Hindu lady of exceeding loveliness, and the dreadful phrase smote on her ears like a vague warning of some new and horrible danger.

"Do you mean," she said, and again her voice did not rise above a whisper, "that she is going to burn herself alive? It cannot be possible! It must not be! Stop her, for God's sake! Do something to prevent her before it is too late."

"What can I do? We have ourselves destroyed all means of egress. I am helpless. Go away from here. This sight will unnerve you. Go at once! I insist!"

The fierce petulance of his commands arose from sheer powerlessness. He well knew the arguments which had been brought to bear on the unfortunate widow who walked with calm intrepidity to a fiery death. She was childless, and it is a tenet of the Hindu religion that the childless wife who burns herself alive on the funeral pile of her husband is blessed in the next world with the offspring she is denied in this.

So Chand Kour, in the greatness of her love, came proudly to the scene

of her self-immolation. She rejoiced in the fact that the mirror revealed no tremors. She gave away with both hands the ornaments and wealth bestowed on her in happier days by the man at whose side she was soon to stand for the last time on earth.

Poor Kate shrilly screamed her name, but the fevered ejaculations of the mob, the droning of the chanters and the instruments, made the effort hopeless. Indeed, Marion and Mrs. Mold carried her away from the window in a half-fainting condition, for the unexpectedly ghastly nature of the exhibition had tried her wearied sensibilities to the breaking point. India had conquered her iron nerve at last.

Concerned as he was about the effect of the sight on his wife, Gopal Singh was much more perturbed to note that his Sikh soldiers were deeply stirred by what they regarded as a sublime act of faith. Outstretched arms and eager talk showed that a breath from the past pervaded their nostrils, and he thought it advisable to visit them without delay, when by tact and ready explanation he might be enabled to prevent any suggestion that they should join their co-religionists in the fight against the power that forbids *satti*. He hastened to the outer wall, furiously calling for brandy as he ran. He, too, was yielding, but not for the first time.

Meanwhile, a number of Brahmans and Gurus were reciting sacred *shastras* and offering prayers for the soul of the dead man. At last all was ready. A ladder was placed by the side of the pyre, and a board on which reposed the body of Narayan Das was lifted from the boatlike bier and carried to the center of the pile. The bearers who performed this task descended, all save one, a decrepit and ghoullike priest.

Chand Kour, without a moment's hesitation, ran up the ladder and seated herself near the head of her dead husband, taking his hands in hers and looking fixedly into his face. There was equal serenity in death and life. Save for the moving eyes, the parted lips, the two were alike.

The old Guru rapidly arranged a large number of reed mats, soaked in oil, so that they wholly covered both the living body and the corpse. The girl's sweet, divinely calm face could still be seen gazing intently downward.

At this moment Ram Nath, the fakir, came into sight from behind the pyre. He vociferated something to the waiting woman, and pointed a talon hand toward the palace. A great hush fell upon the crowd. Ram Nath spoke again.

"Curse them, thrice blessed one!" he screamed. "Curse them with thy parting breath! They killed thy husband, and cast the spell on thee that made thee childless. Curse them now, and thy last wish shall be granted!"

But never an answer came from the unhappy and almost unconscious woman crouching there close to the recumbent form. Seeing that she neither heard nor cared for aught else in this world, the waiting Guru made a sign to those beneath. Another large and heavy mat, dripping with oil, was handed up to him, and this he flung over Chand Kour's head and shoulders. He descended the ladder with painful haste. A richly dressed native, whom the maharaja recognized as one of his own high officials, stepped forward with a lighted torch, which he applied to each corner of the pyre.

The flames at once roared upward with tremendous energy, for the whole structure was soaked in oil, and the noise made by instruments and singers to drown any possible shrieking by the poor girl self-doomed to a fearful death was perhaps hardly needed, for a merciful suffocation must have speedily stilled her devoted heart.

High in air shot the fearsome tongues of fire, conquering even the brilliant sunlight as they rushed to a height of forty feet or more. The effect of the oil soon passed, but by that time the mass of timber was well alight, and in that ardent furnace the bodies of Narayan Das and Chand Kour were quickly transmuted back to the dust whence they sprang. The outer ashes of the logs cracked and whitened in the placid rays of the sun. In an hour there was

small token of the tragedy which had been enacted so suddenly, so mysteriously, with such sublime disregard for a century of British rule and two thousand years of Western progress.

The East, unchanging in its changeableness, had triumphed with speedy reincarnation. An ax made in Sheffield split the wood of the funeral pile; the kerosene which lent fury to the fire was canned in the United States; men and women in the crowd wore cotton woven in Lancashire, and, if wealthy, patent-leather boots manufactured in Northampton. It would seem to be outrageously impossible for *satti* to be tolerated in such a community. There remained but the crumbling beams, with a few parched bones in the glowing interior, to bear gruesome witness to the thrilling human drama enacted in Barapore that day.

"When Ranjit Singh died," murmured one Sikh soldier to another, "four *ranis* and seven slave girls mounted the pile and were burned with him—so my grandfather told me. He saw it."

"Four *ranis!* There must have been some fine bangles given away!"

"Good talking! Those times will never come again, they say."

"Who knows? Before this trouble arose it was said in the bazaar——"

"'S-s-h! The maharaja comes! Let us converse another time."

CHAPTER XV.

LAL KABUTAR TELLS THE TRUTH.

Half-a-mile ahead of the squadron of lancers, Lieutenant Wilkinson led the advance-guard along the Tonga Road from Deoli to Barapore. It was half-past three o'clock in the afternoon of the second day, and the commissioner's escort had traversed ninety-five miles of the hundred and twenty. Men and animals were covered with dust. Even the gaudy lance pennons fluttered listlessly. The very horses looked as if they would sacrifice a good feed for the sake of a rousing gallop. But the normal pace of cavalry on the march is a walk.

At times, when the state of the road permitted, the whole party indulged in a trot, a luxury of which the advance-guard was duly apprised by a bugle-call. Every fifteen miles there was a halt, more or less prolonged, and the led-horses enabled one-third of the detachment to change their mounts, while Major Cunningham utilized some of the *dak* ponies found at the *tonga* stations to relieve the teams of the ammunition and baggage-carts.

To Ayriss alone the pace seemed to be exasperatingly slow, whereas, from the military standpoint, he well knew that their aim was not only to cover the ground in quick time, but to bring the squadron to Barapore in fit condition for the arduous work which would probably present itself.

No news was forthcoming. Natives along the road could tell nothing of the state of affairs in the capital city. A long string of grain wagons was halted between the thirtieth and twenty-ninth miles. When questioned, the drivers said that a man who met them at daybreak conveyed orders from the maharaja that the bullocks should be unyoked until the troops passed, so as to leave the road clear.

Mr. Tennant was at a loss to account for this somewhat needless precaution. He merely ordered the drivers to get their teams in motion again and strive to reach Barapore early next morning. The words of a commissioner-sahib are not treated with such instant obedience in a native state as in British India, so Major Cunningham detailed a *ris-saldar* and six troopers to accompany the convoy and urge them forward with all speed. Whatever the maharaja's motive might be, there was no harm in expediting the famine food, now that the detachment was actually in front.

Again, in a village at the twenty-eighth mile, a sharp-sighted *sowar* discovered a riding-camel grazing untended among some trees. At first no villager could recognize the beast. There was a general disposition to at-

tribute his appearance to an utterly unknown and inexplicable set of circumstances, until a bearded *rissaldar* quickly whipped out his saber and laid the flat of it heavily on the shoulder of the most stalwart liar. Then it was admitted that the *dak*-rider had decided not to go farther that day. Indeed, he and the mail-bags were even then carefully concealed in the house of the head man.

This was a serious development. Nothing less than the anarchy of earthquake or riot will cause a native postman to forego his daily routine; and the man's evident desire to remain unquestioned showed that he was afraid of being mixed up in complications he did not understand. In reply to Mr. Tennant's stern reprimand, he gave a fairly accurate account of the first night of the outbreak at Barapore as rendered to him by the outgoing peon encountered at mile fifty. The latter had evidently dodged the detachment successfully.

"There was fighting in the bazaar," he said. "The gates of the palace were slippery with blood. Houses were blown up with powder, and there was much shooting. To-day, at noon, the wife of Narayan Das would commit *satti* in the square——"

"Is this true?" interrupted the commissioner.

"I know not, protector of the poor. I tell that which was told to me. Because of these things I dismounted at the house of my friend, and placed the mail-bags in his keeping. Look at the seals, sahib. They are unbroken."

Probably the man was acting honestly enough. He was bidden to mount and ride forward with the main body.

The halt caused by this episode brought about two unlooked-for incidents. While Wilkinson, in front, was wondering what was the right thing to do with Umrao Singh, commander-in-chief of the Barapore army, who, with an escort of half-a-dozen nondescript retainers, had just encountered the advance-guard. Major Cunningham, riding with Tennant in rear of the squadron, was surprised at being overtaken by a *tonga*, driven furiously in pursuit of the party, and containing a tall, slightly built Englishman.

Captain Ayriss, peering constantly at the line of hills ahead, noted the stopping of Wilkinson by reason of his meeting with a number of mounted natives. Dick galloped forward, and instantly recognized Umrao Singh. It did not escape him that the burly warrior seemed to be momentarily disconcerted by the encounter.

"What news from Barapore?" was his first question.

"The best," answered Wilkinson. "There was a bit of a row the night before last, but it was settled in five minutes. His excellency, Umrao Singh, has ridden out to meet us and let us know that there is no cause for undue haste."

"Have you brought a letter from the maharaja?" demanded Ayriss, looking steadily into the dark, bloodshot eyes of Umrao Singh.

"No. There are reasons. Let us discuss this thing apart."

The strong, harsh voice was confident enough. Umrao Singh appeared to court inquiry. His manner was of one whose loyalty could not be doubted, yet Ayriss was skeptical.

"Push on ahead, Wilkinson," he said quietly. "If anything, go a little faster. I will conduct our friend here to Major Cunningham and the commissioner."

Riding back to the squadron, he was told that the commandant and Mr. Tennant had been detained for a little while by a strange sahib coming from Deoli. They were hidden by a turn in the road, but his impatience brooked no delay, and he imperatively requested Umrao Singh to accompany him. The latter scowled heavily, for his ponderous frame liked not the pace set by this young cavalry officer. He obeyed, without comment, and his six followers closed in behind the pair.

In the shade of a clump of trees Tennant and Cunningham, dismounted, were talking earnestly to some one whom Ayriss at first failed to identify, for he refused to credit the evidence of his senses. It was not until the wel-

come of a friendly hand-shake and a hearty greeting dispelled his lingering doubts that he cried, in astonishment:

"Felix Glen! Here! What magic has transported you from Hyde Park Corner to the middle of Barapore State?"

"I carry the magic in my portmanteau in the shape of plague serum. The government of India did the rest."

There was no time for further explanation; Umrao Singh's presence demanded prompt attention.

It subsequently transpired that Doctor Glen, brought out to India on special plague duty, was traveling from Calcutta to Simla with the headquarters medical staff when it became known at Saharunpore that there was trouble at Barapore.

The name of the maharaja was familiar to him, and the mention of Dick's regiment brought out the fact that his friend was attached to the expedition, with which there was no medical officer.

He promptly volunteered for the duty, and was permitted to detrain at Deoli, which station he quitted eight hours after the squadron. It was hoped by the authorities that if a typical native state could be induced to try his prophylactic, and good results ensued, the example thus set would be beneficial throughout India.

Umrao Singh, delivering his message to Tennant, knew that his liberty, perchance his life, depended on a false word, an ambiguous expression.

The coolly desperate plan he had evolved was to delay the escort until a fierce attack on the palace, arranged to take place at dusk that evening, had succeeded. But this was not enough. He had to convince the British Government that he was acting in good faith.

It was necessary to betray his master, to betray his friends, to secure the absolute credibility of his own story, and to guide events by devious channels which would ultimately lead him to the throne. To achieve these things he voluntarily placed his head in the lion's mouth, trusting fearlessly to his own wits to extricate it again.

He began well. He gave a thoroughly accurate history of events up to the repulse of the attack on the castle.

"We drove back the rebels like frightened sheep," he said, "and then the maharaja bade me remain in the bazaar during the night. All was in order yesterday. Preparations were being made to burn the body of Narayan Das with due ceremony to-day, and it was not until I learned of an outrage intended to be carried out under the maharaja's commands that I rode forth to meet you."

"Do you mean that the maharaja countenanced the *satti* of Narayan Das' wife?" said Tennant sternly.

"What! You know of it already?"

"Yes. Answer my question."

"He ordered it. It was solemnly carried out by the chief guru of the state, in the square opposite the palace."

"Why should he seek to further inflame his subjects?"

"Because it is not peaceful government he desires, but turmoil. The rising in Barapore will be the signal for similar outbreaks in many parts of India. It is intended to stir up hatred against the British raj, and at this very hour Russian troops are massing at Penjdeh, within a day's ride of Herat."

None of his hearers strove to conceal the amazement with which they heard this outspoken summary of Gopal Singh's intentions.

"Did you come here to tell us this?" demanded the commissioner.

"Yes. Why should I risk the maharaja's displeasure otherwise?"

"But you said he sent you to assure us that all was well," interposed Ayriss.

"No, sahib, I said nothing of the kind. I do not speak English, and I know not what the young sahib in front told you. There is no special cause for unrest at Barapore. The plague is bad, and the people are hungry; but the maharani is a clever woman, and the measures she tried to enforce would have stopped the plague, while grain in plenty is now on the road. You must have passed it."

"Do I understand you to say that the maharaja has deliberately created this disturbance for the sake of en-

couraging similar disorder elsewhere, and with the hope that Russia will declare war against England and invade India?"

Mr. Tennant spoke with slow emphasis. Much that he knew accorded accurately enough with the strange story of the native, yet he felt dimly that the whole truth was hidden from him, and he wished to pin down his informant to the very letter of his statement.

"I will swear it, sahib, on the Ganges water. Nay, more, I will lay such proof of it before your honor that you will report the same thing to the government."

"Then the rising in the city was little else than an affair of hired thieves, and might be quelled at any moment were the maharaja so inclined?"

"That is so, sahib. The maharaja himself rode forth yesterday, with but a few troopers, to arrange for the funeral of Narayan Das."

"In that case, why should he write to us at Deoli, praying us to hasten forward with all speed?"

Umrao Singh gurgled with heavy laughter and gained time. He had not bargained for any messenger escaping the net he had thrown around all exits from Barapore one hour too late. At last he mastered the fit of merriment which overpowered him.

"You were to ride with all haste, and arrive with tired men and spent horses early this afternoon. You would enter by the Delhi Gate, and every man in your party would be shot down from the houses in the bazaar before you had gone two hundred yards within the city walls."

"Come, now, Umrao Singh, you talk like a madman. The maharaja himself sought the assistance of government. We are here at his express desire."

"The maharaja is besieged in his palace. This evil deed would be done by his enemies if Russia holds her hand."

Tennant and the others knew that, however incredible such a plot might seem, all things are possible in India. Only a few years earlier a British commissioner, a resident, and five British officers were murdered in cold blood, and a strong body of troops driven pell-mell out of the state by the petty Raja of Manipur and his ministers. Either Gopal Singh had been suddenly bereft of his wits, or there was really some serious foundation for the theory of Russian activity.

Tennant bit his mustache in nervous ponderings as to the best step to take, and Ayriss chafed at the delay in the advance which might be caused by this conversation.

The squadron was still progressing steadily—indeed, a trifle faster than was known to either Cunningham or Tennant—but it might become the bounden duty of the leaders to recall the troops.

In that event, what would happen to Marion, imprisoned in the capital of a native state seething with disaffection and conspiracy? Her lover abandoned himself to wild plans and still more agonizing dread.

Umrao Singh saw the effect created by his words, and lowered his big eyes lest a sparkle of triumph might escape. He counted on the palace being a holocaust long before the relieving force reached Barapore, if they decided to go on at all.

The maharaja and every one connected with him would be dead, and he, Umrao Singh, would unquestionably be appointed regent, with a reasonable certainty of ultimate confirmation on the throne, for he belonged to a collateral branch of the reigning family. Thousands of people would swear that every statement he had made was true. Indeed, what stronger testimony could he possess than the evidence of the sahibs themselves?

With the curious obliquity of the eastern mind, he gave no present heed to the fact that in stirring up the murderous revolt at Barapore he was acting as the hired agent of Russia. Some fool paid him good rupees for playing a game to suit his own purposes. Very well, let the fool pay.

If Russia did indeed contemplate war, and waged it successfully, he had carried out his compact. If nothing

happened, or she failed to cross the frontier, he stood well with the government of India, to whose representatives he was at that moment giving information of scrupulous accuracy with regard to facts.

Ayriss ventured to break in on Tennant's thoughts. Speaking in English, he blurted forth:

"Surely we can best ascertain the truth by reaching Barapore with all haste."

This was the first word of the conversation understood by Felix Glen.

"May I ask," he said pleasantly, "if our fat and elderly friend has communicated anything of a startling nature?"

"He says, in effect, that Barapore has sounded the tocsin of the British Empire, unless we act with the utmost circumspection," said Tennant, with a haggard smile.

"My motive in putting the question was simply to warn you what you probably know quite well already. He is lying. He can control his face, his eyes, his lips even, but he has never been told that the hand is the real electrical indicator of the human body. His horse could have educated him on that point. No coward ever yet deceived a horse into believing him a brave man. While he was talking, I watched his hands, as I did not comprehend his speech. He was telling you a set of circumstances on which his life and his fortunes depended. He has staked everything on a throw of the dice, and the fact that he has impressed you has given him fresh confidence. But he was lying throughout."

It was now Umrao Singh's turn to listen to words that were meaningless to him, and endeavor to read their significance in the face of another. He could not guess who this quiet-looking sahib in civilian attire might be, but he instantly divined that something was said to discredit him. He broke in again:

"I am content to ride back with you to Barapore. There I will either prove the truth of what I have said, or undergo such punishment as I deserve."

"It is well, Umrao Singh, that you state the case so clearly," replied Tennant. "The sirkar can punish as well as reward. If matters stand as you have told us, you deserve well of the government; if otherwise, you are a traitor to your state and to your chief."

"Four hours at the utmost will serve to justify me." The truculent scoundrel raised his fat hand in the direction of Barapore.

"But you came hither to warn us not to proceed?"

"Not so, sahib. I came to save you from the plot laid for your destruction. If you enter by the Lahore Gate, you can ride untouched to the palace—if there be aught left of it."

"What! Does Gopal Singh propose to destroy his palace as well as his throne?"

"You forget, sahib, that he was besieged therein by an enraged people two nights ago. They may have taken fresh courage, and tried another assault. He cannot even trust his own troops."

"Of which you are the head?"

"In name only, sahib. I have no real authority. The maharaja knows I disapprove of his designs. Had I remained in the city to-day, I should most certainly be a dead man."

In his perplexity, Tennant turned to Cunningham, and the two drew a little apart. With them lay a grave responsibility. It would be folly to disregard Umrao Singh's statement on the mere word of a savant fallen from the skies —one wholly ignorant of the true bearing of events.

The native was a prominent official, known for many years throughout the Punjab, and, although his name had been bruited about in connection with Russian intrigue, it was possibly done with the object of concealing the real offenders.

Ayriss was now in a paroxysm of despair lest his superiors should decide to return to Deoli and there await reenforcements. The population of the city alone numbered some thirty thousand, and the whole countryside was in an excited condition. To bring a squadron of one hundred and fifty sa-

bers into the midst of a hostile territory, one hundred miles removed from rail and telegraph, was a terribly risky proceeding. None understood the danger better than he himself, and that is why the others did not seek his advice. They pitied him. Such was his agitation that Felix Glen eyed him closely.

"What is the matter, Ayriss?" he asked. "Something is upsetting you. What is it?"

Dick leaned down from his horse and caught his friend by the shoulder.

"Marion Forbes is in that cursed palace," he said; and his voice was the voice of a man who saw his beloved in the grave. "She went there three months ago, on a visit to her friend the maharani."

"Good heavens! Is that the girl who diagnosed the broken clavicle?"

"Ah, God! She is my affianced wife!"

Glen answered not a word to Ayriss. He walked straight to the spot where Tennant and Cunningham stood in earnest conclave.

"We are wasting valuable time here," he said coolly, for to him a commissioner was like unto the primrose on the river's brim; a primrose and nothing more. "I repeat that you must put no trust in the stout person's statements. I stake my professional reputation that he is a liar."

Tennant's was far too fine a character to resent Glen's interference at this supreme moment.

"You do not know natives as we know them, Doctor Glen," he said sadly.

"My dear sir, I can only regret my limitations. Remember that I am but vaguely acquainted with the circumstances which are now detaining you. But I *do* know the human body. The big man is chiefly lymphatic, with a strong infusion of the neurotic temperament. This combination produces murderers and conspirators. The touch of neurosis is nature's warning signal to honest men. That is why I say act directly contrary to what he wishes, not to what he advises, and you will be right."

The calm certainty of the man of science appealed more strongly to the intellect of his hearers than the extraordinary story told by Umrao Singh. It swayed the balance. Tennant turned to the commander-in chief with set purpose in his face.

"What do you recommend us to do, Umrao Singh? Are we to go forward with all haste or return to Deoli and await developments?"

"The detachment is a strong one, sahib, and well armed. Better advance slowly and enter Barapore at night. Fall upon the rioters by surprise, and they will run like jackals."

"But delay may mean danger to the inmates of the palace! The maharaja cannot trust his own guards, you say."

"Some may suffer, sahib, but if you listen to my words, Barapore will be quiet to-morrow, and none will know throughout India that there has been aught else than a quarrel for the *guddi*. Such things have happened before."

"It will be difficult to prevent reports getting abroad."

"Not very difficult, sahib. I took precautions to-day to stop all who came from Barapore."

"You seem to have acted with very great discretion. Government will assuredly requite your zeal. Meanwhile, I am here at the request of the maharaja, made officially to the lieutenant-governor of the Punjab, and reiterated in his own writing to me at Deoli. Until I am convinced, by overt acts of treason, that he is playing false, I will continue to believe in him. Under these conditions you must regard yourself and your followers as prisoners. No, I can listen to no more words. Ride forward with all haste to overtake the main body. If either you or any of your men attempt to quit the road, we will have no hesitation in shooting. On the other hand, you have nothing to fear, but much to gain, should your story be verified. Ride! I have spoken!"

Dumfounded by the rapid turn taken by events, Umrao Singh glared fiercely at the Englishman whose decision was so momentous.

Entering Barapore as a prisoner was a different thing to entering it as the prospective head of the state, escorted by the representative of the government of India. Fresh dangers would beset his path. Friends of the future maharaja might be dangerous enemies of an imprisoned commander-in-chief.

He fiercely resented the order, and, true to his instincts, the first thought was how best to resist, to kill, to smother opposition in blood. He and his men were seven to four, and one of the four was unarmed. The escort was a couple of miles ahead on the main road. With the leaders disposed of, if he reached Barapore first by a bridle-path through the hills, he could carry out in deadly earnest the program he had attributed to the maharaja.

Ayriss was mounted; Tennant and Cunningham were gathering their reins preparatory to reaching the saddle; Felix Glen was climbing into the *tonga,* which he would exchange for a horse when the column was overtaken—there was a chance, an excellent chance, for a daring adventurer.

Umrao Singh's right hand crossed to the hilt of a curved sword with razor edge. In his eyes glinted a fearsome light, for murder now offered the only way out of his difficulties. He saw red. There was a singing in his ears.

The cry trembled on his lips that would have buried six spears in the breasts of the unresisting officers. But the "touch of neurosis" made him hesitate one second, two, three. When Ayriss turned his head—he often looked to the distant hills—that would be the moment. Cannon against his horse and strike simultaneously!

It was Felix Glen who shouted: "Something seems to have gone wrong in front!"

Instantly a wild rout of Lancers careered into sight. Horses galloped and plunged madly along. Not all the efforts of their riders could restrain them. A few swerved from the road and fell with a crash of accouterments into a nullah on one side or disappeared among the trees on the other.

The majority—some thirty frenzied chargers—came tearing on at top speed. They quickly communicated their panic to the horses of the stationary party. Cunningham's horse reared up to an astonishing height, as if he wished to see what was toward; and there was much commotion among the half-broken country-breds of Umrao Singh's escort. A fresh stampede was imminent.

With eellike wriggle of purpose, the conspirator seized the opportunity thus presented. He stirred up his own mount with a spur, and plunged into the midst of his retainers.

"Slip away, Alopi, and you, Mir Jan," he hissed. "Let your horses carry you amidst the trees. Ride through the hills and tell those who wait in my house that the English must be fired at whether they enter by the Delhi or the Lahore gate. Fail not in this, and you each earn a thousand rupees."

Notwithstanding the confusion, added to now by an occasional rifle-shot in front, it was readily seen that the men on the runaways were amused rather than scared. Some of them were laughing—they were all breathless with vain endeavor to pull up their frightened horses. As they tore past, a native officer managed to pull his charger back onto its haunches. He sprang from the saddle and caught the cross-bar of the bit. Then he shouted to Cunningham:

"Elephant behaving badly, sahib."

An elephant behaving badly, indeed, for Lal Kabutar, very touchy now by reason of his wounds, and looking for trouble with all the zest of a hilarious cowboy, had wandered off along the highway and charged the Lancers at sight.

He did not actually attack either man or horse. He merely challenged their title to the center of the road, and swung forward with sweeping strides and triumphant trumpeting, brushing all obstacles from his path as a man parts grass with his feet when walking across a meadow.

An elephant, a camel, a buffalo, at times even an armed sepoy, running amuck in vengeful fury, is an object

sufficiently common in India not to excite more consternation than is caused by a scared cab-horse in London.

The unfortunate drawback which prevented defensive action being taken against the giant brute's attack lay in the fact that cavalry carbines and service revolvers were worse than useless. A shot to reach the brain through the eye or the back of the ear would necessarily be a fluke, and to hit the great beast elsewhere merely served to enrage him further.

Lal Kabutar came on like a living tornado. Felix Glen's *tonga* stood in the middle of the road, and a pair of frantic ponies were straining one against the other to escape from the harness.

The driver jumped out, and the doctor followed with a small portmanteau in his arms. Ayriss, overcoming the terror of his charger, strove to catch the reins and pull the *tonga* team out of danger, but he desisted in response to the warning shouts of his companions.

He jumped his horse across the nullah, and was able to turn in time to see the elephant charge the obstruction head downward. *Tonga,* ponies, and baggage flew in all directions, but Lal Kabutar himself fell with a mighty crash. Trumpeting shrilly he strove to rise. He failed, and collapsed again on the wreck of the vehicle.

To men experienced in the hunting of big game, the monster's futile efforts were a revelation. Loss of blood from earlier wounds had told its tale even on that heaving mountain of bone and muscle. His splendid assault of the squadron had exhausted his vital powers, and he would have lain there dying, perhaps for days, had not Cunningham ended his career with a bullet fired at close quarters and with careful aim.

The battered boss on his forehead, the jagged tears and cuts in his flanks from spherical bullets and spear-heads, the dried blood that covered his knees and trunks, attracted many eyes.

"This elephant has been in a fight. He was used to batter down gates, and scores of men have stabbed him," said Tennant sternly to Umrao Singh.

"What I have said I have said," was the stubborn reply. "Each minute lost here is time lost in proving my good faith."

He was defiant now. Alopi and Mir Jan were gone, nor was it likely that they would be missed in the confusion.

"You are playing a bold game if you hope to deceive us, Umrao Singh," said the commissioner. "Cunningham, will you kindly detail a native officer and three men to ride back to Deoli with a telegram for the lieutenant-governor? Then we will advance with all speed."

The message, asking for strong reenforcements, was written and handed to the messenger long before the disorganized squadron was ready to advance. There were several minor casualties among the men, and three horses with broken legs had to be shot. In half an hour, however, Ayriss was able to gallop to the front and start Wilkinson once more.

Doctor Glen was provided with a horse, and his damaged goods were distributed among the baggage-carts. Ayriss, waiting by the roadside for the column to pass, noticed that the portmanteau rescued by his friend from the *tonga* was strapped behind the cantle.

"That must be a very valuable piece of luggage," he cried, for his spirits had risen now that the march was resumed.

"It is worth little in gold, but a good deal in human lives. It contains my sole supply of serum and all my test-tubes."

Umrao Singh rode close to Mr. Tennant, to whom he professed to give in greater detail an account of recent events in Barapore. It was needful now to prepare the commissioner for the tragedy which would be enacted long before the expedition reached the palace.

Dick's quick eyes discovered the diminution of the native's escort. He cantered up to Umrao Singh and said:

"Two of your men are missing. Where are they?"

A fat hand was waved nonchalantly toward the distant trees in the rear.

"You must ask the elephant," was the answer. "The wonder is that any are here."

But Lal Kabutar was dead. He had delivered his message truthfully enough and with much force. More was not to be expected of him, and now his huge carcass blocked the road behind them.

CHAPTER XVI.

FROM LONG-FORGOTTEN ABYSSES.

At noon, when Chand Kour walked so proudly to her death, the armed retainers of the maharaja numbered three hundred and seventy-nine; at six o'clock, owing to the constant reports of desertion which reached him, he mustered his troops, and they totaled two hundred and eighteen.

Those who were loyal consisted mainly of Mohammedans, with a sprinkling of Sikhs and Rajputs. In a word, most of his Hindu soldiers were unable to resist the wave of fanaticism which had temporarily swamped the state, and one-third of his tiny force had gone over to the enemy by dropping from the walls. Gopal Singh's eyes rolled and his gait was somewhat unsteady, but the brandy he had imbibed quickened his intellect and added fluency to his speech.

"Ye who are true to your salt shall reap a great reward," he vociferated. "To-morrow ye shall spit upon the bodies of the jackals who have fled. Be not shaken in your faith. The redcoats are hastening to our aid. This night they will sweep through the bazaar like a flame, and in its breath shall my enemies be devoured. Let a roll be made of every man who stands here, so that I may know my friends in the hour of reckoning."

A chorus of approving cries greeted his speech. These few, at least, would fight like wildcats, and they had the encouraging knowledge that they were called on to defend, not to attack.

But the roll was barely completed before a swelling murmur from the bazaar, the beating of innumerable tom-toms, and the premature discharge of many rifles from the outer walls showed that the defenders would be put to the test ere the relieving force arrived.

Unfortunately there was great lack of effective firearms among the maharaja's followers, and many of the deserters had carried their weapons with them.

The chief native states of India provide excellent regiments of cavalry and infantry, practically equal to the sepoy battalions of the regular army, but these levies are supervised by British officers, and are at the disposal of the government of India for home defense.

To the smaller states, like Barapore, however, the importation of arms of precision is discouraged, if not absolutely forbidden. Hence, after taking count of the maharaja's stock of some twenty sporting guns, there were less than a hundred smoothbore muzzle-loaders among the garrison.

Fortunately the rioters possessed, in proportion to their numbers, a far less ratio than one in three of similarly antiquated weapons. If a hand-to-hand fight could be prevented, there was every hope of a prolonged resistance being offered by the castle.

Marion and Kate, with Barbara Mold and a few frightened native women, looked out from the lofty windows of their apartment when they heard the sounds of threatened conflict.

The city was ablaze. War, plague, or famine could not prevent each true Hindu from decorating his abode with lighted lamps in honor of the Holi Festival. Yet the general illumination looked ghostlike and unreal.

Over the dense bazaar a cloud of thin, blue smoke had gathered as the night fell. From its misty depths the lamps shone dimly, and the hoarse growling of the mob was wafted to the listeners with dreadful portent.

"We are looking down into an inferno," murmured Marion.

"You are, and therein at least you have the bliss of ignorance. I have passed through it," said Kate; and she

turned with a sigh, because her infant wailed in his sleep.

"Poor girl, what a terrible experience you must have suffered, that it should thus embitter your every thought!"

"Don't pity me, Marion—forgive me. Were it not for my pleading you would never have come to this city, this cesspool of all that is vile and unclean. Oh, forgive me, dear, for the peril in which I have placed you."

Marion lifted her head with the splendid self-reliance of her race. Her breast rose and her shoulders straightened.

"Do you think I fear death?" she cried. "My ancestors have dared it many times, in a less worthy cause than that of friendship. My only regret is that I am not able to play a man's part in scourging these dangerous fools into submission."

"But the horror of it all! That burning of a living woman! What will happen to us if this attack succeeds? What shall we do? Listen to me! Whisper! We must not fall into their hands alive. If you think I am mad to think of such a thing, speak to Barbara Mold. Her mother was in India during the mutiny. Ask her what befell the women at Cawnpore, at Allahabad, at Meerut even, before the outbreak was an hour old. I tell you, Marion, we must die, and upon my head be your blood."

She would have raved on in renewed hysteria had not Marion's strong arms enfolded her, and a face with the sweet dignity of an angel bent over her.

"Calm yourself, dear"—the voice was soothing, the accents unbroken by the slightest tremor—"we are in God's hands, and He alone can direct our steps. Calm yourself, and remember that your position calls for unflinching courage. If we have to die, it is you who will show the way. I do not doubt you. You are merely overwrought by emotion, or you would know that our danger is not very great. There, now. Go to the little one. When he feels your hand it will make him restful."

She led her distraught friend to the tiny cot, sure that motherhood would conquer the most poignant grief. Kate choked back her sobs and bent to rearrange the coverlets over the tiny form and soothe the fretful little head with gentle touch.

From a table near at hand the Chevalier Forsyth's weakly handsome face seemed to look at the group with vacuous smiling. Without, the din made by the rebels grew in volume. They were rushing forward now, headed by hundreds who carried bundles of dank weeds garnered from the lake—in each bundle a blazing ball of tow saturated with oil. From every man's burden a column of thick black smoke arose.

Even as the foremast of the horde poured into the outer court, the city and its lights were blotted out from view. Umrao Singh's master-stroke was in progress.

In a place removed from the turmoil, on a strip of land bordering the lake, where the embattled wall turned toward the city from the water-side, two figures crouched in the darkness, lest they should be seen by a sentry.

One, a naked man with matted hair, suggested the embodiment of an evil spirit as he sprawled on hands and knees close to the wall. The other, a bent form, all veiled save the diabolical face, tapped the ground impatiently with the stick which supported her, and met the remonstrances of her companion with curses.

"It is here, I tell thee, ape, man-ass. Dig, fool, and weary me not with thy fears."

But Ram Nath, the fakir, whose dust-covered skin was exceedingly precious to him, only cowered more closely in the shade.

"Peace, mother. Think of the vengeance that approaches. Do not ruin all by risking discovery. Hark, there are thousands even now marching through the street. The fury of the fight will soon attract the eyes of any sentries hereabouts. Art certain that this is the place?"

The snakelike, hissing voice warily touched the madwoman's passions.

"Vengeance! Ay! in measure a hundredfold. She stole my daughter's son so that her brat might become maharaja, yet my daughter was the child of a king who fought in the great war—the war when I came to Barapore. Ah, I was beautiful then—fair to look upon, they said. People called me a witch because I knew each man's name and each man's face. I looked ever for one who came not. He was hidden, kept from he. I searched Barapore until the builder of the castle remembered not its secret ways as I did. But he came not. They kept him from me, and now I am old and withered. If he met me he would pass me by."

For an instant her wandering wits threatened to dissolve in a paroxysm of tears. The fakir heard the shouting in the Diwan-i-Am, and the outbreak of musketry.

"Your daughter's son still lives. He is there, a prisoner."

He intended to divert her thoughts back to their mission, but the result was more than he bargained for. She raised her staff and brought it down on his shoulder with extraordinary violence for one so decrepit.

"And still thou art jabbering, owl!" she cried. "Dig, and quickly! *I* will avenge my daughter. Do thou plunge thy claws in money and gems."

Ram Nath would willingly have strangled her, but he grasped a pickax.

"Does this lead surely to the treasury?" he growled.

"Oh, son of a black pig, wilt thou not work? If I am wrong, strike the ax into my skull and place me in the tomb thou hast prepared."

The man glanced carefully at the battlements. No figure was silhouetted against the sky. He marveled that none had thought of delivering a second assault at this point, but he realized the difficulty there was in placing leaders over a lawless mob, and his own task must be pursued lest perchance the attack might be too rapidly successful.

He labored hard for many minutes tearing the soft earth with the pickax, and kicking it away with his feet like a dog scratching at a burrow. The Tonahi-Jan helped with her hands, and soon the pick revealed a hollow in the foundations of the wall.

The fakir struck a match and lit a tiny lamp. Instantly there was laid bare the top of a small arch, with a wooden door buried beneath the surface.

The old woman screeched in elfin glee.

"Seest thou, Ram Nath? Dig hard, hairy one, and soon the way will be clear."

The opprobrious names she bestowed on the fakir served to inspire him to fresh exertions. He bared his teeth in a malicious grin. She had promised him an easy way to the treasury. Once there, he could find his way back alone!

A fierce struggle was now raging against the very face of the castle. The attack had been pushed home with vigor. Ram Nath and his mad companion worked with desperate energy lest they should be too late.

At last the man was able to rend the stout door with the pickax, and it yielded slowly. The lamp threw a doubtful light down a narrow stone stairway, apparently leading into the very bowels of the earth. The fakir hung back, scared by the unknown, but the Tonahi-Jan helped his unwilling steps with her stick.

"Forward, *sug!* Or shall I lead?"

They went down, Ram Nath carrying lamp and pick, the old woman hobbling behind with a surprising alacrity. The fierce purpose burning in her soul reanimated her feeble frame. Even the fakir was afraid of her.

There were twenty steps or more, curving in a spiral. At the bottom Ram Nath halted again. The feeble oil rays illuminated a fearsome cavern, with dank water in front of a narrow and slime-covered ledge on which he stood. Great rats, toads, and monstrous newts vanished before the light with loud-sounding splashes. His quick eye, too, caught the writhing motion of a couple of reptiles. What were

they—cobras, or harmless water-snakes? But the hag brooked no such deterrents.

"To the right," she croaked. "The way is clear. Haste thee, or Umrao Singh will be before thee with the treasure!"

Not even an ascetic Hindu is enamored of creeping things in the path, with a noisome ditch on one hand and the rocky wall of a tunnel on the other. Yet avarice prevailed over the shrinking of unshod feet, and Ram Nath advanced. This well-matched pair suited their environment. They passed for many yards through a corridor that might have led to the seventh circle of Dante's hell. At last they reached another passage striking off at a right angle with the submerged moat.

Following the beldame's instructions, the fakir took this new way. It led upward. There was no water, and the rough pavement gradually became drier. Soon they were stopped by a huge door, which at first sight looked impenetrable. But the moist decay of the place had eaten through iron and wood, and three vigorous strokes with the pickax burst the lock.

They went on, into a vaulted hall, evidently one of the underground apartments of the palace. Squat pillars of enormous thickness supported the arched roof, and massive foundation walls presented frowning barriers of solid stone.

The Tonahi-Jan hobbled in front now, threading her path with a curious certainty among the gloomy arches. There seemed to be an interminable number of spacious chambers communicating with each other by broad arches pierced through the walls. Ram Nath, holding the lamp aloft, became skeptical.

"Remember," he hissed, "we go to the treasury!"

She laughed wildly, and her cackle echoed through many a dark aisle, while the quick scampering of rats added vague terrors to the darkness.

"Thirty years!" she muttered, heedless of his words. "They brought the bodies of the dancing-girl and the maharani this way, yet I have not forgotten. Who knows the palace of Barapore as I know it!"

She paused breathless before a flight of steps leading to a door.

"Yes!" she cried. "Give me the lamp. I will hold it while you smite the lock. Behold, jackal, the feast is spread!"

Thinking it best to obey in silence, Ram Nath mounted the steps to find the best place to strike. The door opened inward. The lock was on the other side, and there was a key in it. The fakir stepped back and raised the pick.

At that instant the key turned in the lock, the door was flung open, and a big, fat man, dressed in loose white garments—a man with a shock of black hair, and eyes and lips dilated by fear—dashed through. He was in such a state of abject terror that he did not heed the two weird figures beneath until he had precipitated himself upon them.

Ram Nath, taken utterly by surprise—startled out of his purpose by the fearful yell with which the newcomer discovered his presence—fell beneath the huge bulk of the stranger.

They both struck the Tonahi-Jan, and she, too, was hurled headlong to the floor. The lamp flew from her hand and went out, while her ready imprecations mixed with the curses of the fakir and the loud cries for help and mercy of his involuntary opponent.

The darkness was profound. There was a moment's unguided struggle, and the stout man gained his feet again, only to fly back with added celerity by the way he had come. One of his ponderous knees had caught Ram Nath heavily in the pit of the stomach; it was quite three minutes before the fakir could speak.

"Mother!" he gurgled, when breath came, "where art thou?"

There was no answer. He caught some distant sounds, and listened. There was a subdued clash of arms and the cries of men in mortal fight. He still possessed the box of slow-burning matches. He lit one, and found that

he was alone. The Tonahi-Jan had pursued the frightened intruder.

"May Kali surround her with flaming serpents!" he growled. "How can I find my way alone in this man-trap?"

He picked up the lamp and relighted it. He climbed the stairs and peered into the chamber beyond. He advanced toward an open doorway, and at the end of a long corridor he saw a dim light. The sounds of strife came thence. Even while he waited they approached nearer.

The conflict was now raging within the palace. One of the improvised drawbridges had proved effective, and a battering-ram had found an entrance.

To go forward or remain meant death at the hands of the enraged defenders. He could only endeavor to escape through that foul exit which lay behind.

He went back, mastering his rage with the stoicism of his race. Regaining the door which caused the downfall of himself and his plans, he took the precaution to lock it behind him. Then, bending close to the dust-laden floor, he strove to retrace the footsteps of himself and his companion.

The pallid women in Kate's lofty boudoir awaited the result of the attack, with fervent prayers that the troops from Deoli might soon lend their powerful aid. They quickly realized that the furious mob without were fighting with a lusty zeal which demanded a much more strenuous defense than was needed to repel the abortive assault of two nights earlier. Around the palace floated dense clouds of black smoke. There was constant firing from battlements and windows, while the besiegers' bullets sang harmlessly through the air or crashed against solid masonry.

This blind struggle continued for nearly three-quarters of an hour without definite outcome. Even the few native women, gathered in the maharani's apartments, gained courage from the belief that the garrison could offer a successful resistance.

"Surely the relieving force must soon arrive!" thought Marion, for the spoken words on her lips were ever those of confidence. "Oh, if only Dick were with them! He would surmount all obstacles to come to my aid."

"I wish we knew what was going on," said Kate for the twentieth time. "Don't you think we might venture to go a little nearer to the main gate?"

"Why not? We can always return here and barricade the door if need be. Besides, there may be wounded men requiring help."

"Better remain," interposed Mrs. Mold timidly. "We can do nothing, and some one will surely be sent soon by the maharaja to tell us that all is well."

The little woman's white face looked so pitiful that Kate laughed hysterically.

"You are thinking of your babies in Mussoorie," she cried, "and wondering why you were such an idiot as to mix yourself up in my sorrowful life."

"No, no, a thousand times no, but we can do no good by running any further risk."

"Risk! What risk is there in descending the stairs and obtaining some knowledge of what is taking place? Rather will it give us fresh courage to know that the rebels are failing. Come, we will go together, if only for a few minutes."

They unbolted the door. The guards usually stationed there were absent. They hastened down the stairs and through a long corridor. Frightened at being left alone, and not knowing why the memsahibs had gone, the native women followed them.

The young scion of Barapore, Dhial Singh, was left sitting near the cot in which reposed his infant half-brother. He was bidden not to stir from the maharani's suite during the fighting, and no one thought of reiterating the command. Yet the restraint was irksome, and the silence of the spacious apartment seemed to his excited brain to be accentuated by the external clamor.

With an intelligence far beyond his years, he had divined the cause of the estrangement between his father, whom

he had seen little of, and his beautiful stepmother, whom he worshiped. It had been the solace of many a weary hour for Kate to endeavor to implant in the boy's mind high notions of chivalry and manhood.

The grotesque heroes of Hindu mythology, the crime-stained ruffians who stalk in grim procession through Indian dynastic records, were sedulously kept in the background of his lighter studies.

To him Richard Cœur de Lion, Ivanhoe, and the Black Prince were far more familiar figures than Buddha in his many manifestations. No training could place a western mind in the eastern brain, but most certainly this young Sikh prince had garnered very different ideas of life and conduct to those usually imbibed by others of his class.

He already realized that there were higher ideals than wine and women, and he had once earned the bitter displeasure of the maharaja by saying naively that when he grew up to be a man he would spend his time in drilling soldiers rather than in lying on a cushion drinking nasty stuff while nautch-girls danced.

Kate was really very fond of him; and Marion, too, whom he called his "auntie," liked his bright, pleasant ways. One day she told him something of Captain Ayriss—how he had three times won the Dholpore Cup; how he fought and captured, single-handed, two famous cutthroats and rifle-stealers in Peshawur—and Dhial Singh delighted her by saying:

"Perhaps some day, auntie, I may be commander-in-chief in this state. If so, I will want my officers to be like Captain Ayrisss."

With all the ardor of a high-spirited boy, he longed now to be with the soldiers, out there among the smoke and flame; and with a boy's enthusiasm he saw himself rushing, sword in hand, at the biggest man of the rebel host.

Suddenly the infant stirred and cried petulantly. Dhial Singh went to the cot and stroked the tiny hand.

"Don't cry, little brother," he said softly. "I am your ayah just now. Rani says that I must endeavor to do everything well, so I must try to be a good ayah."

The tiny mite, satisfied that some one was tending it, soon composed itself to sleep again. The musketry outside seemed to redouble in volume. The boy distinctly heard a series of thunderous blows, followed by the crashing of wood and a tremendous outburst of yelling.

He turned and looked anxiously toward the door. On a small table reposed a revolver which Kate had placed there earlier in the evening. He picked it up, and saw that it was loaded. The handling of the weapon gave him fresh confidence.

"I wish Rani would come," he said aloud. "If any wicked man tries to touch her I will shoot him dead."

A slight shuffling noise in a distant corner of the room caught his sharp ears. A screen there hid the entrance to a servants' staircase. He wheeled round.

"Who is that?" he cried.

The Tonahi-Jan appeared. The sight of her startled him greatly, not only because he knew that his grandmother was not allowed to enter the palace, but by reason of the uncanny gleaming of her eyes, like unto those of a cat.

"*O-hé,* Nani," he stammered, using the vernacular; "what doest thou here?"

She surveyed him in silence for a moment. Her vengeful glance took in each detail of his European costume, of the tastefully furnished room, of the elegant cot in which reposed Kate's child.

"Go to thy father, boy. He awaits thee in the garden beneath," she muttered, for her dazed wits seemed to be strangely perturbed at finding her grandson dressed like an English youngster of his age.

"Nay, Nani, that cannot be. He directs the fighting in the outer court."

"Go! I bid thee! My words were ever obeyed by thee before that woman came from over the seas. Has she taught thee to despise thy people?"

"Not so, but she knows I am alone here with my little brother——"

"*Thy* little brother!" shrieked the old woman, instantly yielding to a paroxysm of rage. "Hast thou forgotten that thou art my grandson? Hence, boy, before I strike thee. Thy mother liked not deeds of blood. Hence, I tell thee!"

She threw aside her staff and swept back the folds of her cloak to free her withered hands, for the garment was fastened at wrists and throat in an unusual way. Then Dhial Singh saw that she had clutched a long knife from her girdle, and his alert wits divined her mission from the manner of her glance toward the cradle.

He sprang forward. Ere she could comprehend his design he had lifted the baby out of the cot and clasped him closely with his left arm. He still held the revolver, and this he leveled at the Tonahi-Jan.

"Be warned, Nani!" he cried. "Thou shalt not touch him! I will shoot thee dead first!"

With the yelping snarl of a jungle beast the madwoman rushed toward him. But her tottering steps, yielding now to the unusual exertions of the night, were not equal to his rapid movements. Crying to her that if she came nearer he would shoot, he endeavored to avoid her by dodging round the cot. Thus, with the rudely awakened infant now squalling lustily in his arms, he placed the table, on which rested the Chevalier Forsyth's portrait, between himself and his pursuer.

The rays of a large swinging-lamp fell directly on the picture, and the glowing eyes of the would-be murderess suddenly encountered the simpering, self-satisfied glance of the man in the quaint uniform of the Papal Guard.

Had she been struck by lightning no more drastic change could have come over her face and form. The stooping figure straightened, the withered lips softened into a smile of great sweetness, the delirium passed from her eyes. The whole aspect of her face became that of a dignified old woman, of one whose life had been a compound of deep sorrow and abiding purpose.

"George Forsyth!" she whispered in English. "My love, my love, you have come to me at last."

With a sigh that shook her like a blow—a sigh that seemed to symbolize the snapping of brain and heart—she collapsed bodily. She seemed to shrink into a curiously small compass. Were it not that the knife, still clasped in her skinny hand, had buried its sharp point in the parquet floor, and thus caused one thin arm to rise awkwardly, there might have been little else lying there than a disheveled heap of soiled rags.

Thoroughly frightened now, and calling "Rani! Rani!" with the shrill insistence of childish terror, Dhial Singh, still carrying the revolver, ran from the room.

TO BE CONTINUED.

The Trials of Commander McTurk

By Cutcliffe Hyne

Author of "Captain Kettle, K. C. B.," "McTodd," Etc.

IX.—MANOA

(A Complete Story)

IT would have been very hard for any one to have recognized Commander McTurk in the fight which raged around the mine.

To almost all his acquaintances he was a man habitually spruce and smart, and almost dandified; his linen was always immaculate; his hands suggested the attentions of the manicurist.

But this great tattered savage, who stormed through the fight with a shotgun, seemed quite divorced from the man who had once been the best dressed officer in the United States Navy. His feet were bare, and his trousers were fringed from the knee. His shirt lacked a sleeve. Blood oozed from a cut on his head, and blinded him till he wiped his eyes clear with the back of a grimy hand.

International law makes a shotgun an illegal weapon; but in frontier fighting at the back of Venezuela men pick the tool that best fits their hand. Moggridge, the orchid-hunter, who was too short-sighted to see without his spectacles, except at the closest of close quarters, used an ax; and used it, too, with a murderous effectiveness that a crusader might have envied. Commander McTurk went into action with a double-barrel number twelve hammerless ejector. He got in eight shots with this as they ran up into range; two more, fired pistol fashion, before he closed; and then, shifting ends, sailed in with the butt.

Now, novelists notwithstanding, the butt of a shotgun is only a flimsy weapon for a strong man. At the first smite, the stock parts with a short fracture just behind the trigger-guard, and one has to finish the battle with the locks and breech-piece. For nicely judged blows, this weapon can do heavy execution; but once hit, say, an opposing head with the middle of the barrel, and the thing bends, just as a man can bend a poker round his own forearm.

The peons who followed them were but poor fighting men. Three went down badly hurt in the first charge; two dropped deliberately and risked the trampling; and one fled, letting out screams of terror high-pitched as a woman's. So McTurk and Moggridge had all the work on their own shoulders, but they went grimly on without an idea of flinching.

But two men, however madly and tremendously they may fight, cannot stand up against twenty—and there were at least twenty of the so-called miners still remaining unhurt. Moreover, the two were losing strength. The orchid-hunter had been badly stabbed in the thigh; Commander McTurk had again been cut on the head, and the blinding blood trickled more swiftly into his eyes. It seemed to

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Moggridge that they were within an ace of extinction.

The tall American, however, possessed one of those brains which work most clearly and most inventively in moments of the hardest stress. He shouted to Moggridge to run for the old mine tunnel; and, though to the collector's mind the move was as good as suicide, he gave way to the stronger man's advice, and limped to the adit as fast as his wounded leg would let him, while Commander J. K. McTurk fought a rear-guard action of unexampled ferocity, and followed him at an equal pace.

The entrance was partly closed by stones and soil which had trickled down from the steep hill-face above, and it was fringed with those delicate ferns and pendant creepers which grow so luxuriantly in that moist, warm Venezuelan climate. There was only just room for a man to pass between this débris and the crown of the arch, but the sturdy Moggridge crawled in, legs first, leaving a trail of blood behind him; and the lengthy McTurk followed, with the bent barrels of the shotgun still clutched in an aching hand.

For an instant they looked out upon blue sky and tree-tops, and then their view was sliced across by a fringe of maddened faces.

"Come in, you curs!" McTurk invited.

But the miners' courage had its limits, and their numbers had been so thinned in the fight that they had no further appetite for hand-grips. They yapped and they howled and they cursed outside in the open, but no one of them made any attempt to pass under the ferns of the archway.

"Looks like a good opportunity to fix up this hole in my leg," said Moggridge. "I say, J. K., could you tie this string while I jam the pad against the cut? Hell! but that hurts. Thanky, man. It's time that leak was calked. I've lost a deuce of a lot of blood. How about those chips on your sconce?"

"Oh, they'll cake over. It's stopped dripping into my eye already. I wonder when those hounds will remember they've got dynamite stowed away in one of their mine sheds."

"To blow down the hill on top of us? You did foresee that, then? I thought of it the instant you said 'Run for the adit.' Personally, I'd rather have seen it through in the open than be buried alive under this blessed muck heap. By the Lord, J. K., but it was a gorgeous fight!"

"I didn't come in here to invite a funeral."

"Got a scheme, then?"

"I don't say we're out of the wood, by any means; but I do think we've got a good cat's chance. This hill has been mined from the days of the Incas onward, and it's just honeycombed with holes. Lots have tumbled in, of course, and many are blind alleys with but one opening; but it's on the cards we're in one that links up to daylight again somewhere else."

"Where those mongrels will be duly waiting for us!"

"Not necessarily. The neighborhood is practically unexplored, and I don't suppose they know much more about it than we do. You see, the mines were dropped when Spain was kicked out in the Liberator days; and, in a country like this, secondary forest will blot out a road in a year's time, and hermetically seal any district in ten."

"So when Mrs. Codrington's crowd came along here with their machetes and picks, they were practically opening up new ground? I didn't know."

"That's so." Poor McTurk sighed heavily. "I wonder where they've got her now. Fat lot of use we've been in trying to get her out of the mess!"

"Well, she'll have to be content with the knowledge—if it ever reaches her—that we've done our best."

"No, my lad, be hanged to that tale!" rasped Commander McTurk. "I said I was going to get her out of these scoundrels' hands, and, by Glory! I'll do it yet. Here, lift a foot. We must get out of this."

A small brown cylinder, with a tail

that spluttered and smoked, was thrown from without into the mouth of the tunnel, and lay there smelling quietly. The yells and revilings of the miners had toned down into silence, and once more the patch of blue sky and the fringe of trees hung before them, unsullied by the row of savage faces. And then another cartridge, also with its fuse cheerily burning, leaped up into sight and dropped beside the first.

The sturdy Moggridge led the way back into the darkness, limping and stumbling over the débris dropped from the roof, slithering over the greasy mud of the floor, cannoning with his elbows against the rocky walls. Commander McTurk followed intimately upon his heels. It was borne in upon both of their minds that if they did not get beyond reach of its blast, the dynamite, when it exploded, would shoot them into the depths of the mountain, like missiles from a gun.

But, as it happened, they luckily had got an early start, and when the explosion did come, it merely threw them to the muddy floor. The whole mountain cringed to the shock; there was a roar of cascading rock; and the blue patch of daylight behind them was eternally eclipsed.

"And so begins," said Commander McTurk, "a fresh chapter. Come on at once. We may want every second between us and starvation for finding the way out."

It was not absolutely dark in those old mine workings. In places, the men of bygone days had pinned the roof and the rocky sides with wooden props, and though most of these, in the hot, moist atmosphere of the mine, had gone to punk, and disappeared, some still remained—spongy, slimy, and luminous. It must not be understood that these weird, ghostly lights in any manner displayed the way. They merely, as it were, softened the darkness and made it less palpable.

The pair soon began to come upon side galleries branching off the main road, and explored these with set design. They bore to the left, so as to leave no route untried; but kept always in touch with their original point of departure. Commander McTurk was a sailor, and the labor of doing this small task of navigation came easy to him.

McTurk led, with his long body bent double, and the sturdy Moggridge hobbled gamely on behind. Sometimes they trod in water, sometimes on greasy mud. Now they had to squirm over a roof-fall and squeeze themselves desperately between tottering rocks. Now they had to squirm like worms under the downward V's of rotting, broken props. And once McTurk walked over the brink of an unseen shaft, and fell horribly into unknown depths. But, as it happened, the shaft was short, and water broke his fall, and he scrambled out, shaken, it is true, but with his high courage still untapped.

There was only one thing in that mine that really frayed J. K. McTurk's nerves. Great colonies of toads, for a reason best known to themselves, inhabited some of the alleys, and when, in the velvety darkness, his foot came in contact with one of these creatures, he was filled with a shudder of horror that made him long to shout aloud at each repulsive contact. Now, Moggridge cursed the toads loudly and openly, but really did not mind them one bit. So differently are men made.

As their eyes grew larger with the darkness, the luminous patches lured them here and there into useless explorations; but, indeed, it was this glow from decaying wood that at last put them on the way of escape, and but for it they must have perished miserably in the mine.

They had gone the whole way round, explored every gallery, sounded every downward shaft, and had come back to their starting-point, where the dynamite had sealed the cave mouth with the landslide.

"And I guess," said Moggridge, "that this is the finish. I wish I'd a gun to stand myself just one comfortable shot through the head. It will be the very devil starving here by inches."

"I'm not going to starve," said Mc-

Turk doggedly. "I'm going to get out."

"I don't want to rub it in, old man, but I've heard you say that before."

"Well you can hear me say it again. I've bet you two dollars and a half we'd get Lucy Codrington out of those brigands' hands; and, by Glory! I'm going to lift the money. Lick your finger and hold it up."

"Hello!" said Moggridge, in genuine astonishment, "there's a draft. I can feel it distinctly."

"Of course there is. There have been drafts here and there all over the mine, but you've been too thick-skinned to notice them."

"Too blown, and too hot."

"Well, have it how you like. But there have been drafts. And that means that these holes couple up with the outside air somewhere, and, by Glory! I'm the man that's going to find the place. Come along."

"My leg's pretty bad. I can't get much farther."

"Hobble as far as you can, and when it gives way altogether I'll carry you. Come on."

As fate would have it, they hit upon the path of exit within the next twenty yards. Commander McTurk's head, for the seven hundredth time, grazed the roof, and involuntarily his eyes were deflected upward. He saw the phosphorescence of decaying wood above him. He peered and peered with the desperate intensity of a man whose life hangs on his wits, and saw more phosphorescence above—a column of it, as it were, stretching far up into the awful blackness.

He wetted a finger and held it above his head. The upper side distinctly chilled first. There was a vertical shaft above them, and somehow or other it connected with the open air.

Commander McTurk got on to Moggridge's shoulders and fumbled for the opening. It was timbered with rotting wood, which gave way to his touch; but the shaft was narrow, and those forgotten miners, who had sunk it from the drift above, had cut foot-holes in the sides for the convenience of their own ascents. Even the lame orchid-hunter could climb the shaft easily, once he had been lifted onto its bottom lip.

The rest of their escape to the outer air was comfortably easy. They came upon another series of tunnels, or perhaps one might say another mine, well ventilated, with an air blowing steadily through it. They walked and stumbled on with accurate care always up-wind, and then suddenly McTurk stopped and gave a little cackle of laughter.

"Look up!" he said.

"Why, they're stars!" said Moggridge, peering up with short-sighted eyes. "By crumbs, J. K.! we've walked out into the world again, and I'm not a dead man yet. Well, I've to thank you, and the fact that I hadn't a gun, for the escape. Lord! but I am fagged."

"Looks like a hut across there."

"*Benab* they call it in this country. We'll probably get fever from sleeping on the ground. Come along. Let me lead the way, for once."

"Hello! Hammocks!" said McTurk, peering in under the troolie-palm roof. But Moggridge was snoring in one of the hammocks already, and the tall sailor turned into the other. "I suppose I ought to stand a watch," he yawned; but his reflections got no farther.

When Commander McTurk next opened his eyes, equatorial day burned high in the heavens. The air was noisy with insect life, and garrulous with the chatter of frogs. In the other hammock he could see Moggridge's face, red, drawn, and feverish; but he was conscious of being inspected from a different quarter, and turned his eye to look. Yes, sure enough, there was a young Indian girl, bareheaded under the scathing sunshine, and dressed simply in a beaded *queyo*.

"Hello!" said the sailor; and threw his legs over the side of the hammock and sat up. "Good morning."

The girl made no reply in words, but she dropped to her knees, and knocked her forehead three times on the ground.

Now, she was a very comely young

person, and Commander McTurk told himself that at a moment like this he was no stickler for ceremony. So he dropped down onto his feet and picked her up.

"Sorry I don't speak Arawak, or Carib, or whatever language is fashionable about here, and you appear to have no good United States. We dropped in without invitation last night, and I apologize much for the filthy state in which you see me. Do you keep a wash-tub hereabouts, or a river without too many alligators, where one might get a wash?"

But at this point Moggridge woke up, and rapidly took in the situation. "For the Lord's sake, J. K., hold up and mind what you're doing! Don't you try your flirting ways round here."

He put a word in the native to the girl, and, after puzzling over it a moment, she rather shyly answered him.

"Yes, just what I guessed. We're out of the frying-pan, maybe, but we're uncommon near the fire."

"Why, what do you mean?"

"Torture, no less. If accounts are true, and this young lady's male relations catch us, they'll lop off our hands and feet, and gouge out our eyes, and turn us adrift as a gentle hint to the rest of the world that they don't want callers. I saw a poor buck I once employed in Cayenne treated that way. I was trying to get a skull of these people for an ethnographical museum at that time, but I turned up the contract when I saw that buck. Look at the turn of her jaw. She's an Akatee Indian right enough."

"She seemed quite civil. In fact, she was doing some sort of an obeisance when I stopped her."

"Oh, that's all right. She's never seen a white man before, and took you and your affable ways for one of the gods that inhabit the old mine yonder. But I guess the bucks of her tribe won't be so religious-minded, and they're sure to be close at hand somewhere."

He got stiffly down and peered into the edges of the forest.

"Yes, there are three more *benabs* in sight. And there are at least two buckeens and a litter of children working in that cassava ground. I thought I could smell the smoke of the cooking-fires. You can lay to it the men aren't far away. I say, J. K., I advise you to clear out. I shall manage all right. Crumbs! but my leg is hot and stiff this morning."

Of the suggestion that he should desert his wounded companion, Commander McTurk took no notice whatever. "Look here," he said, "you speak the language. So just ask Miss What's-her-name which is the nearest way to the bath-room. I don't mind being killed, if it can't be helped; but I'll not stay filthy for another hour at any price. You'd better come, too—you're mud-caked from head to foot—and when you're clean, I'll dress that cut in your thigh for you. The bother of it is, I don't see how I am to mend up these disgusting rags. I wonder if it would be possible to scare up a suit of clothes, anyhow."

The orchid-hunter laughed. "An Akatee buck's lap is about the same size and cut as the *queyo* that Nora there is wearing. There's not the least chance of your getting anything else. But by all means rig yourself out in a lap, if you're that way inclined; I'm sure you'd look most classical in it. I say, J. K., old man, don't jump or anything. The girl's watching, so get a good hold on your nerves. Just look on that crooked rafter above your head and up against the troolie thatch. What do you see there?"

"Do you mean the yellow bowl?"

"Yes, what's it made of?"

"Calabash, I suppose. No, it isn't, though; it's metal. Softish, too, at that. By Glory! Moggridge, you don't mean to tell me that's gold?"

"It ought to be. It all fits into the tale. That poor buck of mine from Cayenne told me that these Akatee Indians had gold piwarrie bowls, and gold cassava squeezers, and gold this, that, and t'other. Gold is about the same value with the Akatees as putty is with us. Now, there's no big city here, with stone palaces and a king and a religion, and processions of priests, and

all the rest of it. There are only a few *benabs* stuck down in forest clearings, and a few naked Indians to own them. But I want you to realize, J. K., that you're in the golden city of Manoa, or as near to it as anybody outside of a story-book ever got, and that I personally would give four eye-teeth and five toe-nails to be out of it. Now, let loose your imagination on that."

"I am realizing," said Commander McTurk steadily, "that I detailed myself off to help Mrs. Codrington out of the hands of those mining scoundrels who kidnaped her; and that is an object I don't intend to let anything else except personal cleanliness get in the way of. I say, would you mind keeping Nora here and amusing her while I find that creek?"

He went out then into the scalding sunshine, and walked across the savanna that lay before them, toward a point where water winked among the greenery. The Indian girl wished to go with him, but McTurk bowed her politely back to the hut.

The orchid-hunter laughed in spite of his scare. "You do have a way with you, J. K.," he called out. "You do touch their little hearts right on the spot."

But Commander McTurk walked on with his head up in the air, and pretended not to hear.

At the water he washed enjoyably; and, with a wisp of palmetto, dusted from his clothes all the clay and mud that was removable. Then he busied himself with the creation of a broad-brimmed hat, plaiting strips of aloe in eight-ply with a sailor's deftness, and sewing these into shape with fiber.

It was at this point that a party of bucks came upon him, and promptly held an inquest over his disposal. They were just returned from hunting, and their backs were bloodied with game, which hung from their forehead-straps. They carried machetes and wooden spears with fire-hardened heads, and looked fully disposed to use them.

Commander McTurk had left the wreck of his gun in the mine, and had just two hard and capable fists with which to defend himself. Moreover, there was exactly one of him, and there were fourteen Indians. So he decided it was a case for diplomacy, and wished them a pleasant good morning, and went on with his plaiting.

They chattered among themselves, and two of the older bucks swung back their machetes viciously.

Commander McTurk went on with his plaiting and explanation: "I may tell you we've arrived here by the most unlikely of accidents. A friend of ours, a Mrs. Codrington, was up in this neighborhood on some mining proposition that I warned her was dangerous; but I must give her the credit to say that she pulled off the deal all right. However, the blackguards she was bidding against were not the crowd to stick at trifles, and so they kidnaped her, and they've got her jailed somewhere in this country, snug and tight. Well, she got word down that she'd like a bit of my help—she'd refused it before, I'd have you understand, gentlemen—and so I just packed up the painting tackle I was employing myself with, and came off right then. I hope all this yarn is interesting you?"

Now the Indians, as Commander McTurk guessed very easily, had no English, but his placid, easy speech had the effect he hoped for. It caused them to cease from chattering among themselves, and listen in some amazement to what he was saying. The two machete men lowered their weapons. One gory hunter even went so far as to unhitch the strap from his forehead and sit down among the ferns, so that he might hear and observe more at his ease.

"You'll meet presently my friend, Mr. Moggridge, who's in a hammock, with a hole in his leg, in that *benab* there, down by the crotons. He was up this blessed country orchid-hunting, and incidentally doing a bit of skull-collecting, and we met one day, the first time for five years, when my wood-skin had upset in a rapid. He came along with me and brought his peons—he said very kindly that there would be orchids

he wanted where I was going—and when we came up to the mine that's been the cause of all Mrs. Codrington's trouble, he fought with the toughs we met there in a way that made me wish he'd been born a United States citizen instead of a poor devil of a down-trodden Britisher. There! I can see that all this nice, quiet talk has cooled down your martial ardor, and I think now we might venture to join forces with my friend."

Commander McTurk finished sewing the last plait onto his hat, put it on his head, surveyed the effect in the mirror of the stream, and rose slowly to his feet. "I guess," he said, with a courteous bow, "that we'll now go across and pay a call on Mr. Moggridge, and I'm sure it should tickle you to see how interested he'll be in the contour of your heads."

But this pleasing suggestion was very promptly opposed. One of the bucks rapped out an order, and the others, with the quickness of a pantomime trick, jumped to their places, and the sailor was ringed in with a threatening bristle of weapons.

For an instant he looked at the smooth, still water behind him, and thought of diving in and taking his chance of the alligators; but that would leave Moggridge behind, and so he put the idea from his mind on the moment of its arrival. The mantle of diplomacy was still the only wear. So he slipped his hands into the remains of his breeches pockets, and shook his head at the spears, and laughed.

"It was theatrical, of course, that move of yours, colonel; but doesn't it rather jar on your ideas of hospitality?" He addressed his question to the big buck who had given the order. The man nodded, and made some incomprehensible reply; then he picked up his strap, and began fumbling in it.

"If that's your flask you are hunting for," said McTurk, "you've thought of something that will tickle me right down to the heels. I've been wanting a nip of whisky, after walking on the toads in that beastly mine, more than I can tell you."

But the Indian brought out neither food nor drink from his bush-rope bag. Instead, he produced a large nugget of water-worn gold, and, after saying a word or two to his friends, handed it to Commander McTurk.

The sailor took the present, and the spear-points dropped. "Am I to understand that you picked this up during your morning promenade, colonel?" he asked, and translated his question with easy signs.

The chief nodded.

"Then you may take the tip from me that if you want to keep this sweltering country to your naked selves, you'd better not advertise the fact that there's an alluvial gold-field somewhere close and handy. If you do, you'll have half the rapscallions in Christendom treading over your pagan country, and you'll be civilized across to the happy hunting-grounds. I'm traveling light just now, and can't carry keepsakes, and if you've got no immediate use for this gold to make tooth-stopping for yourselves, you'd better let me make a hole in the water with it." He signed what he meant. "Come now, colonel, shall I?"

The chief nodded, and Commander McTurk spun the nugget so that it made ducks and drakes across the surface of the water, and framed itself in diamond-drops of spray under the sunshine before it sank.

That ended the strain. The Indians dropped their weapons and strung out across the savanna, and Commander McTurk went with them to where the cooking-fires made savory odors before their *benabs*.

He was seated presently near Moggridge's hammock beneath a troolie thatch, eating a bowl of pepper-pot that fairly blazed with heat, and discussing the situation.

"I am not a greedy man, by any means," he explained; "but I suppose I like a chunk of gold, for the sake of what it may purchase, just as well as the next fellow. But it was not very hard to see what was in the boss savage's mind. I was to be put to the ordeal. If I showed covetousness, they

would make a pincushion of me; if I didn't, they would reserve judgment."

"I guess they are reserving it still," said Moggridge, with a shiver. "While you were away, Nora was entertaining me with an account of how they operate without anesthetics on callers they don't take a fancy to."

When the heat of the day had worn itself through, Commander McTurk, by the help of many signs, explained to the Indian girl, who had come to see them, that, although much to his annoyance, he could not take away any birds' eggs to add to his collection, still he possessed a stub of pencil and the backs of a couple of letters to take notes upon, and any local ornithological hints he could pick up would gratify him exceedingly. He imitated the chime of the bell-bird, and the *Who-are-yeou* of the goat-sucker; and Nora grasped what he wanted and led him off into the forest, with adoring looks.

"You do fascinate that young person," Moggridge called after them from his hammock. "I just love to see you straighten your shoulders and cock your hat when she makes eyes at you."

"You shut your silly head," McTurk snapped back at him, "and leave me to get out of this mess without interfering more than you can help."

Now, Commander John Kelly McTurk, as has been pointed out before in these memoirs, had a distinct eye for the beautiful in nature, and he would have been very well pleased to stay in the valley for a dozen weeks and make attempts to get down some of its beauties upon canvas. But this matter of Mrs. Codrington took up all his thoughts; his honor was pledged to the rescuing of her; and even that chiefest of all his ambitions, the regaining of a position on the Active List of the United States Navy, was for the moment left out of sight in the background.

He tramped over and across the savanna, and walked down winding forest paths, exploring the place day after day, and always with the girl Nora at his heels; but either he came upon unscalable rocky cliffs or walls of impassable bush. The river, too, was hopeless as a way of escape. There were bateaux, it is true, and woodskins on the placid length which ran through the valley, but the lower end shot over a bellowing fall between upright walls of rock, and the upper sources were guarded much in the same way.

Always one of the Indians accompanied him on these rambles, and others seemed invariably to be hunting or fishing, or strolling within call. Sometimes the chief himself, the big buck that McTurk had first addressed as "colonel," came with him, and the sailor handed out his opinion of the valley and the Akatees from time to time in a vigorous Anglo-Saxon, which gave the savage a fine amusement. But, in spite of many attempts, Commander McTurk never managed to get the fellow to repeat so much as a sentence of English. He would shake his head and point to his tongue, as though to signify that such barbaric sounds were quite beyond him.

With Nora it was different. Nora soon prattled a pretty broken English of her own; but then Nora openly adored him. Commander J. K. McTurk had an unconscious knack of fascination with women.

One spot only in the whole of the valley was the sailor not allowed to explore, and that was a spinney of tall trees in the middle of one of the larger savannas. They were passing it one day, he and the limping, short-sighted Moggridge, when a bird called *Who-are-yeou* from out of the branches of a great silk cottonwood.

"I bet two dollars and a half that bird's nesting," said McTurk. "Come on."

"Let it nest," said Moggridge. "You've inspected forty goat-suckers' eggs in this infernal valley to my certain knowledge."

"I don't know yet what a full clutch is. I've only seen twos and threes in the nests, and they've all been fresh laid, and I'm pretty nearly certain they must produce more for the average

brood. Besides, the markings vary so much, that new eggs are always interesting. Come on, man, and I'll find a new orchid for you."

"I've got a *benab* full of tip-top orchids, and not a cat's chance of getting them away. They'd be worth twenty or thirty thousand dollars if I could get them to a shipping-port; and I'd take just that other two dollars and fifty cents that you owe me, and I can't see the color of, for the lot of them. I say, J. K., just go slow. There are some bucks in that little wood; and if they are out hunting and we disturb the game, they may cut up awkward."

"Rot! They're tame enough," said Commander McTurk. And presently was held up by three spears pointed at his chest, and two at each groin.

"Quite like your happy home," he said coolly over his shoulder to Moggridge. "'Trespassers will be prosecuted—man-traps and spring-guns set here.' Don't trouble to kill me, gentlemen. I'm not keen enough on a goat-sucker's nest to try and pass your weapons, you wall-eyed, flat-footed, indecent sons of Belial."

But, with the exception of this one place, they were allowed to roam the valley as they wished, to gather what they pleased in the way of eggs and botanical specimens; and if it had not been for the incessant thoughts for Mrs. Codrington, they might have lived there pleasantly enough.

There were heavy tropical rainstorms to be avoided or endured, it is true, and at times the insect pests were so bad that they had to fill the *benab* with a smudge of smoke before they could sleep; but they both kept free from fever, and their hurts mended healthily, and, indeed, except for a certain loose captivity, they had little enough to grumble about in the matter of their creature comfort.

But the way of escape from the valley was hidden from them always, and they were only set beyond the bounds of the place by the graciousness of the Akatees; and in the end their liberation came by what, to all human seeing, was the most unlikely of accidents.

They were lying in their hammocks under the troolie thatch during one blazing noon, when the girl Nora brought a chip of wood and handed it to Commander McTurk.

"What's this, my dear?" said he, peering at it under the gloom of the thatch. "Why, there's writing on it!"

He dropped to his feet and shook the other hammock violently. "Here, turn out and look at that. It's from Lucy Codrington, and she says Nora can show us the way to where she is. By Glory! if she can, I'm going to go there, if all the bucks in this blessed valley try to stop me. Here, come along, man."

But, as it turned out, they were not stopped, or, indeed, in any way hindered. They went out from their *benab*, with the girl leading, and presently were running at a jog-trot across the savanna under a brassy glare of sunshine. They held onto the spinney where the goat-suckers still called *Who-are-yeou*, and where the bucks had beforetime warned them off with threatening points. But no one stopped them now.

A winding way wormed through the thickets and round the tree-trunks; and there, in the middle, was a clearing, partly planted with cassava, and jeweled all round with hanging orchids. There was a *benab* in the clearing, and inside, on the edge of a finely woven grass hammock, sat Mrs. Codrington.

"Oh, J. K.," she said, "you are a dear man! I knew you'd find me and take me back, if you had to rake through half South America first. Have you brought a lot of soldiers with you?"

"Don't you worry about the details, Lucy. They're all right. Let me introduce my friend, Mr. Moggridge, who's been helping me hunt for you. How long have you been in this Akatee valley, by the way?"

"I've been here all the time. I don't know where it is, of course, or I should have said in my letter." McTurk cursed softly to himself. "You see, when I had finally agreed over my mining property, and had got the papers signed, there was some sort of a row

started outside the house that night, and there was a little shooting, and somebody called to me to put out the lamp so that they wouldn't be able to see to aim in through the window. Well, then, when it was dark, somebody came into the room and slipped a sack over my head and tied me up, and presently I was voyaging off in a hammock for an address unknown."

"You poor little woman."

"Oh, I pitied myself quite enough, I can tell you! But I was mad to the end of my finger-nails. I couldn't help remembering that you'd prophesied down at Santa Barbara that I should get into a mess if I did come up here and—well——"

Commander McTurk coughed discreetly. "Never mind that, Lucy."

"But I do. I hate being wrong. And I owe you two dollars and a half."

The tall sailor chuckled. "I should be much obliged if you could pay up that amount. To tell the truth, Moggridge and I have run rather short of ready cash, and I guess there's a bill owing for our board up at the hotel here. Hello, colonel! where did you spring up from? And where in glory did you get those clothes?"

The Akatee chief stopped into the *benab,* took off a sombrero, bowed to Mrs. Codrington, and laughed. He was rigged out in spruce white ducks, and wore a gilt-fringed sash and pipe-clayed shoes. "Good afternoon, Captain McTurk. Afternoon, Moggridge."

Moggridge was peering at the man with short-sighted eyes that fairly goggled. "By crumbs!" he said, "but it's John Brown."

"The clothes, from the Oxford point of view," said the Akatee, "evidently make the man. You've had plenty of views of John Brown's body since you've been in this valley without recognizing it."

"Obviously."

"I don't think it was very good taste the way you openly hankered after my skull when I was walking out with you. I remember you were a good deal on the ethnographical tack, even at Balliol."

"You couldn't expect a man to guess who you were. By the way, what are you?"

"Where we are at present," said Brown, "I am Mrs. Codrington's host" —he bowed toward the hammock— "and I have done my best, under very awkward circumstances, to make her comfortable, though I am sure she has had to put up with many privations."

"I have to thank Mr. Brown for every courtesy that a gentleman could possibly show."

"Outside, I am merely native chief of these Akatee Indians."

"But if you're an Oxford man," said McTurk, "how in glory did you get detailed for that billet?"

"Right of conquest. I killed my predecessor. As a point of fact, I came from this country originally. I'm a full-blooded Akatee Indian, Captain McTurk, but I was caught by some infernal missionaries when I was a boy, and sent to England and brought up there. I was what they call sharp, I suppose, and as a punishment, they gave me the curse of education. Then they sent me out here to be a missionary, to teach the poor heathen to wear clothes and get pneumonia. Well, I got about full up on civilization in two years, and went back to the forest again. You see, the shape of the skull, which interests Moggridge so, makes an Akatee rather unadaptable."

"Then have you adopted—er—all the customs of the country?"

"You've seen me play at part of them for yourself. By the way, you were quite right to chuck that gold lump in the water. My fellows would have sliced you into cutlets if you had looked pleased or pocketed it. Yes, I've quite gone back to Indian customs, outside this clearing of course. It doesn't do to mix up the Indian and the white man —I learned that thoroughly at Balliol— and so if the white man presses his way in here without invitation, he has to take the consequences."

"We heard," said Commander McTurk, "that you'd your own simple ways of discouraging alien immigration."

"Quite so. I was quite pleased to rasp up Moggridge's nerves a bit over that point, in return for the extremely bad time he gave me at Oxford."

"Here, I say," said Moggridge, "I didn't chum with you up there, but I didn't meddle with you."

"You called me, 'Lo, the poor Indian;' and 'Lo' I remained. Also you measured up my head for some infernal museum or other, and read a paper on it. Great heavens, man! do you think I didn't feel that I was a natural curiosity among you all, without having it rubbed farther in? As for being in a funk, I know you were, because Nora, as you call her, who happens to be my wife, told me all about it. She quite enjoyed listening to you when Captain McTurk wasn't flirting with her."

Commander McTurk cleared his throat.

"Ahem," he said.

"Ahem," said Mrs. Codrington.

"I understand," said the Indian, "that there is some sort of an understanding between you two. If you'd care to be married, I shall be happy to officiate. I suppose I am still in orders, unless somebody has unfrocked me, and, anyway, I do what marrying's done in this valley. I fancy it would be legal enough."

"I shouldn't dream of permitting such a thing," said Mrs. Codrington quickly.

"Very well, then. I'll leave you now, and go and make arrangements for your transport to the navigable portion of the river. You will move from here as soon as night falls."

In Santa Barbara, a month later, the three were looked upon as people come back from the dead. The news of the kidnaping of Mrs. Codrington had come but slowly down country, and on its heels had arrived tidings of the massacre by the untamable Akatee Indians, under circumstances of unspeakable savagery, of every living soul in the neighborhood of the mines. Rumor had it that a renegade white man had led the slaughter; and none of the three felt called upon to correct that rumor.

WITH A RESERVATION

LUCY is a very timid little girl. The world is so full of terrors for her that her life is scarcely worth the living.

Her father, finding that sympathy only increased this unfortunate tendency, decided to have a serious talk with his little daughter on the subject of her foolish fears.

"Father," she said, at the close of his lecture, "when you see a cow ain't you 'fraid?"

"No; certainly not, Lucy."

"When you see a horse ain't you 'fraid?"

"No, of course not."

"When you see a dog ain't you 'fraid?"

"No"—with emphasis.

"When you see a bumblebee ain't you 'fraid?"

"No"—with scorn.

"Ain't you 'fraid when it thunders?"

"No"—with loud laughter. "Oh, you silly, silly child!"

"Father," said Lucy solemnly, "ain't you 'fraid of nothin' in the world but mother?"

The Red Pope in the Yellow Palace

By George Bronson-Howard

Author of "The Girl of the Third Army," the "Norroy" Stories, Etc.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE RIVER OF LETHE.

SO it was they carried me to the Silent River—the River of Lethe which quenches remembrance. It seems that it could not have been so simple: that a man was done to death so quietly and with such appearance of legality. There was no touch of the melodramatic in it, nothing of tragedy, either, it seemed. I had no thought of death, somehow. That lilt from "Erminie" still ran through my head:

> When love is young, all the world seems gay.

A queer mental vagary for a dying man, eh?

A feeling of curiosity overwhelmed me. I wondered just how the thing was done; and then was rather amused at the simplicity of it. Arif followed the two men who carried me, and John Moon was with him. We reached a certain spot, and the men laid me on the ground again.

The rush of water could be distinctly heard. Not a wild rush, however; but a gentle, flowing sound. Running swiftly the water was, no doubt, but still with that swiftness that had no semblance of haste.

One torch illumined the inner grotto. I could see gigantic festoons of cobwebs in the arches; and the cobwebs were swaying with the convolutions of many spiders. That owl, or maybe it was a mate, hooted again; and the echoes gave back the hoots magnified.

"Are you ready?" asked Arif.

"Why, yes," said I. Strange I did not say something to him to show him my hate. But why? I was in his power. Words might have no effect. I would at least die without letting him know that I particularly cared.

"May you have as pleasant a death," said I, and I am quite sure that I smiled naturally.

He gave some directions to the men. They raised me again. One had gripped my head, the others my feet. They swung me back and forth, as though I were a skipping-rope.

"Let it be done," said Arif, and as I was swung outward the next time they loosed their hold on me.

That was the moment when my stomach was peculiarly weak—the moment when I fell through the air. It seemed that I was falling many thousands of feet. As a matter of fact, I could not have fallen ten. Instinctively I tried to save myself, and tugged at my hands, forgetting they were bound. Perhaps I cried out.

I heard a splash, and did not realize immediately that I had caused it until the cool water touched my hot body and I sank beneath it. Instinctively I held my breath and found the ordeal quite a pleasant one. The fever no longer oppressed me. I was wondering how deep I should go.

But now that feeling of oppression, of being borne down upon on all sides by heavy bodies, came over me. I found that I wanted to breathe, but I

This story began in the February issue. The back numbers can be obtained through any newsdealer. Price ten cents each.

dared not. My head seemed to be bursting. Something hurt me around the heart. In a wild fever of desperation I tugged at my bonds. They didn't relax. My head was surely bursting now. It must not burst, I remember was my thought; and I banished all thoughts of drowning. It was simply that I was determined that my head should not burst.

The awful struggles that followed must have been almost superhuman in their desperation. Perhaps the water loosened the bonds. I came to the surface, gasping and choking, and kicked out my feet. They were free, but my hands were still tied tightly.

With sheer fury I kicked out behind me, and with a strength that came wholly from my imagination I kept myself afloat with only occasional goings under. It was quite dark, and I could see nothing at all. I realized that I was in an underground stream that might have no outlet—that might run into the bowels of the earth. To move my feet pained me, for they were cramped and sore. After all, was it worth while? Why not sink under the water, give up, struggle no longer—make it indeed the River of Lethe?

And it was then that I heard a splashing behind me, the splashing of some heavy body. An eerie terror crept over me—what manner of monster inhabited these caves? What—— I kicked out again, more desperately than before, but as I did so my left knee became suddenly cramped and numb. I sank under the water again.

I remember that something seized me and held me tightly. But I had given myself up to the water. Let the monster do whatever it willed. I began to see green fields and pastures where cows grazed peacefully. Then everything went black.

When again I opened my eyes, I found that I was in a hut, lying on a rude straw pallet on the floor. Really this was a most surprising new world. I had expected something gorgeous. This was shabby, not half so good as the world I had left. I tried to raise myself, but I was very weak. I sank back again, noting that the floor of the hut was not very clean—not even a clean world. Very bad!

Some one was moving about. I watched his movements with some curiosity. He was in a long, yellow robe with a cowl, but otherwise he was quite like the folks of earth. This was rather a peculiar garment.

Then he turned his face to me, and made me quite sure that I was in a second state of incarnation; for I was looking into the eyes of the dead. It was Liang-Hiao, and he was regarding me with some concern.

"Feeling fit?" he inquired.

"It's not much of a world, is it?" I asked.

"No," he replied gravely. "I never so considered it. But, at any rate, we still live——"

"Where are we?" I asked.

"In a shepherd's hut about two miles from the cavern, where I joined you again."

Of course it may appear silly to you who read, but I had quite firmly believed that I was in another existence. "But they said you were dead," I gasped. "And I—I thought I was, too."

"Well," said he with a grim smile, "we were both extremely near to death. But you're too weak to talk about it. You've been raving for two days. Here, drink some of this."

He handed me a bowl of something, and I drank it eagerly. Presently I fell asleep again.

CHAPTER XIV.

ON TO THE SACRED MOUNTAINS.

It was broad daylight when I resumed my normal state, and was freed of all phantasms and fears. Liang-Hiao was preparing some sort of breakfast—a stew of lamb and a potpourri of rice. Also he had some tea. I was quite hungry, and I told him so.

"You're well now," said he. "I examined you before you awoke. Your fever has left you, and your sleep was

quite untroubled. Has the stiffness left your arms and legs?"

I tested those members and replied that it had. I felt as strong and as supple as if I had gone through a gymnasium practise. I sprang to my feet and walked about. Liang-Hiao advised me over his shoulder that there was a brook that ran by the hut, and that I might take a cold plunge.

I pushed back the door of skins and went out into the sunlight, which was lighting up the brown hills and the live-oaks. The hills to my left were dotted with the white fleeces of grazing sheep. The wind murmured gently. There was a pine-tree tang in the air. After all, this world was not so bad to live in.

The brook sparkled, silverlike, at my feet. In a moment I was plashing about in it; and when I reentered the hut, to rub down with the coarse cotton cloth that Liang-Hiao handed me, I was feeling as fit as a fiddle. Without making any comments, Liang pointed to a heap of underwear and garments, and went on with his cooking.

I attired myself in my new apparel, and found that the garments were much like the ones Liang wore. The undergarments were quite clean, as were the heavy, native-made boots that reached half-way to my thighs; but the outergarments showed signs of having been worn before, although they had been thoroughly cleaned. They were of a chrome-yellow color, and consisted of pantalettes that tied at the ankles, a long overgown, padded with cotton, that belted at the waist, and a cowl that hung from the back of the overgown. I marveled at their color.

"What are these clothes?" I demanded.

"Lama's robes," replied Liang-Hiao dryly. "I am the lama and you are my student, d'you see? Suppose we have breakfast now. Not a word or a question until you have eaten, because you will get no answers."

So I set about attacking the lamb stew and the rice. I found it most delicious, and ate quite a bit of it. As I ate I inspected the smoke-blackened, earth-floored hut, whose sole furniture consisted of three straw pallets and a huge pot for cooking purposes, which hung over a hole dug in the ground where smoldered the fire.

We squatted on the straw pallets and ate. Liang then arose and carried out the dishes and pot to the brook to clean up. When he came back he handed me a bag of tobacco and some paper.

"Good Lord!" I cried. This was indeed a heaping of benefits. I rolled a cigarette and breathed in the smoke reverently.

"Chinese tobacco," said Liang. "Very poor stuff, but better than nothing at all."

He carefully rolled a cigarette for himself.

"Now," said I, "I want a full and explicit account of all that happened. You saved my life, you hoary rascal. I'd like to try and thank you, but I couldn't tell you half——"

I stopped abruptly. A sob choked in my throat. "Miss Stuart—my Silver-Girl." I blushed hotly, then faced him, defiance in my eye. "I love her, you know that, old fellow. Tell me—about her."

He regarded me, and then spoke with a certain whimsicality. "I had to do one thing at a time," he reminded me. "I knew Miss Stuart's life was in no danger. Yours was. I know nothing more of her than do you. She is on her way to Lhasa, no doubt."

I started up. "She must not——"

"We will not waste words in promising great and heroic deeds," he said dryly. "Let us discuss the future presently, after I have explained what my plans are."

"But you haven't told me how you managed to be on hand and pick me up in the nick of time—for it was you, wasn't it? I thought it was an alligator or a huge lizard or something of that sort."

"It was I," responded Liang. "And, after all, it happened very simply. When the attack came, I was in my night-clothes. I rushed out on deck and into the arms of one of my attacking countrymen. My revolver happened to go off at that time, and it blew his face

into unrecognizable bits. I simply changed clothes with him, and pulled my pajamas over his naked trunk—ugh! filthy clothes they were of his—but I wore them."

For the first time Liang spoke as though he had done a great deed.

"I wore them," he repeated sadly. "And when the attacking party retreated to their junk, I did the same. Among the rest no particular attention was paid to me, for I am one of them in coloring and nationality, and my attire was sufficiently filthy to indicate that I was of a similar caste. So I continued with them as one of them. They were men from different villages who did not know one another. The only thing that bound them together was the fact that all of them belonged to the Soldiers of God—the lowest order of the soldiers, however, in the rank and file. So I was supposed to be one of them.

"The junk was run ashore the next day, and all disembarked except myself. I stowed away under some mats, and waited until the coast was clear. Then I slipped overboard and swam ashore. After that I traveled a few miles behind the cavalcade for the three days following; and when they went into the caves, I did the same. I was in hiding when I heard your sentence. I hid away near the river, and waited until they had thrown you to your death. When they moved away, I slipped in after you, and managed to clutch you when you were sinking.

"I paddled along, holding you by one arm for maybe two or three hours. It was most exhausting. The river finally emerged into the light of the stars, and I dragged you ashore somehow. Then I came across this deserted shepherd's hut and made use of it.

"One of the herdsmen came by the next morning, and I explained that I was a lama, and you were my pupil. I gave him some gold and asked him to get me proper raiment, rosaries, praying-wheels, etc., also some cosmetics; also to arrange to have two ponies brought here by to-night at the latest. I told him we were going to Lhasa on a pilgrimage. Being a holy man, he looked on me in great awe, and obeyed my instructions without questioning. Thus these robes, praying-wheels, etc. To-day the ponies arrive, and also a guide who will see us safely over the Giami-Tchu Mountains, and on the Roof of the World."

"Liang, old fellow," I cried, "you knew then about the Silver-Girl—that I would follow——"

"I knew quite well," he returned placidly.

I had a mental picture of the girl I loved, stricken with sorrow at my death, and being conveyed on to what was worse than death. I jumped to my feet. "Liang," I said, "we've got to save her. We must overtake that party—we must rescue her. Otherwise——"

"She will become the bride of the Red Pope in the Yellow Palace—that is evident. But how do you propose to rescue her?"

I was nonplused; but when I looked at his inscrutable yellow face, a feeling of relief came over me.

"Liang, I place myself in your hands," I said. "You'll help me, won't you? I don't want to live if she's not to belong to me—can't you see that, Liang? Won't you promise to save her?"

His face was as if carven out of marble. "Stanford, my friend," he said, "I will do all that a man can do to rescue your lady-fair. I cannot promise more. I'll do all I can. One thing I'll promise, boy: if she is not freed, it will be only because I die in the attempt—for really, you know, I value my life quite cheaply."

I caught his thin, yellow hand. "Liang," I said huskily, "God makes few friends like you—you know what I feel—you've done everything for me."

His face softened. "Because it was my own selfish desire that you live. Because I derive pleasure from the fact that you are living."

"You've risked your life."

He snapped his fingers. "Which," he said, "I have told you I valued quite cheaply. Come, now, we'll talk no more

of it. Let us think rather of the journey we have to make. It is obviously impossible that we overtake Arif's little party. They have two days the lead of us. But we know their objective point—which is Lhasa. As a lama, a yellow lama which I am, I shall be able to discover just what has been done with your lady-fair." He dropped his bantering tone. "Before I realized the mythical part of religion, I was intended by my parents for a priest; and was sent to Lhasa to study there."

He had been to Lhasa! My heart leaped within me. "You know the Forbidden City, then?" I asked.

"To a certain extent; but particularly well do I know the Yellow Palace where dwells the Red Pope, Dalai Lama. I left Lhasa initiated into most of the mysteries; and can assume the part of a lama with perfect ease. Years have passed since my lamaserical days, and no one will remember the student Liang-Hiao, the mandarin, in the Yellow Lama Kwek-Kee. As for you, you speak Chinese well enough to be a Chinese. You need only some yellow stain to your face, and a cue—which I have provided for you."

The way seemed strewn with roses. Liang indeed was a prop to lean upon in times of evil. "You are sure we shall save her?" I cried.

"We can be certain of nothing in this uncertain sphere," he declaimed oracularly. "But to continue: You shall be duly saffronized and pig-tailed, and will then pass as my student, Ah-Ling. We will now begin to prepare the face of the student, Ah-Ling."

I might pause and dilate on the preparations that we made for our journey. I might tell you of the way Liang-Hiao stained my face and those parts of my body which were liable to exposure; how he shaved the front of my head and attached a cue; and of many other things that were done in order to deceive our guide into the belief that I was a Chinese like himself. But to linger on small things is tiring.

The guide came before noon, riding a small, shaggy Mongolian pony, and leading by the halter two more of the same breed with saddles and bridles on them. He brought also an ample store of provisions and rugs, and then prostrated himself before us. Lama Kwek-Kee bade him arise, and gave him a benediction.

A little later we rode forth, a cavalcade of three, our ponies stepping merrily over the bare ground, our saddle-bags swinging, and great hope in my own heart. For, seemingly out of the mist in the distance, I saw a range of mountains, clear-cut, silver against the sky, and there was my boundary-mark, the walls that supported the Roof of the World.

We were riding to find my Silver-Girl, who had traversed this very path before. And my heart sang a pæan of joy that I had been saved to go to her rescue. After all, fate had not dealt as unkindly with me as it might. I relied much on Liang's promise; and set myself firmly to believe that we should rescue this fair maid of the dawn, Ashtar of the Silver-Clouds.

So we rode forth with our faces turned toward Lhasa, many a weary mile ahead of us.

CHAPTER XV.

OVER THE MOUNTAINS.

To all intents and purposes, Liang-Hiao had become a lama—a very sacred, very holy man. He made it quite plain to me that I was expected to show him the deference that a pupil should accord a teacher, and conversed with me entirely in Chinese, except when the guide was out of earshot. He had entered into the part, and was playing it with all the zest of an excellent actor; and he expected me to do likewise.

The guide, whose name was Tchai, was a somewhat thick-witted fellow; and there was little difficulty in deceiving him. It was not so much Liang's plan to make him believe, for that was not at all difficult. As he said to me in one of his asides, we were simply conducting a dress-rehearsal; and when the time came for the real production, we must be letter-perfect in our parts.

As we rode, as we ate, as we made ready for sleep, he was eternally coaching me in the things lamas did. I became an expert on the prayer-wheel, and could reel off all the sacred texts inscribed on the Wheel of Life. My Chinese became stilted into the lamas' verbiage. Day by day I learned new things about my craft.

It was perhaps as well that I had something to occupy my mind and prevent me from thinking eternally of the Silver-Girl; for had I continued to speculate on her fate, I should have gone mad, I think.

Our journey to the mountains had little of interest. We were received in each village with great ceremony, and given the choicest lodgings—for which the devout refused payment, asking only our blessings. Food, too, came our way in great plenteousness; and we received every aid in the power of the Chinese folk. At times I felt almost ashamed of our deception, for these simple people believed us to be what we claimed, and were asking us to aid their immortal souls.

Liang-Hiao, I believe, enjoyed it. A more perfect lama I doubt there ever was. His benedictions and his blessings were worthy of the lamented Confucius. He had a string of classic phrases at his tongue's-end; and when he spoke in low, resonant tones, it was something in the nature of a sacred rite.

We changed our ponies twice; and before reaching the mountains laid in a supply of very thick clothes, heavy gloves, and furred boots for the journey. Of Arif and his party we learned much. They had invariably passed through each particular village three days before us; and, in spite of our hard riding, they seemed to be able to keep up their advantage.

All the villagers spoke in awed tones of the great holy one, who was white and who rode a horse; and the Beautiful Daughter of the Moon, who was carried in a palanquin and attended by many soldiers.

Perhaps I have never suffered greater physical pain than when we climbed the mountains of Giami-tchum—the Sacred Mountains, so-called. Those who have done mountain-climbing at all know of the fearful pains which assail one when a great elevation is reached and a scarcity of air is the portion. This mountain-sickness is a thing compared to which sea-sickness is a mild form of stomach-ache.

It took Liang-Hiao first; and never before had I seen a man in such a horrible state. His cheeks grew absolutely bloodless, and he began to shake in every limb. His eyes bulged from his head, and had in them the look of the insane. Time after time he seemed to be trying to speak, but his lips only twitched, and there was a dry rattle in his throat.

From looking at him, I began to realize my own feeling of deathly illness; and the sickness grew on me. Some one seemed to have cut open my head and begun to probe about in my brain. It was as though a piece of cold steel was applied to every nerve of my cerebrum; then it appeared that the brain resisted and throbbed wildly in protest; and the brute who wielded the scalpel took an ax instead, and for every wild throb that the brain gave, he hammered upon it with the blunt end of the ax. Back and forth they fought—brain and ax—until I sank down, so sick that I prayed for death.

How long I was in this state is beyond me. The agony might have been prolonged for days; but I doubt if in actual time I was sick more than several hours. The guide, Tchai, who was immune, flew from one to the other, endeavoring to aid us; but with what little strength I had I waved him away, and buried my face in the snow.

After awhile it was over, thank God! and we resumed our journey, very weak, very white, but no longer sick. Liang-Hiao agreed with me that never before had he known the real meaning of the word pain.

After the sickness came our fight with the mountain-wind. Treacherously it attacks the stomach, this wind, taking no heed of the rest of the body, but concentrating all its forces on the

organs of digestion. Sharp pains begin to shoot through one, and an extraordinary feeling of physical incapacity comes. It was an actual physical effort to keep in the saddle; and it is a matter for greatest astonishment that I did not tumble off and down one of the precipices which yawned so invitingly alongside of the goat-path over which we were making our way.

Although it was bitterly cold, we were covered with perspiration most of the time, for there came places where the ponies could scramble alone, but not with added weight. Here we dismounted, and led them; and when such times came, we wondered at the physical activity of the little brutes, for it was all that we could do to ascend the zigzag paths and pull ourselves along. When thoroughly exhausted, we sat down, drenched with sweat, and the cold wind played upon us merrily, threatening havoc to our lungs.

I shall never forget that vista of snow and ice, mingled with the chocolate color of the stones and rocks. It was the best conception of a hell that has ever been brought forcibly home to me. There seemed to be no end. The climb was interminable. It was up one spur and down another, only to be confronted by one more to go up. It seemed that we made no forward progress at all.

We found camp-fires and the remains of food eaten by the party ahead of us; and in one place there came a token for me, a token that I may not speak of. It was my lady's—my Silver-Girl's; and when I realized that she, too, had been forced to undergo this fearful ordeal, my heart boiled within me, and I was for making haste instead of camping for the night. Just a bit of blue elastic, ground into earth by the boots of the party, who had passed it unnoticing. She did not know that I should see it, for she thought me dead.

But see it I did, and carefully washed it with some of our precious rain-water. I placed it beneath my shirt; yes, next my heart if you will—that little bit of blue, with the broken silver buckle. It was all I had of hers, all left to remind me of her. *Honi soit qui mal y pense.* It was my lady's!

Time after time I strove to drive thoughts of her from me; but again they came, and once more, and my rest, my sleep were denied me. For how might I sleep when she was being taken through all these dangers, conveyed into the heart of that merciless city, which would make of her a toy idol and keep her from the sight of day forever?

But there is an ending to all things, and so in time we crossed the mountains and descended to the Roof of the World. We saw trees again—dwarf rhododendrons, sturdy yews, spreading live-oaks. We saw fields of millet, with here and there a house, the thick, greasy argol smoke ascending from the rude chimneys. It looked very peaceful and very quieting to be once again in the land where humans lived, at least.

But after I had endeavored to spend one night in a Tibetan inn, I wondered if the cold, clear air of the mountains were not preferable—it was, at least, clean. In Tibet there is no cleanliness. A babe is born and begins to collect dirt. It dies at a ripe old age, and until then it is still collecting. They do not wash, these Tibetans. They consider it foolish to disdain the natural skin shelter which nature provides them. They put on clothes to keep warm—why, then, should they remove nature's gift of dirt? That is a covering also.

We came to the village of Kluna on our second night out of the mountains; and we knew we were near the village from the foul odor that smote our nostrils when we were miles away. We rode into the village in the gathering twilight, and out of it in the gathering twilight. I was turned sick with the spectacle of so much collected filth. In the middle of the street all the refuse and offal was thrown. Sore-eyed children, with foul ulcers on their faces, played amid the filth; and their fathers and mothers, clad in verminous rags, picked their way along, with no regard for the stench. And over all was the fat, greasy, foul argol smoke.

"Show no disgust at anything you

may see," Liang-Hiao had warned me before we reached the town; so we rode through with impassive faces. The people fell back very respectfully at our approach, and bowed their heads as we passed by. They called for a benediction, which Liang gave them with hands extended. "Filthy beasts!" he said to me in English.

At the outskirts of the town we were met by the abbot of an inferior yellow lamasery, who had heard of our approach through the country folk. Liang-Hiao's rank as superior yellow lama placed him above the abbot; and we found the old fellow exceedingly courteous and anxious that we should share the monastery's fare. But Liang told him gravely that he was preparing his soul for the greatness of the presence of Gautama, and needs must remain under the heavens, that there might be no earthly barrier between his thoughts and the infinite. Thus we escaped the lamasery of Kluna.

Next day we continued our journey. Our progress was somewhat delayed by the country folk we met, who asked for benedictions and prayers. My throat grew tired of repeating the infernal mantra: *"Om mani padme hum;"* but that was all they seemed to desire. It is their universal invocation. It is this which is printed within the prayer-wheels over and over again interminably. It is this which is inscribed on their prayer-flags—long strips of some sort of muslin, which are nailed to long poles and allowed to flutter in the wind: upward, they fondly hope. Each house, however mean, has one of these prayer-poles in front of it; and attached to the pole are some score or two score of these prayer-flags, all containing the same mantra. Every time one of these flags catches an upward breeze, a credit mark is placed on the ledger of Nirvana, beside the name of the owner of the flag. Every revolution of the prayer-wheel has the same effect. One acquires credit in heaven very easily and mechanically in Tibet.

The more I saw of the country the more I realized that the religion of Gautama—or Buddha—had been twisted about into an unrecognizable shape by the lamas for the better subduing of the people. Poor, ignorant folk they were, for the most; eternally in fear of their devils. Priestly rule was everywhere. The clumsy, awkward soldiers, with their aged match-locks and antique forts, armed with out-of-date jingals, were but the instruments of the Red Pope and his horde. It was like one great army, this land of Tibet, an army with but one head, and that head the Red Pope, who dwelt in the Sacred Yellow Palace of Lhasa—Dalai Lama Gyant-so.

The whole religion is easily summed up in the eternal mantra in which the lamas have embodied their knowledge of power—*"Om mani padme hum,"* which, freely translated, means: "This is the road to salvation; only thus shall you escape from earth."

As for the people themselves, there is little else to say when one has described them as ignorant and filthy. These are the two vital characteristics of the Tibetans. Going farther, it might be said, and truly, too, that as a race they lack beauty in either the Occidental or Oriental sense of the world; but, taking them as a whole, the men are better looking than the women. This may be because a Tibetan woman is compelled by the laws of virtue to smear her face with *kutch,* a thick, gluey stuff, which totally disfigures her, and prevents her from setting men's hearts in a whirl—which is the reason this is done. The lamas care for no rivals. Religion must reign above all else.

So we passed towns and villages, temples, forts, and walls. With regard to these I will say little, as we saw others more worthy of mention in Lhasa later.

The Sacred City, our goal, came upon us unexpectedly after a day's riding through marshes and morasses, hills and valleys. We had climbed with great tedium one of the lesser hills to the right, and were sweating in the intense heat of the setting sun. We reached the crest of the hill, expecting but to find another ascent, when the

full glory of our search stood revealed to us.

It was stupendous—a monument of grandeur and simplicity; a color scheme which I have never seen surpassed. It is not for me to attempt to give a general impression. Let me rather take the component parts of the great spectacle and segregate them.

A broad belt of luxuriant green encircled the city, and from the greenery the slopes of Lhasa arose sheer and perpendicular, towering to the sky. The Red Hill flashed scarlet on the left, dotted with its minor temples. Houses, temples, stretched interminably, and crowning all was the Potala, one sheer mass of stone, topped by another and yet another, glittering ocher and white in the setting sun. It seemed that the gods had created first one stupendous miracle in stone, and then in grim mirth piled on another and yet another. And over all, the reddish-yellow outlines of the palace of Dalai Lama sat like a crown, its great golden roofs giving back to the sun rays as glaring as those the sun bestowed.

"That is the Potala," said Liang-Hiao presently. "And that"—he drew a deep breath and waved his hand toward the palace with the golden roofs —"that is the Yellow Palace, the abode of Dalai Lama."

And, observing that the eyes of the guide were upon us, he bowed deeply, and then prostrated himself. I followed his example.

Thank God we were near my Silver-Girl, at last!

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SMILING GOD.

To enter Lhasa one must pass through a jungle of thorn, willow, and poplar, with wild orange-clematis overcrowding trees and roadway. But one hardly notices anything except the view spread before. I have looked upon many sights, but the sight of the Sacred City is the crowning glory of all. It is beautiful in a wild, unreal sort of way. There is that touch of the non-understandable about it which defies the reasoning powers of man. The color scheme he grants, the grandeur of the masonry, the awful simplicity of it; but when he seeks to explain why he is awed, he does not know.

In front moves the River of Delight —Kyi-Chu—turquoise in the sunlight. To the right the golden ridge-poles of Ramoche stand out like fiery warnings. It is a paradise of living beauty, viewed from the outside; and it is only when one has gone within the Sacred City that the illusion of beauty is lost and the cold terror of the merciless unknown enters into the soul.

We passed along the Ling-kor, or Sacred Way, crowded with a procession of penitents seeking salvation, their eyes turned upward to the golden roofs of the Phodang Marpo—the Sacred Palace. Their hands mechanically turned their prayer-wheels, and their lips twitched and murmured the words that the prayer-wheels bore.

We passed the Marpo-ri, a placid, brown lake of sacred stillness, hung over with myriads of blue dragon-flies. In the center of the lake an island rises from the water, and on it is a pavilion, blue-tiled and golden-roofed. I was informed by Liang-Hiao that this was the Lu-kang, or serpent house, where dwells the Serpent-Devil who controls the flood. Here also, in an enclosure, we saw an elephant—the only one in Tibet, I was informed.

But what avails it that I should tell you of the various things which I saw? I cannot hope to bring to you that mystery, that sudden awe, which entered me when I came within the Holy City. The Potala, grim, enduring, had made me doubt my ability. Who was I that I should hope to rescue from that great place the girl I loved? With its thousand or more chambers, its dungeons, its secret ways; I might spend my life walking aimlessly about, calling for her, and she might not hear. The Potala sat heavily upon my soul. It was too great for me to understand.

"We are going to the lamasery of Jo-Kang," said Liang presently. "The Jo-Kang is the most sacred temple in

all the Buddhist belief; and the brothers of the monastery are those who have achieved most credit, and whose souls sit nearest to Buddha. In my own way I have achieved more knowledge than they, and along their own peculiar lines." He smiled at me. "When they have heard me speak of the great mysteries they will welcome me as their distinguished brother; and you will come as my pupil. But remember, Stanford"—he was suddenly grave—"you must be very, very respectful. You must abase yourself before me. You must make them realize that you, poor worm, understand my greatness——"

Upon some passing supplicants he bestowed a benediction; and then called to Tchai, our guide, who rode before us.

He spoke to him kindly, and paid him for his services, telling him that the time had now come when he must take up his abode in the monastery of Jo-Kang, where it was not permitted that Tchai should enter. Tchai seemed much affected by this news. He wept a little and kissed Liang's hand many times, begging that he might at least be allowed to accompany us to the gates of the sanctuary. To this we could offer no opposition; and he rode with us until the wall of stone that encircled the lamasery blocked farther passage; and Liang-Hiao bade Tchai knock upon the gate with the iron hammer that hung by a chain.

When the guide had obeyed, a little iron slide came down, and a face, masked in black, with only two slits where the eyes showed, inquired our names and reasons for knocking. In deep, sonorous tones, Liang-Hiao answered him:

"I am the Yellow Lama of Mehung, the humblest worm in the sight of Gautama, but esteemed of my craft. I have learned much of the Wheel of Life, and have acquired merit through my years. My pupil is with me. I would rest within the thrice-holy Jo-Kang, and speak of the mysteries with the ever-blessed abbot."

"It is well," said the voice of the warder. "Thy words are those of one who has acquired merit. The abbot will be thy slave while thou art his host. Deign to enter, holy one."

The iron door swung inward silently. Tchai, the guide, kissed our hands again, and bade us a tearful farewell.

"The horses that we ride," said Liang-Hiao, "let them be sold and another golden cup placed upon the shrine of Gautama. Thus may I hope for merit."

"It shall be done, holy one," said the invisible warder.

The guide tied our horses outside; and we entered into Stygian blackness. Instinctively I stretched out my hand for protection against unseen evils; but I felt Liang's firm hand on my shoulder; and without more questioning led as he indicated. The invisible warder spoke again.

"Light is for fools. Darkness brings holiness through meditation. Will the holy one follow his most unworthy slave?"

How we followed him I have no idea. We seemed to be in some sort of a tunnel; and the tunnel was slimy underfoot. Strange insects whirred by me; and it seemed that once I trod upon a creeping thing. But Liang's fingers held tightly to my shoulder, and we made our way silently. Far ahead of us was a faint flicker as of light—a yellow eye glaring out of the darkness.

The warder's voice rang out clearly, and the echoes gave back the words magnified: "Open the Door of Belief for the yellow lama who believes. As Jo-Kang is holy, so is he holy. Let there be an opening."

It seemed to me that the yellow eye flickered again. Now we made out that it was a man bearing a torch. He seemed to come out of some hole or cranny in the rock, wriggling toward us like a foul worm. I could see his face beneath his yellow hood—it was the face of a skeleton. The eyes glared at us.

"For those that are holy there is always an Open Door of Belief," he chanted in monotone and as though he

had said this same thing many times before. "To an inferior insect it is given to open the Door of Belief."

He turned his back on us, and we heard a grating, as of a key in a lock, then the squeak of a heavy door, swinging on rusty hinges. Instantly a blue light suffused the tunnel. We saw, vaguely outlined, the pillars and roof of a great chamber, furnished only with enormous swinging baskets of gold, which contained some sort of combustible material that gave out blue light and sulphurous, greasy smoke. The stuff got into my eyes, and they watered.

"Enter, holy one and thy pupil," said he of the skeleton face.

We made our way into the chamber, and when we had passed the threshold, Liang-Hiao prostrated himself. I followed his example. Arising, we stood with arms folded and heads bent.

"All is holy—Jo-Kang is holy. The one from Mehung is holy," chanted the skeleton face. "Let there be peace for the holy one."

The door grated to again, and we were left to ourselves in that great room with the stinking, sulphurous smoke. We stood still erect, saying nothing, as though buried in the profoundest meditation. Presently Liang-Hiao lifted his head, and his eyes narrowed in a swift scrutiny of the place. Then he spoke in a very low tone:

"It is the custom of these monasteries to leave visiting lamas alone with their meditations before they are presented to the abbot. They are thus enabled to shake off all the atmosphere of the earth, and be better ready for the presence of Guatama. Come, sit down!" And we squatted in the custom of the East.

"If there is any place where we will find what we wish, this is the place. I am intending to represent myself as having had revealed to me that a great miracle is about to be performed. Thus the information. Now we will speak no more, for we may have listeners."

He sank his head in profound meditation; and the time dragged itself slowly onward. Several hours passed I have no doubt. I looked at Liang, and saw that he had fallen into a doze and was sleeping quite peacefully.

Presently a door on the farther end of the room swung silently open, and the murmur of a monotoned prayer came to my ears. In silent procession there came the lamas, walking one by one, their faces hidden in their yellow cowls, their step mechanical, almost automatic. As they walked they droned their monotone, and their long robes swished over the floor.

They circled about us, apparently unseeing, and I could feel their robes touching me. One by one they came, their yellow faces like parchment drawn tightly over bone, their eyes sunk deep in their skeleton faces—these fanatics, these children of the Red Pope.

I did not count them. There must have been threescore; and, following them all, came four men in dress quite similar, but having on their foreheads the turquoise and gold circlet which denoted the higher ranks. Last of all came the abbot himself, a wizened, dried-up specimen, whose face was more that of a monkey's than a man's, but whose eyes seemed to light up the place, so piercing, so keen, so brilliantly hectic they were.

He held up his hand. The lamas ceased their chant and their motion, and stood like statues in the wavering blue light. The abbot came slowly forward and stood before them, pointing his lean, shriveled claw at us.

"Holy one from Mehung," he droned. "Holy one and pupil of the holy one, both. Ye who have crossed many rivers which are deep, and deserts that are bare; ye who have climbed mountains that are cold, and lived with the wild beasts of the jungle; ye who have shown your holiness by seeking wisdom at the feet of Gautama—welcome be ye; welcome, welcome."

"Welcome, welcome," droned the lamas.

"Speak, thou holy one of Mehung," said the abbot.

Liang-Hiao prostrated himself, then stood facing the abbot. "In my humility at Mehung there came a dream, a

vision. And in the vision appeared to me a radiant shape that I might not look upon for my humble station. And the radiant one spoke to me, and his voice was like unto the thunderings of the heavens. And he said unto me: 'Go thou and thy pupil unto the city of Srong-tsan-gambo, that Sacred City which standeth upon the Roof of the World, and within the holy place of Jo-Kang make ye your presence known. For the Son of the World is yet to come; and Ashtar of the Silver Clouds hath been found. Go ye that thou mayest achieve the greatest of merit and be present when there come the rites which bind together the mortal forms of Ashtar and Gautama. Go thou and thy pupil lest ye perish!' And when the radiant one had spoken he was gone; and I fell into a great sweat and trembling. On the morrow I set my face toward the Holy City, I and my pupil, and behold, we are before the holiest of the holy!" And Liang-Hiao prostrated himself once again.

There were many murmurings of surprise and wonder when he had concluded, and a great silence fell on the place. It was broken by the abbot, who prostrated himself three times.

"It is given unto me to see that thou art indeed a holy one, thou of Mehung. For what the radiant one hath told thee hath come to pass. But a space agone, there entered into the city the emissary of the holy Gyant-so, and with him was the Daughter of the Moon, she of the Silver Clouds, Ashtar, whose birth set all the world aflame. And rests she now within the Potala, that on the morrow the Dalai Lama may be ready for the rites. Thus in mortal form come there together the great Buddha and his spouse, Ashtar; and perchance ere long the Son of the World will be born —he who will sweep the earth clean of unbelievers and set up another race of men. Holy one of Mehung, thou hast spoken. Thou shalt now see. Go we within the holiest of temples that we may worship Ashtar, who sitteth in state to believers. The radiant one hath spoken, and the holy one shall see. Come, then, thou of Mehung."

Again the lamas took up the chant, and moved slowly toward the door, followed by the abbot and the chiefer lamas. We walked after the abbot, our hands behind our backs, our heads bent in attitudes of prayer, and slowly and with infinite care picked our way through the damp tunnels of the temple.

We emerged into an ancient chapel, dark and gloomy, and then into another narrow way. Small brass Buddhas stood out in the walls, backed by larger figures painted on the smooth surface—figures of terrifying aspect, the demons of the faith. Light came occasionally from the blue fire that swung in the baskets overhead; and then the darkness gradually deepened into total blackness, until another lamp should be reached. Over all the smell of what seemed to be burning butter was most apparent, for the blue fire is evidently composed mostly of this prosaic material.

Occasionally a bat flew by with a whirring sound; and rats squeaked at our feet. I trod several times on what may have been lizards, or perhaps snakes—I had not chance to see.

And now the chant grew louder and shriller. We emerged into a square court; and before us we could see the gleam of fire on armor and steel. As the light ceased to blind, I looked up, and saw armed soldiers, packed three deep, spears aloft and heads bent; and with a shock I recognized their costume as the counterpart of that of the soldiers in the picture I had seen at the Paris Salon.

We had entered the holy of holies. The walls seemed to stretch away to the sky. The pillars vanished into the upper darkness. A great gleam of gold stood revealed; and the lines of an enormous something loomed out of the darkness in the sulphurous blue light and the bright yellow of the butter-lamps. Great gold vessels held the fire; and their flames, wafting upward, showed the stupendous idol on its throne, and it seemed as if there was a smile upon its face and its lips moved. Across its breast were strung number-

less chains of gold, studded with turquoises, pearl, and coral. Above the throne on which the image sat was a canopy, supported by two fearsome dragons, wonderfully carven from silver, while overhead, apparently poised for flight, the Garuda bird of legend seemed to flap its wings in the darkness.

The Buddha was seated, its great limbs shining and shimmering, and the unholy smile on its face seeming to recognize its power. Perhaps it was only fancy, but I imagined that the Buddha's eyes were turned to something that sat at its feet, something that moved and palpitated; and the smile was for this something, too. I looked.

At first there was only the shimmer of the moon clouds. Then I saw those eyes looking out on the assembled multitude fearlessly, and as a queen might; and the wonderful hair of dawn gleamed out of it all.

She stood there, clad in a gown of silver, that fell away from her neck and shoulders. On her head was the turquoise-studded circlet of Gautama. It was my Silver-Girl.

At the word from the abbot all prostrated themselves before the shrine.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE GREAT GOD SPEAKS.

We had but bowed our heads to the floor when, from outside the temple, there came a great wailing, which increased in volume second by second. It was the miserere of the Buddhists, the foretelling of some horrible happening. At a sign all were on their feet once more; and a band of chiefer lamas swept into the room, tearing at their cowls, and giving vent to their discordant cries. As I looked on them I saw what I had been waiting and dreading to see. For Arif, the Persian, clad in the robes of a Tshi-lama, walked in their midst, his face stern and solemn, and, I thought, with a certain fierce, triumphant look upon it.

"*Dalai Lama*—Dalai Lama," wailed the priests. "The time is come, and Dalai Lama is not. The hand of the universe has been placed upon him. His mortal body were not worthy to bring forth the Child of the Universe, the Son of the World. Dalai Lama, Dalai Lama, Ocean of Learning, is dead."

"Dead, dead," took up the lamas about me; and the temple rang with their cries. The chiefer lamas prostrated themselves before the girl and the image. She was looking before her with eyes unseeing, unafraid.

"Dalai Lama is dead. Grant us a sign, O Gautama. To thee hath returned thy spirit. Walks there no more Buddha upon the earth? To thee hath returned thy soul. Whence shalt thou come, O Wheel of the World? Give us a sign, O Buddha! Take from among us the one thou dost deem most worthy and cast forth his mortal spirit. Enter thou into the body of the most worthy, O Buddha!"

I could hear Liang-Hiao whispering to me: "The gods are fighting in our favor. Dalai Lama is dead. See the Persian; he seems to be pleased. He does not know——"

My head was in a whirl. "What does it all mean?" I asked.

"Dalai Lama is dead. There must be another one chosen to fill his place. His soul will be sent forth, and his body taken up with the spirit of Buddha. Arif is in power, for he is the chiefest of the lamas—he will be Dalai Lama. Do you understand? I suspect foul play in this——"

Arif had reached the foot of the throne, and was holding out his hand for silence. There came a great hush on the assembled multitude.

"Dalai Lama Gyant-so is gone. Buddha has deserted the body of him who was once a lama like one of us. For Buddha has esteemed him unworthy to be the image of him in the flesh, and to wed the Daughter of the Silver Clouds. As the chief of the lamas, let me invoke Buddha that he may choose from among us——"

He fell on his knees before the image; and his strong voice was lifted up in prayer.

"Buddha, let us achieve salvation.

Gautama, bear with thy children. We are as sheep without a herder, for thou hast gone from among us. Cast out the soul, then, of one of us, and enter thou into his body. Speak, Buddha, to us give a sign—a sign, great Buddha."

And the silence fell once more. What came after was the result of natural causes—a trick—but I had not enough acumen to know it at the time. The temple with its mysticism, the great, smiling image—the colossal stupendity of it all had entered my soul.

Out of the silence there came a voice—a voice from the lips of the golden image of Gautama. As the voice came it seemed that his lips moved; but now I know that to be but my disordered fancy. A shuddering fell on the crowd, and they drew their breath sharply and in terror—for Buddha spoke from his golden lips; spoke in tones of thunder that reverberated through the high-pillared place.

"Buddha answers, O my children. Speak ye well indeed when ye say that Dalai Lama's body was unworthy. So went forth Buddha. So the teacher has spoken. Listen ye, my children."

It was the image speaking. When I tell you that I, a man free from superstition, shook as though in a cold sweat, one may imagine the infinite terror of those children of the dark places.

"There is one among you—a holy one from Mehung. Comes he here with his pupil—a boy in years, but pure in soul and beautiful in body. Fit he to bear the Son of the World. To him long ago sent I a radiant one to bear the tidings that he should make ready. The time hath come, O my children. Let the holy one from Mehung stand forth with his pupil; and let him be left alone with Buddha and Ashtar. Go forth, all of ye—this moment is holy."

The abbot had clutched Liang-Hiao and was pushing him forward along with me. The abbot, sore afraid but believing, fell forward before the image.

"The holy one from Mehung and his pupil." And Liang-Hiao and I stood alone before the great Buddha. Swiftly and noiselessly the lamas had faded away and out of the temples, stricken with fear. The soldiers clanked out of the court. All was silent as Liang-Hiao and I faced Ashtar and the golden image.

But when I looked again I saw that there was one who had not gone. Arif, the Persian, stood still before the image; and now turned, his blazing eyes full upon us. Again the golden Buddha spoke.

"Go thou, Arif, also. Thou are not worthy to stand in the presence of the holy one from Me——"

But the word was never finished, for Arif sprang from his place like a panther, and his hand closed over Liang-Hiao's mouth. The Buddha ceased to speak. Arif stepped back, triumphant again.

"Ah! devil's tricks, thou from Mehung. Thou hast used thy voice. Buddha hath not spoken. Thou hast desecrated his image for thy foul purposes. Thinkest thou that thou canst rob me of my right? Am I not to be Dalai Lama? Who art thou to stand between? I will give thee over to the tortures, thou foul priest from Mehung—thou——"

But even as he spoke, his eyes fell on me. Again they wandered to Liang-Hiao's. They grew big with fear, those eyes—the first fear that I had ever seen in them.

"The dead! The dead!" he cried hoarsely.

We stood silent, watching him. My fear had passed away, now that I saw how Liang-Hiao had managed the trick of Buddha's speech; but though the supernatural fear was gone, something else replaced it, for I saw that Arif knew us now.

And through it all the Silver-Girl spoke no word. She still stared with unseeing eyes.

"The dead!" cried Arif again, and drew back. The next moment he had mastered his fear, and seized an enormous mace that lay upon the altar—the scepter of Ashtar. With a movement so sudden that we did not realize its import for the moment, he brought the mace forward with a quick

swing, and it crashed down upon Liang-Hiao's head. Liang sank down without a murmur, collapsing into limpness.

"We shall see—dead or not," cried Arif fiercely, and he swung the mace again. But I was too quick for him. Nimbly I dodged the blow, and dashed straight for the altar, where, at Ashtar's feet, reposed the offerings of the Tibetans—swords, jingals, and the accouterments of war. I seized something that glittered; but as I dragged it from its place I slipped and fell on my face. Arif stumbled over my body, and the mace was jarred from his hands.

I sprang to my feet; but not before Arif had backed to the altar, also, and dragged one of the heavy swords from its place. I was upon him, only to have my sword clash upon his; and the fierce light in his eyes told me that one of us would go into the great beyond before very long.

"Sansome!" he breathed out sibilantly. "I thought I had made an end of you."

"Not yet," I replied grimly. "It's the other way about, my fine fellow. I've waited for this—waited a long time!"

It was evident that he knew the play of the sword; and his enormous strength, back of the great weapon he wielded, was something to be feared.

We hacked at one another savagely, but the swords only met and gave out flashes of fire. Back and forth I ran, hacking, hacking, attempting to bring down my sword before his should be ready to meet it. His eyes glowered at me and his breath came sharply. The swords revolved about our heads like circlets of flame; and there was silence in the room save for the swish of them as they cut the air and the clang of them as one met the other.

Then, in an evil instant, my robe caught between my legs, and I pitched pell-mell upon the floor. Arif was on me in an instant. I looked upward to see him swing his sword in air. But as it rested back over his shoulder, he gave a sudden cry of pain and tottered backward. Before I could get on my feet, I saw my Silver-Girl, a dagger in her hand, dripping blood as she moved back from Arif. Like a tigress she was on him again, but he pushed her back, and wrested the dagger from her hands.

"You!" he almost hissed. "You—let us make an end—all of us—and die—together."

The dagger, which he had taken from her, flashed forward. I was on my feet, but not quickly enough. She ran backward, her hands held before her, and gained the altar. Arif raised the dagger and launched it forward straight for her heart.

And then happened what I shall remember always with a sadness which no other thing has brought into my life. A body rose between the two. There was a flash, and the body dropped to earth with a sharp cry. Liang-Hiao had stood before her—it was his life for hers.

With a cry of hate, I was on Arif's back and had him by the throat. I was a wild animal then, knowing nothing of the laws of civilization, thirsting for blood as my primordial ancestors might have done. My teeth fastened in his cheek. My nails tore his hands. My fingers gripped the dagger by the blade and the steel bit into the bone. Then my grasp shifted to the hilt, and we struggled, we two, for its possession.

Every muscle in my body was on the strain. Every one of the ethics of civilization was gone. My knees landed in his stomach, and one hand crashed into his teeth while the other pulled the dagger. One of his knuckles gouged into my eye. I tore the dagger away from him with a scream of exultation, and made for him again.

The steel cut into his body, and he struck me heavily with his clenched fist. I took his throat; squeezed his gullet in my fingers, and plunged the dagger into his flesh. His grasp on me relaxed and grew weaker. With savage pleasure I struck the dagger into him again and again, exulting in the blood that streamed from its impact, and screaming out expletives and curses all the while. Now he had fallen limp, and to the floor.

I looked down on him one last time, and planted my heel on his face. Then I threw the dagger from me and fell to sobbing—sobbing as a woman might under some great sorrow. I looked at his mangled body and realized that I had done this; that I had been a wild, savage beast and drunken with blood. But the sobs were not for him; they were for the cruel wrong he had done Liang-Hiao, my friend, who gave up his life to save the girl I loved.

Then warm, soft arms encircled my neck, and an ecstasy of kisses rained on my lips. "You have killed him, Stanford. You have come for me. Take me away. I love—oh, I love you, sweetheart. Take me away. Don't—don't leave me again. Let me die with you, but don't leave me."

And in that moment I forgot everything but the perfume of her presence, her soft breath on my cheek, her warm arms about me; and I held her to me so tightly that she cried out in joyful pain.

"Liang-Hiao," I said. It was after the spell of great joy had spent itself. "Liang-Hiao——"

I loosed her grasp, and turned, groping, toward him. I heard something like a weak voice; then stumbled over his body and to his side. I took one of his hands and chafed it—it was growing very cold. My Silver-Girl knelt beside me and held the other hand.

"Liang," I cried. "Lang, old friend. Lang!"

"Stanford," he murmured very weakly. "Don't—wait for me—I'm done for. I'm going—can't last—very long now. Listen—quick! There is a secret passage behind the great image. It leads out of Lhasa and toward Gyantse. Take it—go—before they return and see—go quickly—Stanford——"

My Silver-Girl was weeping silently.

"You—did it—for me," I choked.

"No"—he smiled inscrutably in his old way—"for her—Ashtar. You see, I—loved her, too—yes, I loved her, too, Stanford—in my devious Oriental way—but that couldn't be, of course. Why are you so solemn? It's no great thing—to die—when one hasn't anything—to live for." He took a sudden fierce energy. "Go—quick—by the door. There is a painting—a tree—behind the image—push the—panel—and go! *Go,* you fool, if you want to save her. As for me——"

My Silver-Girl was bending over him. "Liang-Hiao," she breathed, "you—how can I thank you—you saved me——"

He was smiling again. "No—great—thing—after—all. But—if you would—kiss me—yes—kiss me——"

She leaned over him and pressed her lips to his. At that moment his hand fell limp in mine. I leaned over anxiously and felt his heart.

Then I looked at him. He was still smiling upward in that inscrutable way—the same smile I had always known—his eyes staring quizzically at his surroundings. In death as in life—he went to meet his God with a smile on his face, debonair as ever, this nobleman of China.

"Come, Joy," I said softly, as I pressed his hand for the last time. "Come."

I took her into my arms. She was weeping. "Come," I said again, and led her toward the shrine. I lifted her to the altar and scrambled up after her.

From the distance came the chant of the lamas.

"They are returning," I said. "We must be quick." My fingers explored the region to the back of the smiling god. My hands encountered the tree panel, and I pushed. The door swung outward into an evil-smelling place.

I reached back and seized one of the butter-lamps. "Hold it," I told her; then procured for myself a lighter sword from the arms on the altar. Taking the lamp in one hand and the sword in the other, I led the way into the secret passage.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE HUE AND CRY.

As the door slid backward into its groove, the sickening smell of the grave was in my nostrils, and I coughed

and choked, while the flame of the golden butter-lamp wavered fitfully. My Silver-Girl clutched my shoulder.

"We cannot go—in here," she wailed. "We cannot."

"It is our only way of escape, dearest," I answered. "Liang-Hiao has pointed it out. We must go. Come!"

And I pressed forward, still choking in the graveyard dust. The light of the lamp fell forward, revealing a passageway covered with white dust, and walls that encircled us like arches. My foot struck something, and I looked down to see an eyeless skull grinning up at me. I shook in terror.

"What is wrong, dearest?" she cried.

"Nothing." At least, if she had not seen, I should not add fresh terrors for her.

The impact of our feet sent up clouds of dust before us. In a flash I realized what this white dust was. It was all that was left of the bodies of those who had been buried here. These were the catacombs of Lhasa, the graves of lamas who had gone before.

"You are trembling, sweetheart," I said, as I felt her hand shake on my shoulder. "What is it?"

"It is nothing," she replied. "Let us make haste. Let us make haste." Her tone was feverish.

A lizard's eyes gleamed opalescently from the darkness. There was a scurrying of many small feet and the chattering of rodents. Again my foot struck a skull; and a pair of eyes gleamed from it. Following, a rat jumped from the skull and scuttered away. Joy muffled an exclamation of terror.

"I cannot stand it—I cannot," she moaned. "I—must—go—back."

An agony of fear filled me. "You must not, Joy. For God's sake, remember what it means—escape! You and I together, dearest, away from this accursed country! Come, be brave, as you were. Oh, my poor little girl—bear up!"

Then I heard the shrill cackling of a human being who laughed; and a body opposed our further progress. A pair of eyes brilliantly bright burned before us; and a long skinny hand was extended.

"Peace, pretty one, peace! When you have been long here, there will be no terror! Peace!"

It was the voice of a very ancient woman, yellow, sere, her skin hanging in fulvous bags about her eyes, in marked contradistinction to the deathly pallor of her hands and her cheeks.

"Here is rest for the afflicted. Peace, pretty one! You will stay. Here is peace."

She spoke the Tibetan tongue, which, thanks to Liang-Hiao, I knew fairly well by now. When I had mastered my sudden start at the appearance of this hideous crone, I asked her to lead the way out of the cave.

"You wish to leave the sanctuary?" she cackled. "Here is peace. They will not drive you away, for they are dead! Peace with the dead; peace for the afflicted living. You are stricken with the sickness—whiter than I are you, both of you."

A great shuddering fell on me. "She is a leper!" I muttered. "Let us pass there, old woman. Don't touch us. Show us the way from this place, and you will be well paid."

She cackled again hoarsely. "Money! I need no money. There is food within these caves for those who would eat—lizards that are fattened on the bodies of the dead—ha! fine food. And company! The rats are a merry crew. They do not shun me because I am a leper. Then, too, the old lamas—the dead lamas—ah! a merry crew, a merry crew!" And she fell to laughing again more horribly than before. Her hand clutched my Silver-Girl's gown.

"Woman," I said sternly, "get out of the way, if you would not be eternally cursed by Gautama. See you not the robe I wear? Would you seek to oppose the path of a lama of the holy Jo-Kang?"

She shrilled again. "Lama—thou? It is a jest. And the woman? Ah! the pretty one."

Her fingers clawed upward with in-

tent to touch my Silver-Girl's face. A great horror fell upon me, and I hurled the butter-lamp directly at the crone. She fell back with a cry of pain; and I seized my Silver-Girl's hand and sped away from her rapidly. I could hear her moaning and cursing behind us; but soon the sounds faded away in the distance as we ran.

My Silver-Girl was holding me tightly. I could not see her face, for it was pitch-dark, now that the lamp was gone. Only the bright eyes of the lizards and rats lighted our way for us.

"Will there never be an end? Will there never be an end?" she wailed. And as she spoke we came upon light. A great cave opened up before us. A fire burned in its center, and gathered about it were men and women huddled together in scanty rags. The flames of the fire were most pungent and foul, and when I looked again, I saw that the fire was of the bones of the dead.

At our entrance there was much turning of heads, and many of those about the fire scrambled up and toward us. I saw on all the deathly pallor of the dread disease, and they evidently looked upon our white faces as proof that we were of them. A horrible-looking old man, with a thin, scanty beard, came forward, wielding a staff.

"New visitors! New comrades!" he cried, waving his staff. "See! they are of the nobility. The woman wears the turquoise of the temple; and the man is a lama. Gautama hath stricken the lama with the sickness, for he is untrue to his vows. See the woman, too! For she hath been stricken for leading him from his vows. Ha! ha! Ha! ha!" And the old fiend indulged in hysterical laughter.

The lepers crowded forward. The women were ghastly. Their bald heads shone whitish-pink in the firelight; their mouths showed toothless jaws; and their tongues waggled about as though tasting some choice morsel. There were some twenty of them, and they moved toward us in the manner of slinking hyenas scenting the kill. Through their foul tatters and rags their skin showed like dirty chalk; and the nails had fallen from their feet and hands.

"Keep back!" I said; and I held out the sword at full length. "Keep back, and let us pass from the cave."

The old man chuckled horribly again. "He is a lama, and he threatens us with death. What have we to fear of death? Is it not release? Ha! ha! Kill, lama; kill. But if you would live yourself, surrender the silver garment of the woman; for it is worth much and will buy food for all of us. Pay the toll, newcomer. Pay the toll."

They circled about us, their tongues waggling as they shouted: "Pay the toll; all must pay the toll."

With a sudden movement I put my Silver-Girl behind me and held forward the sword, backing toward the end of the cave, where began another tunnel.

The old man rushed forward, his claws extended and his eyes bulging. "The toll; the toll!" he cried; and he came upon us like the whirlwind.

At the thought of the contamination of his touch my heart grew sick, and my sword whirled in air. He fell to the ground lifeless, his head half severed from his body and his blood staining the white dust of the cave.

I backed again; quickly, now, keeping the lepers at their distance; but they had determined on a concerted effort, and pushed forward in a body. They were armed with the thigh-bones of the dead—formidable weapons enough in the hands of desperate folk—but before they had advanced beyond the body of their fallen comrade, there was a sharp crack, and a man fell to the ground, shot through the head. I smelled powder; and saw a revolver extended over my shoulder.

"It was Liang-Hiao's," she murmured. "He put it in my hand—when he died. There are five shots still remaining."

Awed by the mysterious death of their comrade, the lepers retreated, and we backed rapidly toward the tunnel. When we had reached it, we joined hands again and ran as we had never run before. The archway was still

dark, and we saw nothing; but, as we ran, there came that grayish appearance as of approaching daylight.

"The light!" she cried. "The light, Stanford!"

As we ran on, the grayishness gave way to less opaque matter; and we came into the light of day, stumbling headlong into the mud and rain outside. The rain was pouring down in torrents. I looked about me and saw that we stood at the foot of the hills of Lhasa; and above us loomed the vast shape of the Potala. We had passed out of the city through the tunnels of the dead.

A great boom seemed to shake the earth; and the lightning shivered a blazing zigzag course across the sky, making the golden roofs of the Phodang Marpo vast sheets of resplendent flame. Grim and awful, the great walls of masonry towered against the wind-swept sky; and as I looked upward the rain smote my face as though I had presumed against higher things.

I tore off my lama's robe, and before the Silver-Girl could protest I had wrapped her in it and drawn the cowl over her head; then I took her hand again. "We must find shelter," I said. Together we made our way across the narrow footpath of the morass, our feet sinking in the soft mud and our bodies drenched by the rain.

Out of the morass we came to the great road, its limestone bed washed clear of filth by the rain. This was the road to India which we must take if we would hope to escape from the dread country of the Red Pope. The rain continued to fall in great sheets, blinding me to the things before me; and the thunder boomed and reverberated above us.

A sudden vivid flash of lightning showed me a house—an inn, from its appearance. I dragged forward my tired Silver-Girl, and beat upon the door with the sword which I still carried. There was some murmuring within, and finally the door of the courtyard was unbarred and the gate swung open. Through the gate we passed, my Silver-Girl and I.

"It is most stormy. The gods are angry—they are angry, the gods," murmured the dirty old fellow who tended the gate; and we passed on through the courtyard and into the filthy inn, where a great fire of argol burned. About the fireplace were squatted many and various merchants and tillers of the soil, who glanced apathetically in our direction and resumed their drinking of the foul mess of butter and tea, which was brewing in a huge kettle over the fire.

My Silver-Girl had the cowl closely pulled about her face, and her whiteness of skin was not apparent. The landlord of the inn bowed before us and offered us some of the concoction.

"We wish horses," I said abruptly—"horses, and quickly, too. We have a sufficiency of money. We will pay you well. Fetch the horses, and fetch them quickly——"

"Then the master will venture forth while the gods are angry?" he questioned; but without answering his question, I pointed to the Silver-Girl.

For the first time he noted the lama's robe and bowed most profoundly. "A benediction, holy one!" he craved.

"The holy one contemplates the mysteries," I said sharply. "Be quick now, and fetch the horses. The holy one rides on a mission of importance."

But the knave remained to haggle; and after he had extorted from me something like twice the horses' worth, he finally set off to fetch them.

"It is better not to speak," I whispered to my Silver-Girl; and so we waited in silence for the return of the landlord who was to provide the means of our salvation.

To his credit be it said that he returned in very short order with the news that the horses were saddled, and were waiting without in the courtyard; also that the storm had somewhat abated. We thanked him, and went out.

Presently we heard the clattering of many hoofs, and the iron gate swung open. We had but moved into the courtyard when they entered—soldiers to the number of several score. They dismounted and threw the reins over

their horses' necks; then one of them—an officer, by all accounts—moved forward to the landlord.

"We seek a yellow lama in company with a woman with hair of silver and face that is white. The yellow lama has turned traitor and carried off the mortal body of Ashtar, the Silver One. Know you of such, my man?"

The landlord trembled visibly, and his face was turned toward us. "There has been but one yellow lama," he said, with a shiver and a shake. "And he stands there." His hand was pointed in our direction. I pushed my Silver-Girl toward her mount, and stood with my hand resting on the bridle of my own horse.

The officer strode forward toward us—a Tartar, by his looks; a man with long, drooping mustachios, and teeth that showed in a fierce smile. Humbly enough he approached my Silver-Girl and stared at her. Then his attitude changed. With a sudden movement he flung the cowl back from her head, and her glorious hair shone resplendent.

It was his last action of any sort. My sword whistled through the air, and he toppled backward into his companions' arms.

With a great heave I lifted my Silver-Girl into her saddle, and, holding my sword, followed her. Then I drove my heels into my horse's sides and pricked her horse's flanks with my sword. We dashed in among the dismounted soldiers, and one fellow caught my bridle-rein. I brought the sword down on his hand, and he relinquished his hold with a gasp of pain. Out of the courtyard we sped and into the mud of the road.

Neck and neck we were off down the road, bending over our horses like jockeys at the track. A shot from behind told us that the soldiers were getting their old-fashioned match-locks into play. Presently the hoof-beats of other horses could be heard behind us. They had mounted and were in hot pursuit.

"We must ride until we come to some place where we can make a stand," I cried. "There must be many places in this country where one man can hold off an army. Ride—ride, dear heart. Bear up."

She turned her sweet, sad face to mine; and her eyes were brimming over with tears. "Of what use is it, Stanford?" she asked. "We can never escape them eventually. Why not end it all here and now? I have the revolver. Let us die now—and by our own hands. We cannot escape, dear heart."

"We will escape," I cried from behind clenched teeth. "These devils sha'n't have it all their own way. We will—we will escape."

And still from behind came the remorseless clatter of the horses' hoofs.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE ROUT OF AN ARMY.

The level road ceased very abruptly, and we had to face a hill that sloped gently upward, its summits veiled in the mist and rain. A bridle-path ran along its side; and to this we urged our horses feverishly. Out of the distance came the crack! crack! of the flint-locks; but the balls did not come our way. We had nothing to fear from the long-distance marksmanship of the Tibetan soldiers.

Our horses were panting at the unexpected climb, and going very slowly, in spite of my repeated applications of the flat of the sword which I carried. And still the horses of our enemies thundered along. Looking back, I could see that they were at the foot of the hill.

Then, with a sudden, convulsive start, my Silver-Girl's horse foundered and rolled over. I had just time to drop the sword over my saddle and clutch at her. When I pulled her up beside me I saw that she had fainted dead away.

With the desperation born of terror, I grasped the sword again, dropping the bridle-reins and guiding the horse with my knees while the girl hung a dead weight on my arm. It did not seem that I could hold out much longer, and my horse panted, his tongue lolling

out. Mercilessly I jabbed the sword into his side, and he shot forward for the moment, then went down to his knees.

Out of the rain, I saw the square outlines of a small fort standing on the crest of the hill; and, disentangling myself from my fallen horse, I half carried, half dragged my Silver-Girl upward. The fort was deserted, and its massive door stood a little ajar. With a great heave of my shoulder I sent the door spinning open and sprang within, my precious burden in my arms. I laid her gently upon the floor and turned my attention to the door. Exerting all my strength, I sent it back into its place, and twisted the heavy bar of iron into its hasps, closing it against our enemies.

Then I looked about me. This was evidently some fort for outposts, built during the petty feudal wars which had ravaged the country. It had two semicircular windows, barred with iron; and in the middle of the square court a stone stairway led to the upper rooms. Again I picked up my Silver-Girl and ascended the stairs.

Above there was a landing, leading off into numberless small rooms, evidently intended for sleeping-places for the soldiers. The place was absolutely bare. No doubt the peasantry roundabout had carried away every available stick and stone. The place was dusty from long disuse.

From an open window at the side of the landing I could see that the rain had settled down to a long, steady downpour, and the lightning flashed intermittently. I placed my Silver-Girl within one of the smaller rooms and loosened the revolver from its place. This I stuck into my belt, resolved to use it only as a last emergency.

I could hear the wheezing of horses, and the hoarse cries of the soldiers as they surrounded the little fort and debated as to the best way of entrance. But that could not concern me. For the moment we had absolution. What the next hour would bring God alone knew; but now I was alone with the one I had traveled all these weary miles to find and rescue—and what a rescue! I gathered her up in my arms.

"Joy! Joy!" I cried. "Joy, my Silver-Girl!"

Slowly her eyelids fluttered, and presently her wonderful eyes looked into mine again. "Sweetheart," she murmured. "Is it over—and we——"

"Sweetheart," I moaned. "If I hadn't been such a fool! Why didn't I make you stop? Why didn't I compel you to remain behind and let us go first and prove to you Arif's scoundrelism? And now—this is——"

"The end!" she gasped. "Yes, dear one, I know. It is the end. But isn't it better that we should die now and together? Don't let them take me, Stanford—the revolver!"

She clutched for it.

"I have it, dear one," I soothed.

"You must save two shots. One for you and one for me. I must not fall into their hands again! We will die together here—promise me you will save—two shots—promise!"

"I promise," I said dully.

"And you will kill me—first—and then — yourself — and — maybe—God won't think that it's wrong, Stanford. For it isn't wrong—it isn't. Shall we be tortured again? No—no! Let the end come now."

Below I could hear them battering on the door with some heavy, blunt instrument. They had fashioned a ram of something and were using it.

"And you will believe, Stanford, that I loved you. All the time I was in his power I thought only of you, dear one; but when I thought you were dead I made the best of it and determined to rule—and to punish him. I would have ruled—like a savage; and punished—punished for the awful agony they have made me suffer. For I thought they had killed you—and my heart was hard. Hard! And when I saw you again—oh, God!—I thought the dead had come to life. Then I knew that it was you again, and I wanted to die with you, for life isn't worth while without you."

"They bound me and threw me into the river. Liang-Hiao rescued me. Liang-Hiao—poor devil!"

But as I thought of it, perhaps he was better off than we, for he had at least given up his life to save the woman he loved—given up his life, faced a man weaponless and taken her blow.

"And you came—to find me—you and he—when you had escaped. Stanford, can you know what it means when the one you love proves his love as you have proven yours?"

They had ceased to batter at the door. It was evident that they realized its futility. A silence came. Even their chattering was absent. We waited, waited a long time; and I held my Silver-Girl tightly to me, wondering that death could be so very sweet.

But of a sudden came the explanation of the quiet. There was a sharp, staccato detonation, then a hollow boom, and something blew up. Bits of stone flew in air and fell back to the floor. The iron door crashed in with a great sound.

I thrust the revolver into her hand. "The time has come," I said. "But we'll make them pay the price for our lives, if they must have them."

I groped about and seized the sword which had stood me in such good stead. Then I crept from the room to the landing and took my stand at the head of the steps. She followed me, and flung her arms about me.

"It's good-by, sweetheart—good-by—in this world," she sobbed. I dropped the sword for our last embrace.

"Sweetheart," I choked out, and held her tightly to me. She was sobbing convulsively.

"Why should we struggle?" she wailed. "Let us die now—together."

"I'll make them pay the price first," I snarled. "Our lives will be worth something." I kissed her, and, with the sword in my hand, sprang to the head of the stairway.

They were crowding into the place in numbers, and making for the steps. The room was full of the sulphurous smoke of the explosion, and the figures were misty and only half formed. They rushed on to the foot of the steps, brandishing their match-locks and short swords. Some one fired a match-lock, and the bullet soared up and struck the ceiling above me.

But a sharp order from an officer in command caused the firing to cease. "Would you kill the Silver-One?" he shouted. "Beware! What are a few soldiers' lives if we take the Silver-One back to the Sacred City? Kill the treacherous lama—the accursed one—but the Silver-One must be unharmed."

The gray light of the stormy morning fell on their dripping armor and accouterments; and their swords seemed leaden colored as they flashed in air. I stood at the head of the stairway, my feet firmly planted apart, the sword ready for its carnival of blood. Only two men might ascend the stairway at once; and I was desperate. I knew that eventually they would overpower me and kill me, and that the end would come to both me and my Silver-Girl; but I was grimly determined that there should be a heavy reckoning before this should come to pass.

When the first man came tumbling up the steps, head bent, sword outthrust, I stepped forward and cut him down savagely. His body rolled down, and several of his comrades stumbled over it and fell backward. But there were plenty more to follow. The dogged fanaticism of the Oriental was roused. They cared nothing for their lives. They were fighting in a holy cause; and if they were slain their souls would wing their way to Gautama, the Blessed Teacher. They knew themselves to be instruments in the hands of the gods. What mattered their lives?

One fellow, sent forward by the press of his comrades, hurled his sword at me. It glanced past my head. He looked at me calmly, prepared to die; but I only drew back my fist and sent him crashing among his comrades. I could not slay an unarmed man.

The check was but for a moment; and two men behind him sprang simultaneously forward. My sword leaped out and caught the first man about the neck; and before the other man could strike I used the sword rapier fashion

and sent him down with a hole through his lungs. He spat blood, choked, and staggered. Immediately he was trampled under foot. Some one fired a match-lock, and I felt a dull pain in my shoulder. Another bullet soared by me with the ping of a vicious mosquito.

Crashing through his comrades' ranks came a giant—a man some four inches over six feet—and wielding the short ax of the common soldiery. He whirled about at me, and his ax sang viciously through the air. I dropped on one knee, and again using my sword as a rapier, I sent it through his vitals. He clutched at air, and flung the ax directly at me. The blunt end of it struck my sword hand, and my sword clattered to the floor.

I stood unarmed before the approaching horde; and two men leaped upon me with upraised swords. I sprang back, but they were upon me. Dully, I saw their weapons revolve about their heads. Then came two sharp, quick reports, and the men staggered back, their hands clutched to their breasts, their weapons clattering to the floor. The reports had come from behind me; and I knew that my Silver-Girl had again come to my aid.

With my uninjured left hand I seized one of the swords that had fallen; and as a man sprang upon me, I dashed the hilt of the thing into his teeth. He dropped back, stunned for the moment; and I felt a soft, firm hand on my shoulder and was dragged back from the staircase. Unwittingly I followed; and we were within one of the small rooms and the door swung to on the approaching foe.

I had enough sense left to drop the iron bar to the door just as half a score men hurled themselves against it. The beating of many small weapons—axes, swords, guns—upon the door became apparent; but I knew that there was a respite for a moment.

"You are bleeding—you are hurt," cried my Silver-Girl, pale and trembling.

I looked down, to see blood trickling from my shoulder. My hand was gashed and open to the bone, and one of my fingers had been thrown out of joint and stood at right angles to the rest of my hand.

"It doesn't matter," I said. "It is the end. Give me the revolver. We will be ready for them when they come."

The battering at the door continued. We waited silently, our faces close together. Again the ram struck the door, and as it did so, the thunderous detonation of a great gun in the distance rose above the battering like an echo vastly magnified.

Following the report of the great gun came the sharp, muffled cracklings of what seemed to be a Maxim gun; and the screaming as of grape-shot in air drowned the noise outside. One hundred minor reports like the popping of a string of fire-crackers answered the Maxim; and yet one hundred more, as though men were firing by companies and in unison. Following them came the intermittent shots of a number of men firing aimlessly.

It was evident that the noise thus created had alarmed the attacking party. As for us, we thought nothing of it. It was as bad to be massacred by marauding Nepaulese as to be killed by savage Tibetans. We waited, listening to the noise without wonder; and then came the cries of many men about the temple.

"Fly! Fly! The devils! The devils!" came from many throats. "The devils are upon us. Gyant-se has fallen. The great general hath been slain. Fly! The great black devils are upon us."

And again out of the gray morning came the simultaneous fire of many guns; again grape-shot screamed in the sky. There was a scrambling beyond the door, and many cries of fear. The shouts outside continued.

"Gautama hath forsaken us. The great black devils have come. They are as high as mountains and breathe fire. Fly! Fly! Gautama hath forsaken us—Buddha is dead."

The back-bone had gone out of them with the collapse of their religion. There was a scrambling, and many cries

of terror, and we could hear our enemies rushing down the stone stairway.

I dashed to the window. A vivid glow lighted up the horizon. I saw a red burst of flame and many puffs of white smoke. There was a great crash as of a heavy gun again; then the lightning suffused the sky, and the thunder shook the heavens.

"The gods are angry—the devils have come—fly!"

"What does it mean?" breathed my Silver-Girl.

"I do not know," I answered.

We leaned to look from the great stone window. In the gray light we saw many men crowding on the heels of their comrades, treading them down, knocking against them, flying in the terror of the damned. Men on horseback ruthlessly rode down those on foot. Soldiers flung away their swords, their guns, their armor, even their clothes, and fled half naked.

Over the crest of the hill came many more, all running, all with the terror of the forsaken in their eyes. Officers were flinging away their ornaments and helmets. Common soldiers were shrieking out their cries to Buddha to save them from the fiends of the pit.

It was an army in flight. They came in tens, in scores, in hundreds. Half naked, frenzied, afraid, they thought of nothing but escape. They passed the fort like sprinters on the last quarter and disappeared down the hill, walking, rolling, tumbling—any way that would take them from the terror which pursued them.

Within the few minutes I stood with my Silver-Girl thousands passed me by without semblance of order or of discipline, in one mad, headlong flight. The bodies of the wounded who had fallen and were trampled to death dotted the muddy hill and stretched in straggling lines on the slope of the lower hill. Swords, guns, axes, helmets, and all the paraphernalia of war were scattered higgledy-piggledy everywhere. Men thought only of life.

And now came a vaster horde than before, shrieking and wailing, leaping and jumping, pushing and scurrying as had the others; but with an accelerated speed. And on their heels came the hoarse yells of victory of another set of warriors: the feared demons, the victorious fiends!

I could hear the cries, one solemn chant of exultant victory: *"Wa guru ji ka khalsa. Wa guru ji ka khalsa. Seri wara guru ji ki futti. Sut seri akhal!"* Again and again this chorus swelled and rose above the tumult and the cries of the Tibetans; and presently a harsher, shriller note was introduced, and another band took up their war-cry—*"Seri Ghurkh Nath Baba ki jai!"* And the others yelled over their voices again: *"Wa guru ji——"*

"What does it mean?" My Silver-Girl was clutching my arm. I knew both the cries. The first was the adjuration of the Sikhs: "Hail, God of the Liberated! Victory to the holy ones, my body is to thee, O God!" This had been the harsher, dominant note; while the other war-cry was that of the Goorkhas: "In the name of our holy father, victory, Ghurk Nath!"

Again and again the cries came; and as they increased in volume, the Tibetans fled, with wild and piteous appeals to Gautama. And now I saw a man stumble and fall and throw up his hands to the sky; and over the hills came the gaudy turbans of the Sikhs—the Sikhs in the familiar khaki of the British service—rushing upon their foes with their bayonets bared, and unholy gleams of amusement in their grins. On their heels came the Goorkhas—small, wiry men, riding the mountain ponies and brandishing their short swords. Like a whirlwind they swept up the hill.

"Attention!" rang out in stentorian tones. It was as though a megaphone had been used. "Attention! Cease firing! Halt!"

My Silver-Girl stared at me with eyes wide open. "What does it mean, Stanford?"

I was too overcome to tell her. Out of the distance sounded the clear notes of the recall. The bugle was like the trump of the angel Gabriel.

"Halt! Halt!" ran around the hill; and the different companies drew up like one great automatic machine.

"What does it mean?" she cried again.

Again came a sturdy English voice: "I say, Mac, what sort of a bag did you have, eh?"

She still questioned me feverishly.

"It means, sweetheart," I answered her, gasping for breath and holding to the window. "It means that, somehow, God knows how, we're not to die. It's the English—the English soldiers. Don't you hear them?"

Everything was dancing madly before my eyes. Outside I heard dully the cheery voice again: "Disarm any stragglers you may find—hello, Mac! This is rather like gunning for partridges, eh? I say, wonder if there's any of them concealed in this bally place—Subadar!" The voice changed again to official command. "Take five men and examine this outpost for concealed Tibetans—hello! There's some people at the window." Then, in halting Tibetan: "Come out of that."

I gathered up all my strength to call to him: "Americans—a man and a woman—Americans——"

"Eh — what's that? Americans? Rum go. I say, rum—deucedly rum go——"

My Silver-Girl's lips were to mine; and she was holding my face close to hers.

Over the hills from the east came a blaze of red light; and the rays of the rising sun bathed her hair.

The sun had risen, after all! Then I think things went all a-splurge with me. I fainted.

CHAPTER XX.

THE END OF IT ALL.

And now the story of Ashtar has been told. There is little more concerning us two which would interest you who read. For with the rescue came the end of our travail. We were safe under the Union Jack, with British bayonets to wall us from danger. But a word for them—those gallant fellows who saved us, and who penetrated the Forbidden Land; a mere handful of native troops led by officers who knew nothing of fear. Trim, dapper Englishmen, with Georgian accents, some of them, and with a keen regard for the conventions.

The story of the expedition which went forth from India to wrest certain rights from the Red Pope has been told better than I can do it. That virile writer of the old-established, conservative *Times* has made the story a saga which will endure—to Percival Landon, or Chandler, of the *Mail*, you should go for the whole story. I know it only in part, and that part not very well; but these men were with the expedition from the start, and they wrote history for their papers while it went on its way.

I was ill and delirious while the dickerings with the Chinese amban and the emissaries of the Potala were carried on. But all the world knows that the Englishmen entered the Forbidden City, and departed with the rights which they had come to secure.

And then began the homeward march. I was well enough to sit astride a horse; and my Silver-Girl was at my side to remind me that life wrested from the jaws of death was a very, very beautiful thing. So we rode through Tibet and to the Himalayas, and descended into Nepaul; and after awhile we reached the railroad, and were quickly transported to Bombay.

I might say now that I must apologize to those officers who succored us so nobly. For I lied to them. Our story was so unreal, so out of the common, that I feared to tell it lest they think me insane. Thus it was that I told them that Miss Stuart had come on an expedition to find her father; and that I had accompanied her. The rest was pure fiction, and had to do with the fights with Tibetans and pursuit by order of the lamas. The story was painfully uninteresting, and there was no cause to doubt it.

But now that I have had time to set

forth the whole tale as it happened, I take this opportunity to dedicate this story to those officers whom I deceived, with the hope that they will understand my motive in concealing it from them when they rescued us. For them I have only admiration and regard, and I would that they might think of me in a friendly spirit in spite of my former deception.

So the story ends. We were married at Bombay, my Silver-Girl and I; married at the Church of the Redeemer by a very lovable young curate who had just come out to India. I gave a wedding-breakfast at the hotel, at which were present some of my friends, the officers of the expedition, the American consul-general, and some of the naval men from one of our war-ships in the harbor.

In Bombay I wired to San Francisco for funds; and when we were thoroughly outfitted in every respect we took a Peninsular and Oriental steamer for Brindisi; and spent our honeymoon in the sunny Italian land, poking about in orange-groves and quaint cathedrals, and drinking in the art of a bygone age.

There was but one tinge of sorrow in our overflowing cup of happiness. It was Liang-Hiao—Liang-Hiao whom we left in the temple of Jo-Kang, foully done to death by the Persian. One has but few friends in life; and he was a friend like unto which no man may have another. For he laid down his life to save her.

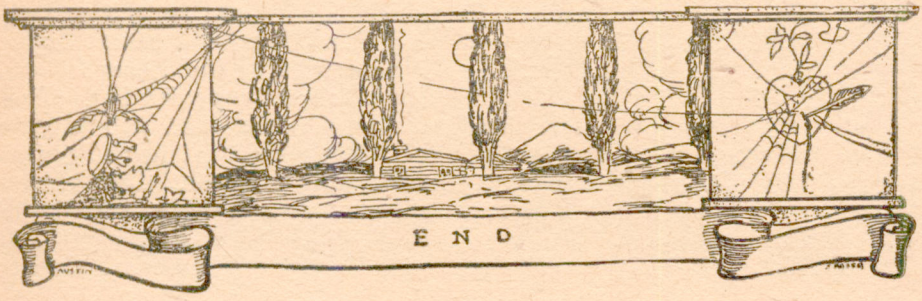
So Liang-Hiao, old friend, God bless and keep you, and whatever it may be that eternity holds for those who have done what they should here on earth, that portion is yours if it were ever any man's. Your image will be with us always; and our children will know your name before they know any other man's — you, Sir Liang-Hiao-Tafu, nobleman of China, and in life or death my very dear friend.

And now I turn and look—for my Silver-Girl is there. We are back at Monterey now, where the turquoise waters of the bay melt into the golden rays of the sun. And Daisy is with us, too. For that little girl from Chicago was not destined to perish in the Yang-tse-Kiang. She is with us, and also her husband, Miller Leeds, whose yacht was blown up for our sake. Daisy, too, has a story to tell which is quite thrilling; but no doubt you have heard enough. To be quite brief, the yacht was repaired, and, after searching in vain for us, they returned to Shanghai, where the consul-general wired for a gunboat to scour the Yang-tse-Kiang and find us. But of course that does not matter now.

As beautiful as ever, my Ashtar, my Silver-One, with the sun on your marvelous hair! It was a devious way to the Castle of Delight that we have builded; and the wandering knight had not hoped for so much of happiness. But the fair road of light has opened for us two; and our Elysium is with us, until time calls the halt and tolls the bell; and may we go together then, my Silver-Girl and I!

Let me look into your eyes, dearest; then kiss me. For I have lived all our life over again in the telling of this for alien ears. And now the story is done; so kiss me, that I may know that you are really with me and our travail is at an end.

My Silver-Girl! God keep her!



The Adventures of Felix Boyd

By Scott Campbell

Author of "Below the Dead Line," Etc.

IV.—THE WHEEL WITHIN

(A Complete Story)

"CAVENDISH—yes, Jimmie, that is the name," said Mr. Felix Boyd, glancing again at the telegram. "Mr. Marmaduke Cavendish, No. — Bay State Road, Boston."

"Humph!" grunted the Central Office man, with an obvious increase of interest. "Bay State Road, eh? That's right in the swell section."

"And from the tone of his message, Jimmie, one might well infer that Mr. Marmaduke Cavendish is a man who knows what he wants and is not afraid to ask for it," said Boyd, smiling. "He states emphatically that money is no object, and that I must come to him at any price, or wire at once if not coming. Very businesslike, to be sure. If I am not mistaken, Jimmie, this man is the father of young Marmion Cavendish, the crack Harvard twirler."

"Twirler?"

"He who was in the box when the 'varsity team from Cambridge gave the Yale nine such a trouncing last year, thus scoring a clean record of college victories for the season. He's a crack pitcher and an all-around athlete, I have read—stay, I think I still have the clipping here from to-day's Boston paper, if Terry has not filed it. Yes, here it is, Jimmie. I thought I was right."

"It explains the telegram?"

"Listen."

And Mr. Felix Boyd read the following, selected from a batch of newspaper clippings on his desk:

TEN THOUSAND DOLLARS REWARD.

Mysteriously abducted, or strayed from his home in Bay State Road, in a state of mental aberration, Marmion Cavendish. Age, nineteen; height, six feet; weight, one hundred and ninety pounds; complexion, light; hair, brown; eyes, blue; features, shaven. Is known to have left his home between the hours of one o'clock and six on the morning of May 11. The above reward will be paid to any person giving information of his whereabouts, if alive; or a suitable reward for his body, if dead. Communicate with Marmaduke Cavendish, No. — Bay State Road, Boston; or with Henry M. Sanger, detective, Pemberton Square.

Mr. Felix Boyd replaced the clipping on his desk and glanced at the Central Office man. It then was five o'clock in the afternoon of May 17—several days after the mysterious disappearance of Mr. Marmion Cavendish—and the yellow beams of the declining sun were shedding a golden glow through Boyd's office on Union Square, where he then was seated with his friend from the Central Office.

"That explains the telegram, all right," remarked Coleman.

"Evidently," Boyd acquiesced.

"It is equally evident that your fame has reached the ears of Mr. Marmaduke Cavendish, and that he means to have your assistance at any old price,"

This series began in the February issue. The back numbers can be obtained through any newsdealer. Price ten cents each.

laughed Coleman. "What are you going to do about it?"

"What do you say, Jimmie?"

"What do I say?"

"If you will take a few days off and go to Boston with me, I will look into the case."

"Done!" exclaimed Coleman promptly. "I'll go at once and get leave of absence. I shall enjoy a whiff of Boston's east wind."

"Capital!" cried Boyd, rising. "The problem also may present interesting features. We have ample time to make ready, Jimmie, and hit the midnight express. I will wire Mr. Marmaduke Cavendish that I will call on him at nine o'clock to-morrow morning."

Bay State Road, one of Boston's most fashionable avenues, closely skirts the Charles River for a considerable distance, with only a narrow wagon-road between the rear yard fences and the walled river bank. Across the historic stream rise the roofs and spires of famous Cambridge—the home of Harvard, and the birthplace of American universities. The dwelling approached at nine o'clock that May morning by Mr. Felix Boyd, accompanied by Jimmie Coleman, was a type of most of the attractive residences in that locality—a house of brick, prettily decorated, and having all the external evidences of an abode of wealth and culture.

The strangers were admitted by a butler, to whom Boyd gave his card, and they then were ushered into a handsome reception hall.

"Mr. Cavendish is expecting you, sir," the butler softly vouchsafed, with a punctilious bow. "I will tell him you are here."

He vanished into an adjoining elevator, which noiselessly rose, and presently descended; and out of it there then emerged an elderly, intellectual-looking gentleman with pale-blue eyes and spare features, whose thinness was accentuated by an abundance of wavy gray hair. Externally he bore every mark of the cultured aristocrat, which Boyd had inferred him to be.

"I am glad," he began warmly; "very glad, indeed, Mr. Boyd, that you could come to my assistance. I am in sore distress of mind; yet your telegram of yesterday gave me a ray of hope. For I have heard of you, sir, and read of your many exploits at times when other detectives were all at sea—ah, but I should not presume to be complimentary so quickly. Come out to the library, Mr. Boyd, and I will inform you what has occurred here, and why I require your aid."

He glanced inquiringly at the Central Office man, and Boyd hastened to explain that Coleman was his assistant and adviser in many cases, and accompanied him in that capacity.

Mr. Cavendish graciously acknowledged the introduction that followed, then led the way through a deep hall and into the library—a large, square room at the rear of the house, beautifully furnished. The broad plate windows overlooked the blue waters of the Charles, with the city of Cambridge and a broad sweep of open landscape in the distance.

"I infer, Mr. Cavendish, that you wish me to try to locate your missing son," remarked Boyd, accepting the easy chair indicated. "I see by the local newspapers this morning that no trace of him has yet been found."

"Alas, no!" was the reply. "Yes, it is for that I have appealed to you, Mr. Boyd. Before stating the case to you, however, it will be well for me to impart a few facts about him and myself that may shed a little light upon the sad circumstances."

Boyd bowed without speaking, then began to remove his gloves. He could see that Cavendish was essentially a gentleman, one of the old-school type, rigidly conforming to every requirement of superior manliness, and too proud to allow many signs of his bereavement to appear in the business then engaging him.

"I am a man of letters, Mr. Boyd," he began, with grave simplicity. "Nearly all the years of my life I have been a reader and student, and in a modest way have contributed to philo-

sophical and scientific literature. I am a widower, sir, and have but one child, the son now mysteriously missing. He and my sister and myself make up the family. For help we have four servants—a butler, a chef, and two maids."

"You are both brief and explicit, Mr. Cavendish, which is very commendable under the circumstances," commented Felix Boyd.

"I shall try to be both," said the other. "Now a few facts about my son. He is nineteen years old——"

"I have read the newspaper description of him. Mr. Cavendish. You may omit what that imparts."

"Very good. I now see that you anticipated the business upon which I require you."

"Yes, sir, I did."

"I will continue. My son now is a senior at Harvard. Though I wish I could speak more favorably of him, I feel that I must be perfectly frank with you, and impart any facts that may have even a remote bearing upon his strange disappearance."

"Am I to infer that your son has been dissipating?" inquired Boyd.

"Not in the ordinary use of that word," replied Cavendish, with a quick shake of his gray head. "You may infer, however, that a man of my tastes and tendencies has but little sympathy with college athletics to the extent that they are practised in these days. While I admit that a strong and healthful body is essential to a corresponding mind, I am vigorously opposed to physical culture solely with a view to intercollegiate supremacy in sports and games, and at the expense of that mental application and studious interest from which only the best intellectual results can be obtained."

"Ah, I begin to see, sir."

"In a nutshell, Mr. Boyd, my son is of a directly opposite mind. He is an enthusiastic athlete. He has fought, rather than read, his way through Harvard, so to speak. He thinks far more of developing a new in-shoot, or of acquiring an efficacious 'spitball,' as he terms it, than of the education for which I sent him to college. Naturally, sir, this has brought about a little estrangement, for, despite that I love my son devotedly, and would expend a fortune upon him for the attainment of any laudable ambition, I am not a man to calmly put up with persistent folly and extravagances."

"Am I to judge from the last, Mr. Cavendish, that your son is a spendthrift?"

The tremulous tenderness with which he had referred to his love of his son was gone from the old gentleman's voice when he replied to Felix Boyd's question.

"Spendthrift—yes!" said he, with some asperity. "For upward of three years I was seriously annoyed with his flood of bills for clothing, sporting-goods, carriage hire, and—well, well, Heaven only knows what! But I put an end to all that eight months ago, Mr. Boyd; an end to it, sir. Yet not because I am selfish or penurious—far from it—but because I think it most unwise for a young man to form absurdly extravagant habits, merely because his father is rich and willing to pay his bills. Yes, sir, I put an end to that eight months ago."

"What steps did you take, Mr. Cavendish, to check his extravagances?" Boyd attentively inquired.

"I placed him on a monthly allowance, Mr. Boyd; liberal enough to cover all his legitimate needs and a few luxuries as well, and informed him that he must not call upon me for anything more. To be perfectly frank, sir, I was quite severe with him, believing it to be for his own good; and I warned him that if he incurred debts above his allowance, I should be angry enough to disown him. In reality, Mr. Boyd, I should do nothing of the kind"—and Cavendish smiled a bit sadly—"but I aimed to deeply impress him with my wishes in the matter."

"Quite properly, Mr. Cavendish, I am sure," said Boyd. "I think I fully appreciate the significance of all you have stated. Let us now get a little nearer to the case itself. When and under what circumstances did Marmion Cavendish disappear? State any facts

which you think may have direct bearing upon his absence."

"I can do so quite briefly, Mr. Boyd. One evening, about a month ago, I think, he remarked at dinner that he then was studying like a trooper, and that he was determined to make up for lost time, and go out of college with a Garrison finish—if you know what that means, sir; I'm sure I don't!"

"I know. Continue, if you please."

"I was glad to hear him say so, and very pleased to observe in his subsequent conduct that he appeared to mean all that he had said. He remained at home evenings, instead of roistering about town or visiting his clubs or the theaters, as he long had been in the habit of doing."

"You left him free to come and go, I infer?"

"Yes, for years," was the reply. "I believe in advising young men, but not in forcibly restraining them. If I have tried to correct my son's foolish ways, it has not been by denying him personal liberty."

"Quite right, too."

"To continue," said Mr. Cavendish. "Marmion spent night after night studying in his room up-stairs, and I frequently heard the clock strike one when he was about retiring. I at length observed, also, that this close application was gradually telling on him; for he lost flesh and became quite hollow-eyed, and on several occasions he remarked that his head was 'off,' and that he suffered from bad dreams. I cautioned him not to go too fast——"

"One moment, if you please," Boyd quietly interrupted. "Did he explain what he meant by saying that his head was off?"

"Why, no, not directly," said Mr. Cavendish, with brows lifting. "I inferred, however, that he meant that it felt badly at times, as if overtaxed with study."

"Yes, quite likely," drawled Boyd, suppressing a smile. "He disappeared on the night of May 11, I think—one week ago."

"Yes, that was the night."

"Was he at home all of that evening?"

"He was, Mr. Boyd, studying in his chamber."

"When was he last seen or definitely heard?"

"Not after nine o'clock," replied Mr. Cavendish. "At that hour I went to my chamber, stopping for a moment at Marmion's door. He was deeply engrossed in his books, and answered my few remarks in monosyllables only, which I thought a little strange. I advised him to retire early, to which he made no reply at all."

"One moment, please," interposed Boyd. "Did you hear him going to bed that night?"

"I did not, which was very unusual, Mr. Boyd, for I am a light sleeper. Naturally feeling a little anxious about his health, moreover, I had fallen into a way of listening to hear him retire. Yet on that night I fell asleep almost as soon as I touched my pillow, and I did not awaken until called by the butler next morning. Much the same is true of others in the house, who frequently heard him moving about when preparing for bed."

"None of them heard him that night, then?"

"No, none. All appear to have slept soundly that night."

"Was your son here at dinner as usual?"

"Yes."

"Did he then appear quite natural?"

"I think he seemed a little uneasy."

"Do you mean restless, Mr. Cavendish, or mentally uneasy? Did he leave the dinner-table during his meal?"

"I think he did so once, yet I am not sure about that," replied Mr. Cavendish, with obvious wonderment over Boyd's interest in so insignificant a matter.

"Oh, well, it is not material," said Boyd, with an odd little gleam from under his drooping lids. "You, then, Mr. Cavendish, were the last to see him that evening?"

"I was, Mr. Boyd. Next morning he was missing from his room when Moulton, the butler, went there, as

usual, to awaken him. I at once was notified, and we immediately began an investigation. Marmion's bed had been occupied, but no signs of——"

"Pardon me, had the coverings been thrown off?"

"Only partly so."

"Did you feel for any warmth beneath them?"

"I thought of that and did so, Mr. Boyd, but I found the bed quite cold."

"Which indicates that he had not occupied it for some little time," said Boyd. "Go, on, please."

"Upon the floor were his shoes and hosiery, tossed down when he disrobed. The coat and vest he had worn that evening lay over a chair near-by. On the chiffonier were his cuffs, his collar, and cravat; but his undergarments and trousers were missing. These discoveries led us to believe that he had partly dressed himself and gone down-stairs. After vainly searching the entire house, however, we found that the rear basement door, which Moulton was positive he had locked and bolted before going to bed, was unfastened."

"You looked in the yard, of course?"

"Indeed, yes, with all haste!" exclaimed Cavendish. "In the damp soil near the walk were prints of bare feet, evidently those of my son. They led toward the rear gate, which also was found to be unfastened; and Detective Sanger afterward discovered two faint imprints of the same kind near the wall of the river bank, a rod or more from our gate."

"Were there other imprints discovered—those of boots or shoes?" inquired Boyd.

"No, none. My son appears to have left the house alone and only partly dressed."

"To be brief, Mr. Cavendish, this really is about all you know bearing upon his disappearance, is it not?"

"I regret to say, Mr. Boyd, that it is."

"Speaking of Detective Sanger," said Boyd, now drawing up a little in his chair, "why did you first call upon him for aid, Mr. Cavendish, instead of giving the case to the police?"

"Because," the latter gravely hastened to explain, "Sanger had served me once before, in a case involving a small amount of stolen property, and he then displayed considerable ability. He was recommended to me by my son at that time, who stated that he was an officer of exceeding shrewdness and discernment, and one to be relied upon in any kind of trouble. Naturally, then, I first sent for Detective Sanger, though I since have appealed to the municipal police."

"Sanger is not one of the regular force, then?"

"He is not, Mr. Boyd. He is a private detective."

"Is he still in your employ?"

"Yes, indeed, and is working tooth and nail to find some trace of my son. In a way, they have been friends for some time, sir, and Sanger feels deeply for all of us."

"I see, Mr. Cavendish—and I do not mention it with any personal desire or designs whatever—that you have offered a large reward for information leading to the discovery of young Mr. Cavendish."

"Yes, Mr. Boyd. I did that day before yesterday, when all other efforts still proved futile. Detective Sanger suggested my doing so, in case that Marmion, if mentally unbalanced when he left the house, may have been lured away by designing knaves, who now are holding him in hope of some such offer."

"I see," said Boyd approvingly. "Quite a bright idea on the part of Detective Sanger, I'm sure. You say he has not yet discovered any clue to——"

"Pardon, Mr. Boyd. What is it, Moulton?"

The butler had appeared at the library door as silently as a shadow.

"Mr. Sanger, sir," said he, with an obsequious bow. "Shall I take him any word, sir?"

"He has called, as usual, to report——" began Cavendish.

"Capital!" Boyd glibly interrupted,

with an apologetic bow to the elderly gentleman. "Let us meet Detective Sanger, by all means, if you have no objection."

"Show him in, Moulton."

"And when you introduce us, Mr. Cavendish, kindly inform Detective Sanger just who we are and why we are here," added Boyd. "I wish to avoid blinding him with any little equivocations. Merely professional courtesy, Mr. Cavendish—I think you understand."

Mr. Marmaduke Cavendish may have understood, yet he looked a little perplexed, for all that; but courtesy was part and parcel of his own nature, and he gravely arose and signified with a bow that he would comply.

The heavy tread of the approaching detective already was sounding in the adjoining hall.

II.

Instead of evincing any surprise or the slightest sign of professional jealousy upon learning the truth, Detective Sanger was heartily profuse with his expressions of pleasure over meeting Mr. Felix Boyd and the Central Office man, when introduced and informed of their business. He was a short, rugged, pot-bellied man, this Sanger, with full red cheeks and twinkling blue eyes, and a voice as deeply sonorous as the low bellow of a bull.

"I'm glad, Mr. Boyd; mighty glad to meet you," said he, as they shook hands. "I've heard of you—who has not?—and I'm really glad to meet you. Same to you, Mr. Coleman. I hope, on my word, that you two gentlemen may be able to help us out in this sad affair."

"Very good of you, Sanger, surely," said Boyd, with genial familiarity. "When you visit New York, don't fail to call on me. Mr. Cavendish already has stated the case most explicity, and I was about to ask him a few questions. As I wish to make my stay in Boston as brief as possible, we will, with your permission, proceed at once. Very likely you, too, will help us."

"In every way possible, Mr. Boyd, on my word," cried Sanger, taking a chair. "Young Cavendish is a personal friend, one who has put me in the way of some considerable business, and I would turn heaven and earth to find him alive and well."

"I don't doubt it for a moment," said Boyd approvingly. "It was a good idea of yours, that of offering a reward. It may lead to the detection of some rascals who, if Cavendish is mentally wrong, now are designedly holding him in confinement."

"That was exactly my hope, Mr. Boyd, in making the suggestion," declared Sanger, with eyes more brightly lighting his round, red face.

"It was capital. I presume you have not yet received any communication in response to the offer."

"No, not yet, sir; but I have hopes."

"I noticed in the published offer that it was suggested that young Cavendish possibly had been abducted," added Boyd. "What led to that belief?"

"I will tell you, Mr. Boyd," explained Sanger, before the gentler Mr. Cavendish could open his mouth. "You see, sir, Mr. Cavendish here is vigorously opposed to his son's taking part in college athletics. The young man is, as you may know, the mainstay of the Harvard baseball team."

"Yes, so I have heard."

"Now it struck me, Mr. Boyd, that some of those harum-scarum college chaps might have abducted young Cavendish, with the ultimate view of coercing his father into permitting the boy to continue his work with the team. The fact that he left his chamber half-dressed and went down to the back yard, where we found prints of his bare feet, indicates that he may have responded to some signal or call from his college friends in the night, and they possibly may have violently removed him."

Jimmie Coleman was about to quietly deride such a theory, when, much to his surprise, Felix Boyd quickly interposed with an approving nod.

"By Jove! there may be something in that, Mr. Sanger. It is well worth

considering, at all events, and may lead to some discoveries."

"So I think, sir."

"Has it not occurred to you that young Cavendish may have committed suicide?" Boyd then inquired. "Has the river, which I see runs within a rod or two of the rear yard, been dragged for his body?"

"No, not yet; for two reasons," Sanger again hastened to explain. "First, the tide at this point is so strong that his body, in event of suicide, would have been carried out into the harbor."

"I see. What is the other reason, Detective Sanger?"

"Because I am convinced that Marmion Cavendish has not committed suicide. If that had been his intention, Mr. Boyd, he naturally would have gone directly across the wagon-road to throw himself into the river."

"True," assented Boyd. "That is most likely."

"Yet I found prints of his bare feet at some little distance down the road, showing that he either had wandered in that direction, or had been forced to walk that way by others. Hence, Mr. Boyd, I have no faith in a suicide theory."

"Very reasonable, I'm sure," said Boyd thoughtfully. "You appear to cover every point admirably, Mr. Sanger. I think, while you are discussing the matter with Mr. Cavendish, that I will, with his permission, take just a glance at his son's sleeping-room. I wish to see his windows, and learn what opportunity he may have had to hear the signal you mentioned. Kindly let your butler conduct me to the chamber, Mr. Cavendish."

The request was readily complied with, and Moulton stiffly led the way to a rear chamber above the library. Boyd did not so much as glance at the windows, despite the remark he had made below, but turned a searching gaze about the attractively furnished room. In one corner was a small roll-top desk, which he found to be locked

"Has this desk been opened, Moulton, to ascertain whether the young man left any note explaining his absence?" he indifferently inquired.

The butler stiffly shook his head.

"No, sir," said he, with nose a bit elevated. "It strikes me, sir, if my opinion is asked, that Master Marmion would have left such a note in plain sight on his dressing-table—not locked in his desk."

A faint smile stole about the thin, firm lips of Mr. Felix Boyd.

"It was not asked, Moulton, yet it is a very shrewd opinion, on my word," he dryly rejoined, as he turned toward the dressing-table mentioned.

Upon it lay several china trays, containing numerous silver-backed toilet articles, brushes, and combs, the implements of a manicure-set, also a small tray of gold collar-buttons, pins, and shirt-studs. Only one object briefly claimed Boyd's attention—a small stick of slate-colored grease paint, such as actors use, not over an inch in length.

At this he merely glanced, however, then opened the door of a closet nearby. It was fairly filled with fine clothing, covering every requirement of a young man of fashion; and Boyd briefly examined this extensive array of garments, incidentally noting the name of the custom-tailor.

On the floor of the closet were six pairs of shoes, lying about in considerable disorder. In these Boyd displayed some little interest, and presently surprised Moulton by stooping to examine them, studying the soles with curious attention. He arose after a moment, however, and remarked:

"I guess there is nothing to be learned here, Moulton. Who occupies the room directly over this?"

"Henri, the French chef, sir."

"I presume he now is in the kitchen?"

"Yes, sir."

"Let's step down there for a moment. I wish to ask him a question."

In the kitchen was found a burly French cook, clad in an apron and a white linen cap, who also responded readily to the detective's few inquiries.

"I am told, Henri, that you sleep in the room directly over that occupied by

young Mr. Cavendish," said Boyd. "Do you sleep with your windows open?"

"Yes, sir, always," was the reply, with a broad smile and a Frenchman's invariable bow.

"Did you hear any cry, whistle, or signal of any kind from out-of-doors on the night Cavendish disappeared?"

"But no, monsieur; no. I sleep that night like one log."

"I see," murmured Boyd thoughtfully. "By the way, has the young man been eating heartily of late?"

"No, monsieur; not at all," said the cook. "Me, I try in vain to teeckle his appetite." And he shrugged his shoulders despairingly.

"What did he have for dinner on the evening he disappeared?"

The Frenchman stroked his double-chin for a moment and stared thoughtfully at the ceiling.

"Ah! It was that evening, I think, he bring home a portion of the steak," he presently replied. "But yes, it was, monsieur. Yes, yes; he come to the kitchen twice, monsieur, to tell me he want it cooked so."

"Ah, yes!" drawled Boyd. "That indicates that his appetite was poor. I think this is all, Moulton. We will return to the library."

They had been absent only about ten minutes, and Boyd dubiously shook his head when he entered, remarking, with a glance at Detective Sanger:

"I might as well have remained here."

"You found nothing, eh?"

"Nothing at all, Mr. Sanger. I now would like, however, to visit the rear yard and road with you, and have you show me where the prints of the young man's bare feet were found. I presume they are obliterated by this time, yet you can give me an idea of their location. I labor under considerable disadvantage in undertaking an investigation so late in the day."

"Yes, so you do," assented Sanger, promptly rising to comply with the request.

Both Coleman and Mr. Cavendish accompanied them, and Sanger carefully indicated the various places where the impressions had been found, while Boyd appeared to be mentally weighing their significance.

"The water is quite deep here, I judge," said he, a little later, while standing on the broad, granite wall above the dark surface of the flowing stream.

"Yes, six feet or more," replied Sanger, constantly hovering about Boyd's elbow. "If young Cavendish had fallen over he would have sunk and been quickly carried away. I don't credit any suicide theory, however. Not by a long chalk!"

Boyd leaned indifferently forward to peer down—not at the dark surface of the stream, but at the gray face of the granite wall in that locality. On the rough front of one of the lower stones he had observed a faint streak of green, a few inches in length; but he could discover no other block of granite marred in a like manner.

"No, Sanger, nor do I," he presently rejoined, still with obvious perplexity. "We may as well return to the house. I shall do all I can with the case, Mr. Cavendish, yet I am laboring under many disadvantages, as I previously remarked."

"Yes, I admit that you are, Mr. Boyd," the old gentleman sadly answered.

"Just at present, I regret to say, I am completely in the dark," added Boyd, as the four men entered the house.

It was close upon noon when he finally departed, in company with Jimmie Coleman and the Boston detective, the latter having volunteered to see them to the Touraine, at which hotel they had registered and left their luggage. The Central Office man was quite as mystified by the case as Boyd appeared to be, and not until after they had arrived at the hotel did Felix Boyd find an opportunity to carelessly remark, unobserved by Sanger:

"I am not so very sure, Jimmie, that this Boston detective's bump of curiosity, or a feeling of professional jealousy, may lead him to watch me, with a view to learning what steps I intend taking

in this case. If he does so, old man, I should rather like to know it."

"Leave him to me, then," growled Coleman, readily seeing the point. "We will invite him to lunch, Felix, and I then will frame up some excuse for leaving you. After that I will keep an eye on him as long as you wish. I, too, have thought that he hangs to us pretty closely, yet I can make nothing of the case."

"Do as you suggest, however," said Boyd, with more earnestness. "Shadow him until dark, at least, Jimmie. I have an idea that he may go to Cambridge this afternoon or evening—don't ask me why I have it! If he does so, and enters any house there or here in town, contrive to send word to me here, and then watch the house until I can join you. Do you understand?"

"Certainly. But what in thunder have you learned that leads you to——"

The impulsive question died on the lips of the Central Office man, however, for Sanger was at that moment hastening from the cigar-stand to rejoin them.

It was two o'clock when the lunch ended, and Coleman then declared that he was going out for a walk, in which Boyd protested that he did not wish to participate.

"I am going up to my room to quietly consider this affair," said he, when Sanger still lingered. "There must be some rational solution of the mystery, and my pipe may enable me to hit upon it. We shall be here this evening, Sanger. If you have no better employment, come round and smoke a cigar with us. By that time I may have evolved some theory to fit this remarkable case."

Detective Sanger cheerfully promised to do so, as the two sauntered out to the hotel office, and Boyd there bade him good-by and went to his room.

III.

Upon entering his room in the Touraine after parting from the Boston detective, Felix Boyd's aspect and actions underwent many a startling change. With brows knit, with eyes darkly glowing, with his every movement evincing the energy and impatience of one who felt that valuable time already had been wasted, he hurriedly opened his portmanteau, changed some of his outer garments, and then concealed his sharp, clean-cut features beneath a simple yet effective disguise.

Thus changed, at the end of a quarter-hour he left the hotel by the Tremont Street exit and hastened up Boylston Street to the store of Jacobson & Fiske, fashionable tailors, the silk card of which firm he had discovered on most of the stylish coats in the wardrobe of young Cavendish.

Received by the junior member of the firm, Boyd promptly stated his business.

"I am an officer, Mr. Fiske, engaged in trying to locate young Mr. Cavendish," said he, with considerable suavity. "Knowing that he has had clothing made here, I would like to obtain from you, if entirely agreeable, some of his measurements, which may aid me as a means of identification in case they are required."

"Yes, certainly," Fiske readily said. "If you will wait one moment, I will have my cutter note them on a card for you."

Felix Boyd bowed and awaited the merchant's return, thanking him when the desired favor was granted.

"Has any trace of him been found?" Fiske then inquired, with grave interest. "He really is a fine fellow, despite that he will persist in going the limit in many ways, and I should feel badly if any serious ill befell him."

"I cannot yet report anything very favorable."

"I am sorry to hear that."

"Possibly he is considerably in debt to you?" Boyd added, with an inquiring smile. "In that case I may say that his father will, at the proper time, meet all of his son's financial obligations."

"Well, well, that will not hurt our feelings any," laughed Fiske, with dry significance.

"Ah, then he is in debt to you?" queried Boyd, with brows lifting.

"To the tune of seven hundred dollars," said the tailor, smiling. "Yet we are not worrying much about it. I did threaten young Cavendish last week that I should sue him for the amount, but he called the following day and stated that he was sure of having the money within a month, so I consented to wait. I hope he may turn up all right, I'm sure."

"Did he say from what source he expected the necessary funds?"

"No, I think not. I do not recall that he did."

"I presume he may be in debt to others, also."

"Yes, very likely," Fiske dryly rejoined. "If not, it is quite unusual."

"A fellow of not much principle, I infer."

"In that you are entirely wrong," was the quick rejoinder. "If I thought you were right, I should not have given him credit. As a matter of fact, Marmion Cavendish is a royal good fellow in countless ways; but he is thoughtless, generous, inordinately fond of the good things of life; and money leaves his pockets as water leaves a sieve. This is partly owing to his bringing up. Until some eight months ago he never knew what it meant to anticipate the payment of a bill. His father always paid for him."

"Ah, I see."

"Cavendish is all right at heart, I'm sure, and means to be rigidly on the square. Some day he will inherit his father's large fortune, and then—well, there'll be something doing, I imagine, unless wisdom comes with years and greater responsibilities."

Boyd laughed lightly and departed. In the street he tore up the card he had received and coolly threw away the pieces.

Boarding an electric-car, he then went to Cambridge, where he spent three hours in wandering along the water-front, visiting one wharf and boat-landing after another, as well as every float at which small boats were advertised for hire.

His mission—of whatever it consisted—proved futile until nearly dark, when he discovered a boatman on a small wharf at the foot of a narrow street in lower Cambridge. Here were made fast two small skiffs, painted green, from one of which the boatman then was disembarking. Boyd sauntered down the wharf and accosted him.

"You don't keep boats to let, do you, my friend?" he inquired.

The man raised his grizzled head and looked up from the padlock with which he was securing the boat's chain to a ring-bolt in the wharf girder.

"Friend, eh?" he grimly echoed, with a distrustful stare. "No, I don't let 'em, but there do be some coveys about here who take 'em, off an' on, whether I let 'em or no."

"Well, that's hardly on the level," said Boyd.

"Not on the level at all, I'd say," growled the man. "But things ain't done on the level these 'ere days, the which is the wuss for all hands."

"That's very true, sir," laughed Boyd. "Some rascal has been taking liberties with your boat to-day, I infer."

"No, not to-day," rejoined the boatman, rising. "'Tain't happened fur a week back, now, when one of 'em was used by some cussed landlubber in the night. See yonder, where the blatherskite braised the new paint off her for'ard rail."

"Ah, I see. You don't know who the rascal was, I suppose?"

The boatman laughed with grim significance.

"I wish I did," said he. "I reckon he'd ask next time afore he took her. I'd not mind it so much, ye see, if he'd not smashed my padlock. That 'ere's the third I've had to whack up fur in a month. Heave ahead, matie, I want to lock the gate yonder."

Darkness had closed in when Felix Boyd retraced his steps up the narrow way, then turned a corner, and emerged into a broader street, lined on either side with inferior wooden dwellings. Here the electric-lamps relieved the darkness, and he had covered barely fifty yards, when, observing a man ob-

viously seeking concealment back of a tree opposite a plain wooden house with blue blinds, Boyd abruptly halted.

"Humph!" he softly ejaculated, with an odd little laugh. "Evidently my quarry has been run to cover."

The man he had discovered was Jimmie Coleman, writing with a pencil on a leaf of his note-book.

With the light of suppressed amusement in his keen gray eyes, Boyd sauntered nearer, when Coleman suddenly observed him and cried, with voice somewhat lowered:

"Come here, my man. I want you to do me a service."

"Want me?" echoed Boyd, with a distrustful stare.

"Yes, you," growled Coleman, with characteristic bluntness. "I'm a detective, and on an important case. I want you to hurry to the nearest telephone station and call up the Hotel Touraine, Boston. Then ask for the party whose name you'll find on this paper. When you get him, read him the message I've written here. Do you understand?"

Boyd accepted the written sheet, nodded several times, then quickly tore the paper in pieces.

"See here!" snarled Coleman, with a furious oath. "What the devil do you mean——"

"Easy, easy, Jimmie! Don't slip a cog at this late stage of the game! If you don't know me, I'll remove this——"

"Thunderation! Don't you always show up when least expected? The devil take you, Felix, the better I know you the less I understand you!"

The Central Office man recoiled, with a suppressed, indescribable laugh, while the other, with a grin of delight, whipped off his disguise and slipped it into his pocket. In Boyd's eyes, however, there was that subtle, fiery gleam seen only at times when his work was approaching its climax.

"Easy, Jimmie," he repeated, in hurried whispers. "I take it your man has sought cover."

"Yes, in that house."

"The one with blue blinds?"

"The same."

"It appears to be unoccupied below, yet there's a light in one of the rear chambers. Note the reflection on the front curtains, Jimmie. Come with me. We'll see what the back yard offers."

There was a tremor of suppressed excitement in Boyd's eager voice, and he gripped Coleman by the wrist while speaking, and drew him across the street. Together they stole into the yard and around the house, where Boyd gazed eagerly at the back chamber windows. At one the shade had not been quite drawn down, and Boyd hurriedly muttered:

"Your shoulders, Jimmie! I must have a look into that room!"

Coleman quickly crouched near the wall of the house, then rose, with Felix Boyd on his shoulders, until the latter gripped the outer casing of the chamber window and peered beneath the shade.

Two men were seated in the room. One was Sanger, the private detective, a frown of mingled disgust and determination on his huge red face. The rays from an oil-lamp fell upon the countenance of his companion—a young man—who was seated at a table; and in all his life Boyd never had seen such heart-anguish reflected in a human face.

"You'll now do what I command, Cavendish," the detective was sternly saying, in tones easily reaching Boyd's ears. "Do you think I'll stand to have you throw up this scheme at this stage? Not on your life! I've helped you through it to this point, and now I'm bound I'll have my share of the blunt."

"Helped me through it!" Cavendish cried. "You've done more. It was you who first suggested it, you who led me into it, you who prevailed upon me to adopt this knavish way by which I might get money with which to square my debts. I was a fool, a mad fool, even to have considered it. I could have done so only in the hope of keeping the truth from my father, and—oh, dad! dad! what a cur I've been! I tell you, Sanger, I'm going home tomorrow morning. I'm going to dad to confess the whole cursed business.

I'll not suffer him to grieve longer over——"

"You dry up!" snarled Sanger, with an oath. "You'll do nothing of the kind! If you do, mark me! I'll publish your folly all over the world. I'll make you the laughing-stock of every man in Boston."

"You're a devil!" Cavendish fiercely cried, leaping to his feet and passionately beating his heaving breast. "I tell you I'm going home."

"You'll listen to me," retorted Sanger, with the assurance of one who felt that he held the ribbons well in hand. "Don't be an ass! You shall go home within two days, I give you my word."

"That is worth nothing—now!" groaned Cavendish, dropping back in his chair.

"I'll show you the way," continued Sanger decisively. "I'll pretend tomorrow that I have heard from parties having you in custody. I'll fake a letter making me the go-between to deliver the reward in some crafty way, and to receive you into my hands in return. Once we thus get the money, Cavendish, I can take you home, relieve the old man of his anxiety, and you can easily protest that you have no recollection of leaving home, or of anything else, till you found yourself in the hands of the rascals who since have confined you."

"I'll not do it," groaned Cavendish. "I tell you, Sanger, I've made up my mind I'll not see this knavery to a finish. Let come what will, I'm going home in the morning—nay, this very night—and will confess the whole truth to——"

"You stop a bit," Sanger fiercely interrupted. "I've got a reputation at stake as well as you. Before you shall do what you now threaten, since you're fool enough to show the white feather, I'll turn you down in dead earnest and——"

"What's that?"

Cavendish, with a blaze of passion lighting his agonized eyes, had leaped to his feet as if to throttle the miscreant opposite.

But he found himself gazing into the black muzzle of a leveled revolver.

Felix Boyd sprang lightly to the ground and glanced at Coleman.

"Did you hear?" he whispered.

"Only the last," muttered Coleman.

"We are just in time! This way, old man, and we'll try the back door."

The back door was locked. At one of the side windows, however, Boyd succeeded in thrusting his knife-blade between the sashes, and quietly threw the catch. In another moment both men were stealing across a vacant kitchen, then through a narrow hall and up the stairs. The sound of voices and a thread of light under a closed door were sufficient guides.

Boyd drew his revolver in the darkness and slipped it into Coleman's hand.

"Cover that cur," he softly whispered. "Leave Cavendish to me."

Coleman barely breathed an affirmative reply as Felix Boyd threw open the chamber door and stepped into the lighted room.

An oath rang through the house as Sanger sprang to his feet, but it was fairly drowned by the thunder of Jimmie Coleman's threatening command:

"Sit down!"

The private detective dropped back in his chair as if already shot.

Young Cavendish, with a look of mingled agony and horror, stood staring at the intruders.

"God—God above!" he presently gasped. Then, gazing at Boyd, he asked: "Who are you, sir?"

"My name is Felix Boyd," was the reply. "I am a New York detective, Mr. Marmion Cavendish, and have come to take you home to your father."

For the bare fraction of a second Cavendish stood silent and staring. Then, with a groan that seemed to shake every fiber of his powerful figure, he dropped into a chair by the table, bowed his head upon his arms, and fell to sobbing.

"Oh, God, God!' he groaned aloud. "It's now too late—too late—too late!"

Boyd laid his hand on the young man's shoulder.

"No, not too late, Cavendish," he said gently. "Fortunately I have overheard enough to enable me to set you nearly right at home. If you have been a fool, my boy, and now know it, make amends by being a wise man in the future. That is left for all who have the virtue to repent and the will to atone. So pull yourself together, my lad; and you, Jimmie, slip a pair of bracelets on that scurvy scamp in yonder chair. By moving quickly, Jimmie, we again may hit the midnight express."

"There was a wheel within a wheel, Jimmie; that was about the size of it," said Felix Boyd, as he sat smoking with his companion in the parlor-car of the night express. "There was a crooked detective, Jimmie, pretending to be on the square, yet conspiring with a foolish youngster, in order to perpetrate a fraud of his own invention."

"But how the dickens did you light upon it so readily, Felix, and so quickly run the game to cover?" Coleman perplexedly inquired, knocking the ashes from his cigar.

"Quite easily, Jimmie," laughed Boyd. "To begin with, I felt sure that young Cavendish had not been abducted. It is not so easy to make off with a brawny athlete of one hundred and ninety pounds. I was convinced from the first that Cavendish had left home voluntarily, yet it was not so easy to guess his motive."

"I should say not."

"When informed of his extravagant habits, however, and that he had for some months been on a restricted allowance, I began to suspect the truth. I reasoned that he might be heavily in debt, as well as somewhat alarmed by his father's threat of disownment, and that he had adopted this scheme by which to get money. When informed of his sudden studious turn of mind, which was entirely unlike him, also of the fact that he had recommended Sanger to his father, and that Sanger was the one who had suggested offering the reward, I felt sure that I was not only on the right track, but also that Sanger was the young man's confederate."

"Humph!" grunted Coleman. "Simple enough when explained."

"Several things went far to confirm my growing suspicions," Boyd blandly continued. "The fact that all the house had slept soundly that night, Jimmie, indicated that some harmless drug had been carefully put into their food at dinner. This appeared obvious from the fact that Cavendish had brought home steak for himself, and twice had visited the kitchen while the dinner was being cooked."

"Ah, I see."

"In the young man's chamber," Boyd went on, "I discovered a small piece of grease paint, such as actors use. What more was needed in explanation of the hollow, darkly ringed eyes of which his father had told me?"

"Humph! Failing health, eh? Well, well, the young rascal went about it quite cleverly, to encourage an idea that he was mentally wrong when he departed."

"He made one fatal slip, however," laughed Boyd. "I was wise to his game the moment I discovered it."

"What was that, Felix?"

"His shoes," laughed Boyd. "He shrewdly left those he had taken off that evening. In selecting another pair from the darkness of his closet, however, he inadvertently carried away two right shoes, leaving two lefts behind. I readily discovered the mistake, which plainly indicated that he was playing a deep game, and that, while leaving a part of his clothing, he had selected such substitutes as he would require, knowing very well that they would not be missed."

"The young reprobate!"

"Later, Jimmie, I discovered on the river bank wall a streak of green paint, evidently from a boat's rail. That showed me the way plainly. I reasoned that Cavendish would not have ventured into the front street that night, lest he should be seen and recognized, and that Sanger had met him with a boat at the back of the house. That they had crossed the river to Cam-

bridge was obvious, there being no retreat easily available on the Boston side, so I gave Cambridge my attention and set you upon Sanger's track, feeling sure that he would, after leaving us, soon go to report matters to Cavendish."

"I see."

"Later I easily confirmed my suspicion that the young man was in debt, by making a call upon his tailors. Next I began a still-hunt for a green boat on the Cambridge side, and I finally hit upon it and the truth as well. Sanger had used the boat and brought the youngster over to the house in which we discovered them, and which temporarily had been rented for the purpose of concealing Cavendish. Naturally, Sanger had chosen one near the landing they must make that night, and so it happened that our lines of work converged at just that point. See, Jimmie?"

"See, yes!" growled Coleman. "Of course I see, now that you throw it all into the lime-light. Only your infernal cat's eyes could have seen it in the dark, however."

Boyd laughed deeply and elevated his heels to the opposite seat.

"Don't flatter me, Jimmie," he murmured.

"But what the dickens did old Cavendish say, Felix, when you took his son home?"

"I did not wait to see," laughed Boyd softly. "They'll fix it up all right between them. The youngster is not half bad, and this lesson will make a man of him. As for Sanger, the cur, he'll get his, all right!"

"I hope so."

"And we, Jimmie," Boyd dryly added—"well, I rather think we shall receive a Cavendish check by to-morrow's mail! Not a bad day's work, eh, old chap?"

A VICTIM OF VIGILANTES

"SOME of you know, probably," said the man in the mackintosh, "that I spent a summer out West some years ago, in a mining camp. There was a gang of tough fellows——"

"Other tough fellows, you should say," suggested the man with the loud necktie.

"And one of these was known as Slim Sime. He was a mean, sneaking, snooping, prying cuss, with his nose always in other people's business; and when he was caught, one night, in the act of salting a claim, he was tried by a Vigilance Committee and unanimously sentenced to be hanged.

"Well, the Vigilantes took him to a tree on the outskirts of the camp, tied a rope around his neck, pinioned his hands behind him, threw the noose end of the rope over a limb, strung him up, and went away and left him hanging there.

"Next morning somebody came along and found him in the same place, all right, but he was standing on his tiptoes, with a bored look in his eyes, and he complained of being tired and hungry. The fellow who had found him felt sorry for him, and cut the rope and let him go.

"You see, the Vigilantes had hung him to one of the lower limbs of the tree, and his feet only cleared the ground by a little over a foot——"

"I see," interrupted the man with the white spot in his mustache. "The limb had bent under his weight and let him down."

"Not at all," said the man in the mackintosh. "His neck had stretched thirteen inches."

When they had smoked in silence several minutes, the man in the corduroy suit remarked that he had no objections to a chap embellishing a story a little, but he had no use for a blamed liar. And the other members of the group nodded solemnly.

A Chat With You

"PLAY ball!" You all know what those two words signify. Whether you have played the game yourself, or looked on as a spectator, you can surely remember a time when those two words had a tremendous lot of thrill and excitement for you. You remember the green diamond, the basemen and short-stop in the foreground, the fielders farther away, the catcher crouching low and squinting through his mask, the batter tapping the plate with his bat and looking nervously at the pitcher, who has the ball clenched in both hands, ready to swing back and send it across the plate. No matter where you go, no matter what your life is, you will never get a more thrilling moment, an instant of time in which you are more keenly alive.

BASEBALL has won its place as the national game of America. Football has had its chance and has been found wanting. No game in the world is half so good, from the point of the spectator, as baseball; no game calls so much upon the intelligence, quickness, and nerve of the player; no game is so genuinely American in the hustle, skill, and energy that it calls forth. Next to playing baseball or seeing it played, reading a description of it, written by a man who knows the game and who can make things alive and real for his readers, is the best way to catch the spirit and charm of American sport. We have been planning for some time to give our readers a series of novels dealing with sports and athletics. For almost as long, we have been looking for a man who could write a complete novel on baseball to open the series. "The Game and the Lady," written by Charles Kroth Moser, will appear in next month's issue of THE POPULAR. When you read it you will agree with us that the right man has written on the right subject.

"THE GAME AND THE LADY" is the story of a college man who adopts professional baseball as a means of livelihood. It shows the life of the professional athlete as it actually is, and, besides that, it tells a story which will exert a strong influence over any one who reads it. This is only the beginning of a series of novels dealing with the various phases of American athletics. In the July number we will publish a complete novel, the scene of which is laid at a famous race-course. In a later number we will publish the story of a polo-game. Each of these novelettes will be written by men who are conversant with their subject, and who have won reputations as writers.

SPEAKING of stories of the race-track, we will have in next month's issue a racing story entitled "Young Blood," which is sure to attract a great deal of attention. We think that it is

one of the finest racing stories we have ever printed. Its author is Mr. Allan Taylor, who is famous as an athlete and writer, but who has never heretofore contributed to THE POPULAR. From this on, Mr. Taylor will be one of the regular writers for the magazine. In next month's issue, also, will appear a remarkable story by W. B. M. Ferguson, entitled "The Third Degree."

AMID all the detective stories that have been published, very few have attempted to describe, with any degree of accuracy, the work of the detective bureaus in our large cities. There is no question that in New York, Chicago, and London there are police detectives of unusual ability, whose memoirs would make the most fascinating sort of reading—could they be written. The unfortunate thing about them is that they cannot be written. A successful detective, for obvious reasons, does not want his history and a description of his methods published to the world. In "The Third Degree," however, Mr. Ferguson has given us a chapter out of the annals of crime in a great city. It is a short story. It will not take you half-an-hour, at most, to read it, but its effect will last for a long time. You will feel, after having read it, that a portion of actual life has been shown to you, that a flash-light has been thrown for an instant on a part of society that usually does its work underground and in the dark.

FOR some time past we have been receiving letters from all over the country, asking for more stories descriptive of the career of Norroy, the diplomatic agent. Mr. George Bronson-Howard is now completing a second series of Norroy stories, even more fascinating in their interest than the series which we completed some months ago. The first of these, "The Editor and the Diplomat," will appear next month. It tells the story of an unscrupulous journalist who tried to hold up the administration, and it shows how Norroy defeated him at his own game.

THE cigarette-smoking, champagne-drinking Russian grand duke, although he may not be commendable in character, or successful in any practical way, is always interesting. A delightfully humorous story of a grand duke who held up a gaming-house at Monte Carlo with a Russian battle-ship is told by Frank Richardson in next month's POPULAR. Besides this, there are "The Hoodoo," a Western story, by B. M. Bower; "The Scale of a Snake," one of the adventures of Felix Boyd, by Scott Campbell, and "The Spoiling of a Philistine," by Charles Carey. Philip C. Stanton's circus story, "The Clown and the Catacombs," has for its scene the city of Rome, and is novel and exciting in every line. "Holtschneider's Sacrifice," by Charles Eader, is a short story that is unique in its way. In addition to these stories, next month's issue will have another instalment of "The Malefactor," by E. Phillips Oppenheim, as well as serials by Richard Marsh and Louis Tracy. Altogether, it is a number that we feel proud of, and that we are confident will surpass the expectations of our readers.

BUILD YOUR OWN BOAT

By the BROOKS System

You can build as **good a boat** yourself **as you can buy** and it will cost only about quarter what a boat factory would charge you. No tool experience or mechanical ability is required—you simply use the Brooks System.

Our free catalogue tells you how to build sixty styles of boats—**canoes—rowboats, sailboats, launches, yachts,** etc., all sizes, the patterns varying in price from $2.50 to $25.00—with ordinary household tools.

The **BROOKS SYSTEM** consists of exact size printed **paper patterns** of every piece that goes into the boat, a complete set of **halftone illustrations** showing an actual picture of each step of the work properly done, **detailed instructions** to build, covering the entire constructions of the boat, and an itemized **bill** of all **material required** and how to secure it.

10,686 novices—most of them with no tool experience whatever—many of them professional men—seeking recreation and exercise—built boats by the Brooks System last year. Over fifty per cent of these have built their second boats. The catalogue shows photos of many of the boats they have built.

Many have gone into it as a business—and have built ten—fifteen and twenty boats—from one pattern—at a big profit.

To those who do not wish to bother with preparing the material we furnish complete boats in the knock-down form, ready to put together (with all fittings, etc.) and the price is only a trifle over the cost of the raw material. The catalogue fully illustrates and describes all styles.

Satisfaction guaranteed or money refunded. You take no risk.

Be sure and send for the free illustrated catalogue of all our boats.

BOOKS WE PUBLISH

Useful Information for the Amateur Yachtsman and Boat Builder. Price 25c.
The Principle and Operation of Marine Gasoline Motors. Price 25c.

BROOKS BOAT MFG. CO.,

Originators of the Pattern System of Boat Building

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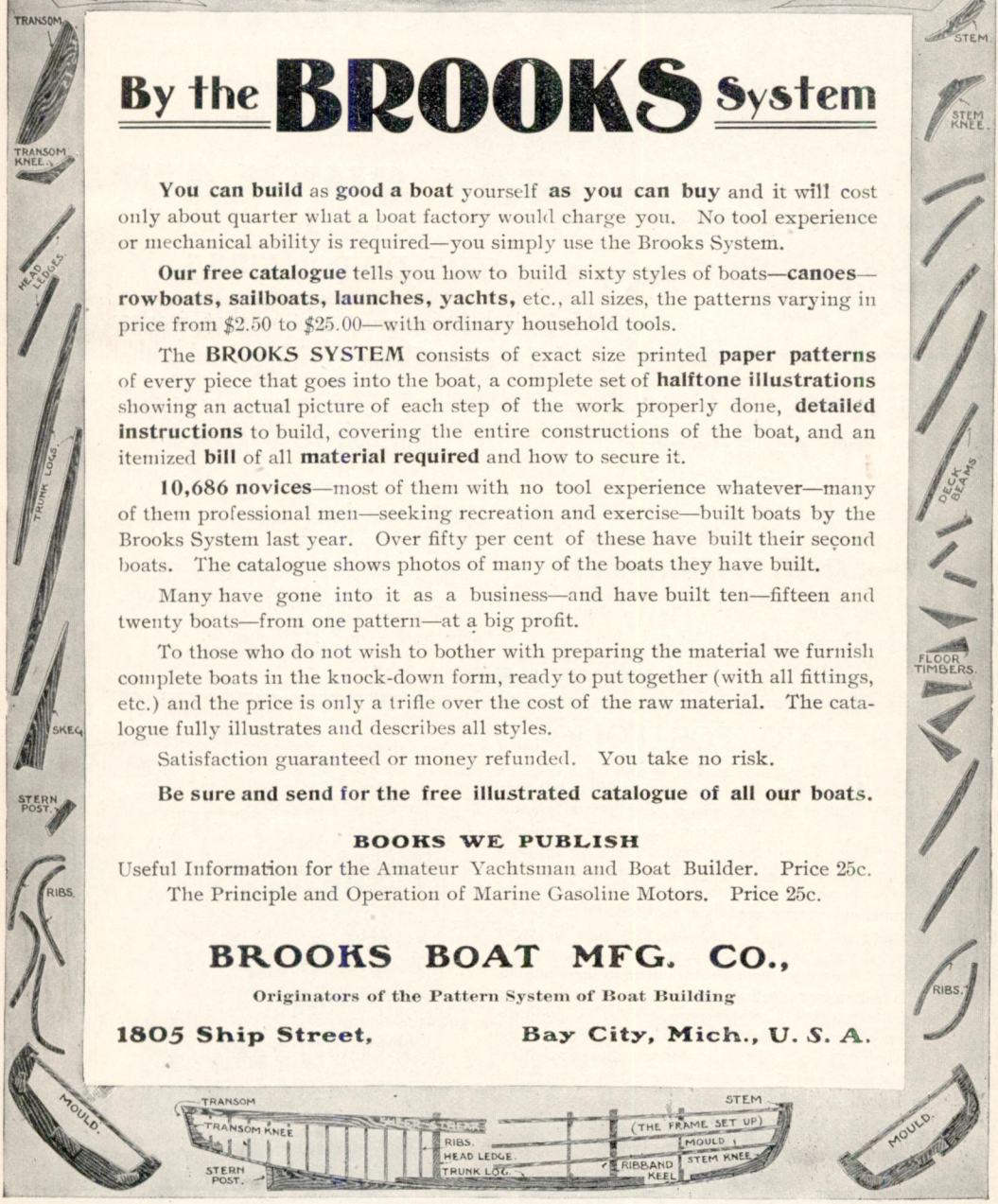


AINSLEE'S MAGAZINE FOR MAY

will contain the first instalment of a Great Novel by

MAY SINCLAIR

Author of

"THE DIVINE FIRE."

It is, indeed, so great a story that readers of *Ainslee's* will agree with the author that it surpasses "The Divine Fire" in strength, in interest, in artistic skill.

W. A. Fraser

will have "The Glove Stakes," the first of a series of six racing stories.

Mrs. C. N. Williamson

will contribute a short story entitled "Lady Pam's Bridge Debts."

Elizabeth Duer

is the author of the novelette "The Lord of the Isle."

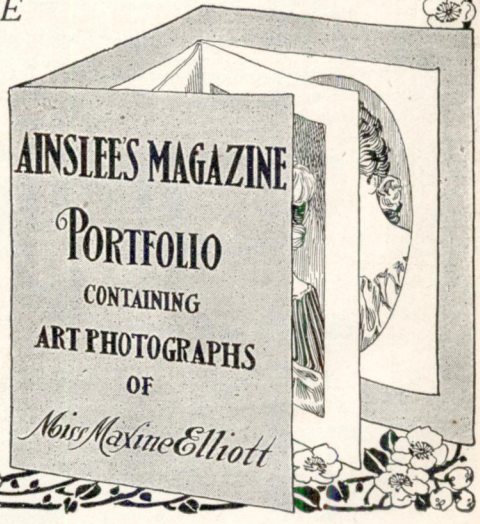
Other contributors will be Kate Jordan, George Hibbard, James Branch Cabell, Pomona Penrin, Mary Manners and Anne Rittenhouse.

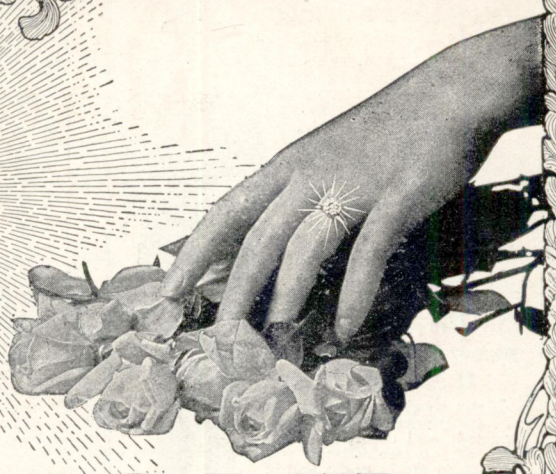
NOW ON SALE

FREE—ART PORTFOLIO—*FREE*

Ainslee's Magazine has at great expense prepared a **"Portfolio of Art Photographs of Miss Maxine Elliott,"** one of America's most beautiful and popular actresses. The Portfolio contains six large sized *real* carbon photographs colored by hand. They are the latest and best pictures of Miss Elliott, taken by one of the most skilled photographers in the land. The pictures are mounted on a heavy mat paper and folded into a binder—making an artistic Portfolio—or they may be easily removed and framed complete, no other mat being necessary. We cannot here do full justice to the Portfolio. A miniature reproduction, giving an idea of it, has been prepared and will be sent on request. A Postal will do. In sending you the miniature we will tell you how to get the big Portfolio of *real*, hand-colored photographs *free of charge*. There is no canvassing scheme attached to this offer—no scheme of any kind.

AINSLEE'S MAGAZINE 79 SEVENTH AVENUE, New York City





DIAMONDS ON CREDIT

For Wedding and Commencement Gifts

Spring time is here the season when all the world is joyous and beautiful, when Diamonds and Flowers hold their sway. School days will soon be over and Commencement Day is close at hand—then too, it will soon be June the month of weddings, receptions and anniversaries.

Will there be a June bride or graduate in your home? If not, surely there will be in the home of some loved one or friend and you will wish to remember the occasion by a suitable gift.

Let Us Help You to Select An Appropriate Gift. It is at such times that the **LOFTIS SYSTEM** is a welcome convenience. There are many who wish to give their loved ones suitable presents, but it is not always convenient for them to do so. It is our pleasure to offer our patrons their choice of our large and complete line of beautiful and artistic wedding and anniversary presents at terms to suit their convenience.

Write For Our Handsome New Catalogue The Finest ever issued, 66 pages, 1,000 illustrations of Beautiful Diamond Rings, Pins, Brooches, etc., ranging in prices from $25.00 to $500.00, High Grade Elgin and Waltham Watches, Ladies' and Gents' sizes, from $10.00 to $100.00, and all other kinds of Jewelry, Silverware, etc. Select any article you wish and it will be sent on approval. If entirely satisfactory, retain it, paying one-fifth cash, and the balance in eight equal monthly payments. Remember there is *no interest* to pay. **Write for Catalog Today.**

Our Prices Are From 10 to 15 Per Cent Lower than the ordinary spot cash retail jeweler. This is made possible by the fact that we are direct importers and sell a thousand Diamonds where the retail jeweler sells one.

Our Guarantee Certificate as to quality and value given with every Diamond is the broadest and strongest ever issued by a responsible concern. We also guarantee complete satisfaction and our exchange system is the most liberal ever devised, for it permits you to return any diamond bought and get the full amount paid in other goods or a larger Diamond.

There is no better investment than a Diamond, they have increased in value more than twenty per cent during the past twelve months and Diamond experts predict an even greater increase during the coming year. Write today for Handsome New Catalog.

LOFTIS BROS & CO. ESTD. 1858

DIAMOND CUTTERS WATCHMAKERS, JEWELERS

Dept. E 256, 92 State Street, CHICAGO, ILL., U. S. A.

Suits $12.50

Made to Your Order

$6 Trousers Free

Perfect Fit Guaranteed

$100 FORFEIT *will be paid to anyone who can prove that we do not cut, trim and make every suit and extra trousers strictly to order.*

FREE

We will send you free of charge handsome assortment of high-grade all-wool cloth samples of the very latest fabrics, together with new Spring Fashion Plates, and will make for you strictly to your order, a Suit for $12.50, $15, $18 or $20, and give you an extra pair of $6 all-wool Trousers, absolutely free.

Money Refunded If Not Satisfactory

If you want the satisfaction of having your new Suit cut, trimmed and tailored to your order, and to fit you perfectly; if you wish to save $10 to $15 in cash; and if you will accept a pair of $6 Trousers made to your measure, as a present, write today for our Samples, Fashion Plates, Tape Measure, Order Blanks, asking for special Free Trouser Samples, which will be sent you by return mail, postpaid.

Owen T. Moses & Co. 249 Moses Bldg. Chicago

References: Our 1,000,000 satisfied customers or the Milwaukee Avenue State Bank, Chicago. Capital Stock, $250,000.

$5000. A YEAR IS A GOOD INCOME

But thousands make more than $5,000 a year in the Real Estate Business. One of our Chicago graduates made $20,000 last November. Another in North Dakota made over $8,000 the first year after taking our course. Hundreds of others are successful and we will be pleased to send you their names. This proves you can make money in the **Real Estate Business.**

We want to teach you by mail the best Business on earth (**Real Estate, General Brokerage and Insurance**) and help you to make a fortune.

By our system you can make money in a few weeks without interfering with your present occupation.

All graduates appointed special representatives of leading real estate companies. We furnish them lists of readily salable properties, co-operate with them, and assist them to a quick success.

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Our **Free Book** will tell you how you can make a success in this wonderful business. A postal card will bring it.

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Young men desiring to fit themselves for a pleasant and profitable profession should fill out and send this advertisement to us to-day and receive our 200 page handbook (FREE) describing our **CIVIL ENGINEERING COURSE** and over 60 others including **Electrical, Mechanical and Steam Engineering, Surveying, Heating, Ventilation and Plumbing, Architecture, Architectural Drafting, Mechanical Drawing, Telephony, Telegraphy, Textiles,** etc.

American School of Correspondence,
Chicago, Ill.

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We absolutely guarantee to teach shorthand complete in only thirty days. You can learn in spare time in your own home, no matter where you live. No need to spend months as with old systems. Boyd's Syllabic System is easy to learn—easy to write—easy to read. Simple. Practical. Speedy. Sure. No ruled lines—no positions—no shading as in other systems. No long lists of word signs to confuse. Only nine characters to learn and you have the entire English language at your absolute command.

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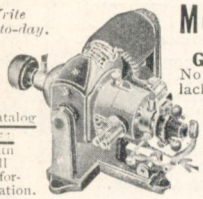
975 Chicago Opera House Block, Chicago, Ill.

Write to-day.



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starts and runs

Gas Engines without Batteries.

No other machine can do it successfully for lack of original patents owned by us. No twist motion in our drive. No belt or switch necessary. No batteries whatever, for make and break or jump-spark. Water and dust-proof. Fully guaranteed.

MOTSINGER DEVICE MFG. CO.,
141 Main Street, Pendleton, Ind., U.S.A.

SONG WRITING

The Quickest Road to

FAME AND FORTUNE

Do you know that **Your** song may be worth

Thousands of Dollars

Send us your poems to-day. We compose music and arrange compositions.

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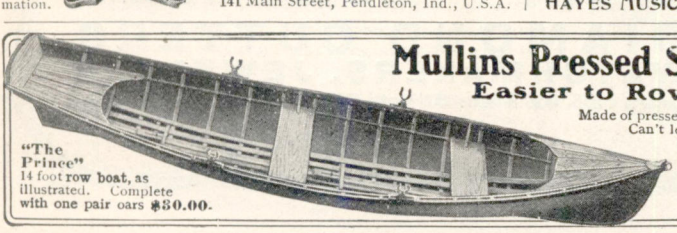


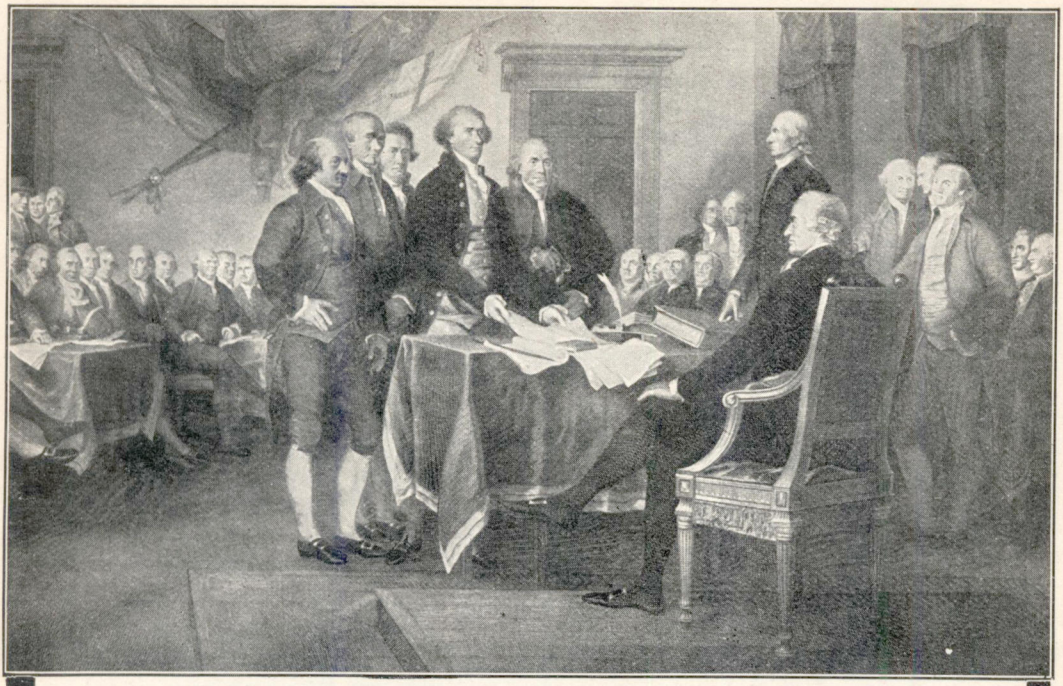
"The Prince" 14 foot row boat, as illustrated. Complete with one pair oars **$30.00.**

Mullins Pressed Steel Boats Can't Sink

Easier to Row—Absolutely Safe

Made of pressed steel, with air chambers in each end like a life boat. Can't leak—crack—dry out or sink—last a lifetime. Every boat guaranteed. The ideal boat for families—summer resorts—parks—boat liveries, etc. Strong—safe—speedy. Write to-day for our large catalog of **row boats, motor boats, hunting and fishing boats.**

The W. H. Mullins Co., 325 Franklin St., Salem, O.



The Wage Earners' Declaration of Independence

Everybody knows what the stroke of a pen did for this great nation.

Do you realize what the stroke of a pen or pencil will do for you?

The Coupon shown below is the Wage Earners' Declaration of Independence.

Signed as directed it opens the way to freedom from overwork and underpay. Because the welfare of those who sign it becomes of interest to the International Correspondence Schools; that great institution founded and maintained for the benefit of workers who would otherwise spend a life time struggling in poorly paid positions.

The signing of this coupon costs nothing, it simply gives the **I. C. S.** an opportunity to demonstrate how you may qualify for promotion in your present line of work or for a better salary in a more congenial occupation.

Is it possible that there is a small salaried man anywhere, so lacking in the desire for success, as to pass this offer made by an institution of world-wide standing, the records of which show the the names and addresses of thousands—men who have been made independent by this easy method.

Sign your Declaration of Independence and mail it to-day.

International Correspondence Schools
Box 855 SCRANTON, PA.

Please explain, without further obligation on my part, how I can qualify for a larger salary in the position before which I have marked X

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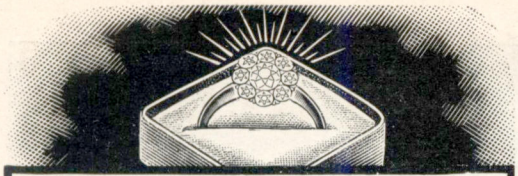
Illustrator	Civil Engineer
Civil Service	Build'g Contractor
Chemist	Architec'l Draftsman
Textile Mill Supt.	Architect
Electrician	Bridge Engineer
Elec. Engineer	Structural Engineer
	Mining Engineer

Name_____

Street and No._____

City_____ State_____



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If you want the greatest value obtainable in Diamonds today, be sure to examine this Ring. A TEST COSTS YOU NOTHING.

$8.50 **A MONTH** with 20% down pays for this cluster exactly as shown above. **Price $85.00**; or 8% discount for cash after inspection, **$78.20 net.** The same style cluster, somewhat smaller, for **$6.50** month

Simply order any diamond or other jewelry from our immense stock—sent prepaid—**no deposit, no money down**—from reliable, responsible people. Returnable at our expense; or, if acceptable, pay for it cash or easy payments, just as you choose—*not a cent to be paid until satisfied after examination.*

Marshall's Diamonds $2.50 A Month

$2.50 to $6.50 a MONTH and upwards pays for a genuine Marshall diamond — and you have the Marshall guarantee of quality.

We have Diamonds ranging in price from $8 to $800.

40% Off With our free Catalog of 108 pages, listing 1200 articles, the most complete and generally admitted by the trade to be the most *reliable* catalog of Diamonds and Jewelry, we will send you our discount sheet, quoting 40% off not only to cash purchasers, **but 40% off also to those who buy on easy payments. 20** years of absolute reliability back up every statement in the Marshall catalog. *We know* it will save you money.

Write today for Special Offer on Marshall Cluster Rings, free catalog of Diamonds, Watches, Cut Glass, etc., discount sheet and free sample copy of "Marshall's Monthly," giving full information on **How to buy a Diamond.** *Write today.*

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Read "The Malefactor." It is the greatest novel ever written by E. Phillips Oppenheim, and will make the biggest success of the year. "A New Monte Cristo!" is the dictum of a critic who read the advanced sheets. It is running serially in THE POPULAR MAGAZINE.

$7.85 DRESSES Any Man

With an All-Wool Cheviot Made-to-Measure Suit

Spring Raincoat Extra Pair Pants FREE

To introduce our famous made to measure custom tailoring, we make this unequaled offer **SUIT MADE TO MEASURE** well made, durably trimmed **$7.85 equal to any local tailors $15.00 suit,** AN IRONCLAD GUARANTEE sent with EVERY SUIT and a **SPRING RAINCOAT or PAIR OF EXTRA TROUSERS like Suit** a fancy pattern if desired **FREE** You take no chances dealing with us, *as you do business with a house that bears reputation.* PERFECT FIT GUARANTEED or you dont take the goods. REMEMBER AN ABSOLUTE GUARANTEE with every suit. **Send Us Your Name** and address and we will send you **FREE SAMPLES** of cloth, measurement blank and tape line. **SEND NO MONEY** but write to-day

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WE WILL CONVINCE you that we sell a better bicycle for less money than any other house. Buy direct from the factory. If you want to **Make Money** or **Earn a Bicycle** write for our **Special Offer. TIRES, Coaster-Brakes,** built-up-wheels and all sundries at half usual prices. **Do Not Wait,** but write us a postal today and learn everything. Write it now.

MEAD CYCLE CO. Dept. A 182, Chicago, Ill.

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Have already cut out the following coupon. If you have not yet done so, you should by all means do so at once. Do not put it off, you may forget it or it may be too late. Each one sending in this coupon secures a contract certificate for from $100.00 to $500.00 in one of the most profitable enterprises in the world. Such an offer was probably never made before and you cannot afford to miss it. Every reader of this paper can and should take advantage of it now.

CUT THIS OUT

$1,000.00 A YEAR AS LONG AS YOU LIVE.

Do you want an income of from $100.00 to $1,000.00 a year for life? If so, return this coupon promptly. You take absolutely no risk of any kind. If upon examination you are not thoroughly convinced that this is one of the **GREATEST OPPORTUNITIES** of your life to secure a steady, permanent income, as long as you live, you are under no obligation to make any payments whatever, so don't delay, but send in coupon at once.

Name.....

NOTE—Write name plainly so that no mistake will be made in filling out certificate.

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Please reserve.....Shares for me, send me certificate, booklet, reports and all information; if I am fully convinced that it is an enterprise of the soundest character and will prove **ENORMOUSLY** profitable, I will pay for same at the rate of $2.00 per share per month until fully paid. **No more than five shares reserved for any one person.**

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BEAUTIFUL ALBUM FREE! An elegant Souvenir Photograph Album containing a number of very interesting views will be sent free to all returning this coupon.

REPRESENTATIVES WANTED

MEN WHO CAN EARN PROM
$3,000 to $10,000 A YEAR.

We are financing one of the greatest and most profitable commercial enterprises of the day. The stock of this Company is a perfectly safe high grade guaranteed security now paying liberal dividends, while the future profits and possibilities are almost unlimited.

We desire first class representatives in every city and town. Excellent opportunities for the right men. Address at once for full particulars.

A. L. WISNER & CO., BANKERS.
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LEARN How To MOUNT Game Heads, Birds, Animals, Fishes, Etc.

Be a taxidermist. We can teach you by **Mail** to stuff specimens of birds, animals, fishes and reptiles; also to tan skins, make rugs, etc. (This is a most profitable and fascinating business). Easily and quickly learned in your own home, during your spare time. Adapted to **Men, Women** and **Boys. Standard Methods,** low rates, satisfaction **Guaranteed.** If you are a sportsman, naturalist or nature lover, you should be able to save your fine trophies. Adorn your home, office or den with beautiful mounted specimens. Double your income by mounting for your friends. Are you interested? If so, send for our beautiful catalog, and the Taxidermy Magazine—*both free.* Ask today.

THE NORTHWESTERN SCHOOL OF TAXIDERMY
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FLASH LIKE THE GENUINE

Day or night. Solid gold mounting. You can own a Diamond equal in brilliancy to any genuine Stone at one-thirtieth the cost.

BARODA DIAMONDS

stand acid test and expert examination. We guarantee them. See them first, then pay. **Catalogue Free.** Patent Ring Measure included for FIVE two-cent stamps.

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Be Your Own Boss!

MANY MAKE $2,000.00 A YEAR. You have the same chance. Start a Mail Order Business at Home. We tell you how. Money coming in daily. Enormous profits. Everything furnished. Write at once for our "Starter" and FREE particulars.

M. L. KRUEGER CO., 155 Washington Street, Chicago, Ill.

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Young men desiring to fit themselves for paying positions as Architectural Draftsmen should fill out and send this advertisement to us to-day and receive our 200 page handbook (FREE) describing our **ARCHITECTURAL DRAWING COURSE** and over 60 others, including **Electrical, Mechanical, Steam and Civil Engineering, Heating, Ventilation and Plumbing, Architecture, Mechanical Drafting, Telephony, Telegraphy, Textiles, etc.**

American School of Correspondence,
Chicago, Ill.

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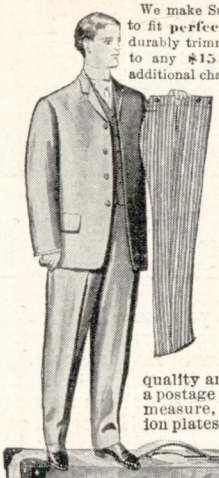
$7.98 FOR SUIT AND EXTRA TROUSERS



We make Suits exactly like illustration, **guaranteed** to fit **perfectly,** in latest style from fashionable cloths, durably trimmed and correctly tailored, for **$7.98** equal to any **$15.00** suit, and make you besides without additional charge an extra pair of Fancy Worsted Trousers.

YOU RUN NO RISK

Any Suit and Trousers made by us, if not exactly as ordered and as represented, you return at our expense. **We will** at once return to you **all money** paid us thereon. **Besides you keep** the Elegant Patent Suit Case in which garments were shipped.

We want every man that reads this advertisement to write for our latest samples of cloth from which we make suits from $7.98 to $15.00, including extra Trousers and Suit Case. You will be astonished at the variety, quality and wonderful value. It costs you but a postage stamp to get these samples, with tape measure, measurement blanks and latest fashion plates. **All are absolutely free.**

Please Write To-day to

THE GENTS' COMPLETE OUTFITTING COMPANY
Dept. E 119
242-244 Market Street, Chicago.
Ref.: Royal Trust Co. Bank, Chicago Capital and Surplus, $1,000,000.00.

Sempre Giovine

(Always Young)

is the name and result of this wonderful skin food. A perfect beautifier and emollient. A scientific compound of solid vegetable oils which harmonize with the cuticle and produce marvelous results. Softens the skin and gives that soft, peachy tint. Cures all wrinkles.

Guaranteed not to cause a growth of hair, because it is made of vegetable oils.

Used for over a quarter of a century by the most famous beauties.

Price, postpaid, 50c.

Marietta Stanley Company
83 Fourth Street
Grand Rapids, Mich.

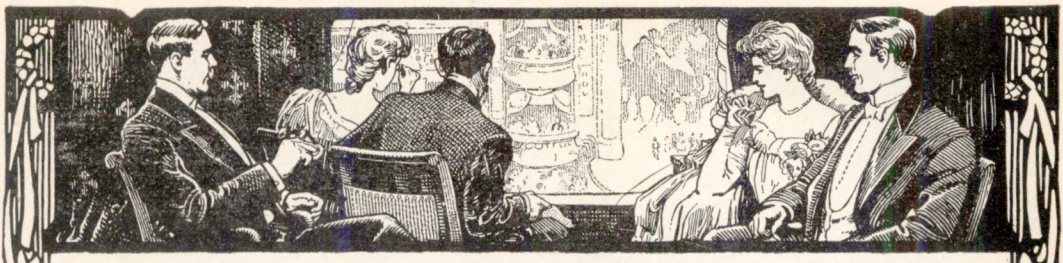
Cash Value 10c.

Mail this Coupon

and 40 cents in stamps or currency to **Marietta Stanley Co.,** 83 Fourth Street, Grand Rapids, Mich., and one full size box of **Sempre Giovine** will be sent you prepaid.

..... Name

.....Address



Style Makes All the Difference

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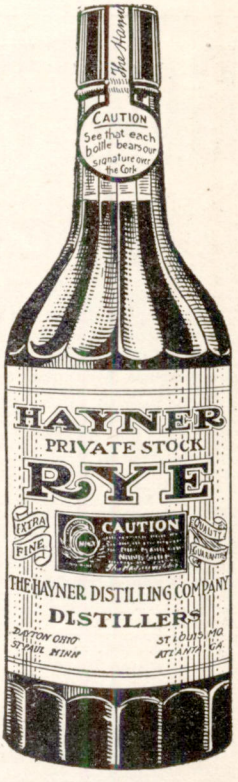

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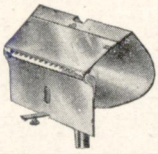

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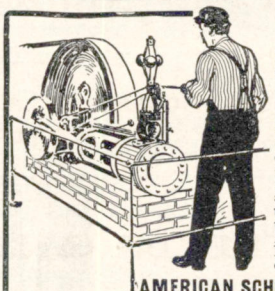

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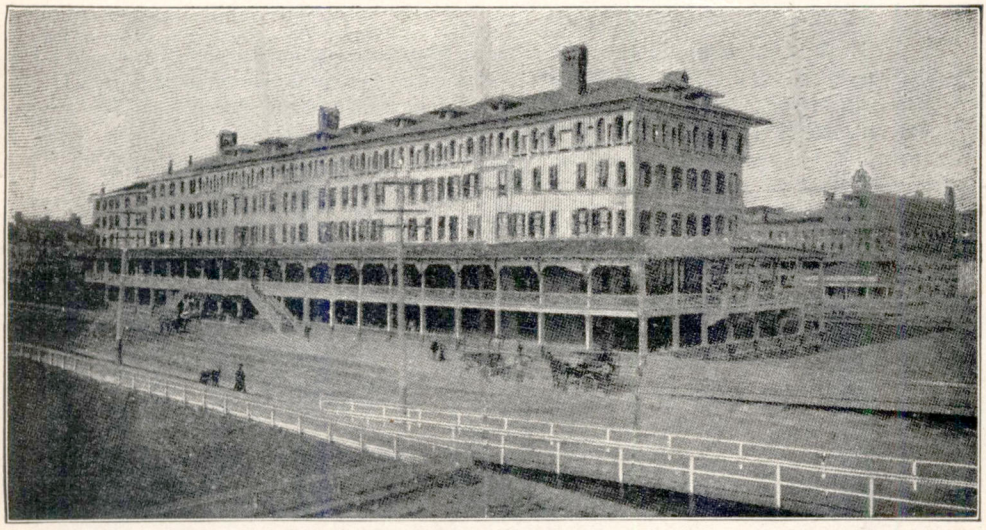

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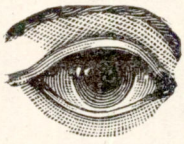

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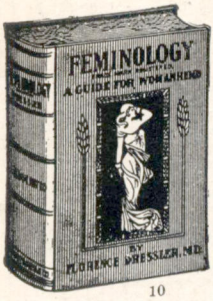

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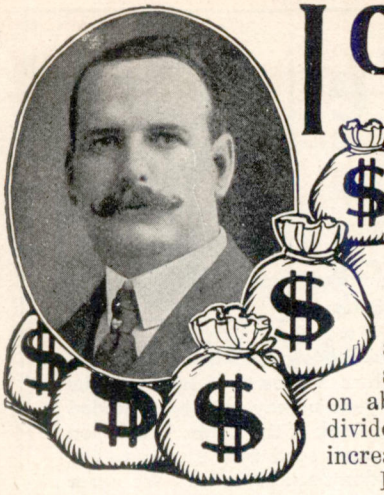

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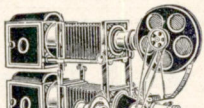

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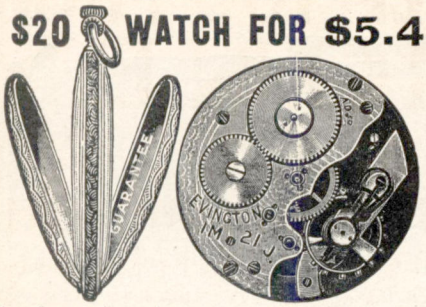

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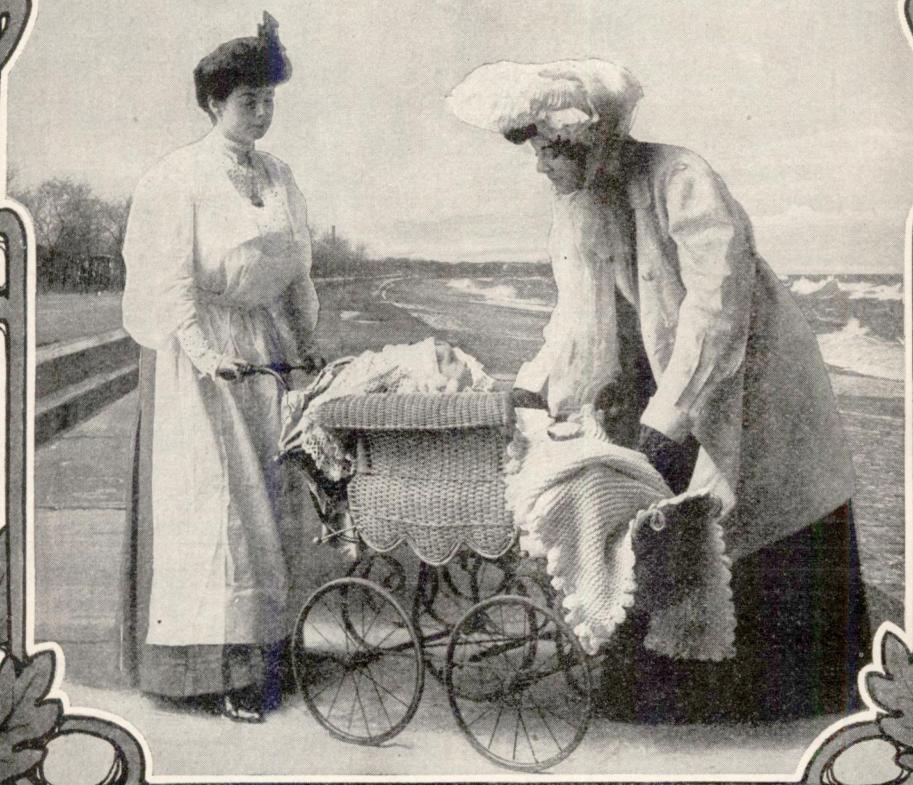

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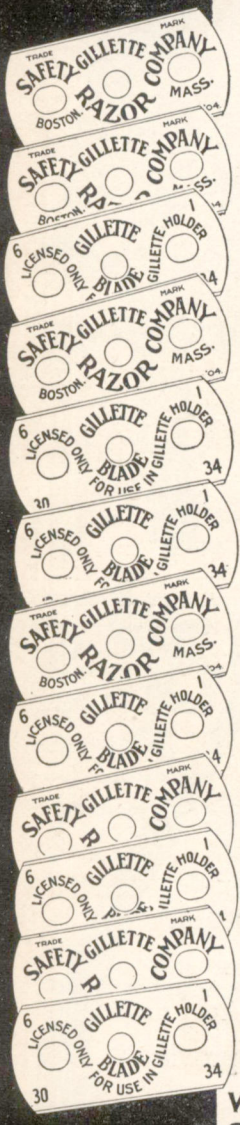

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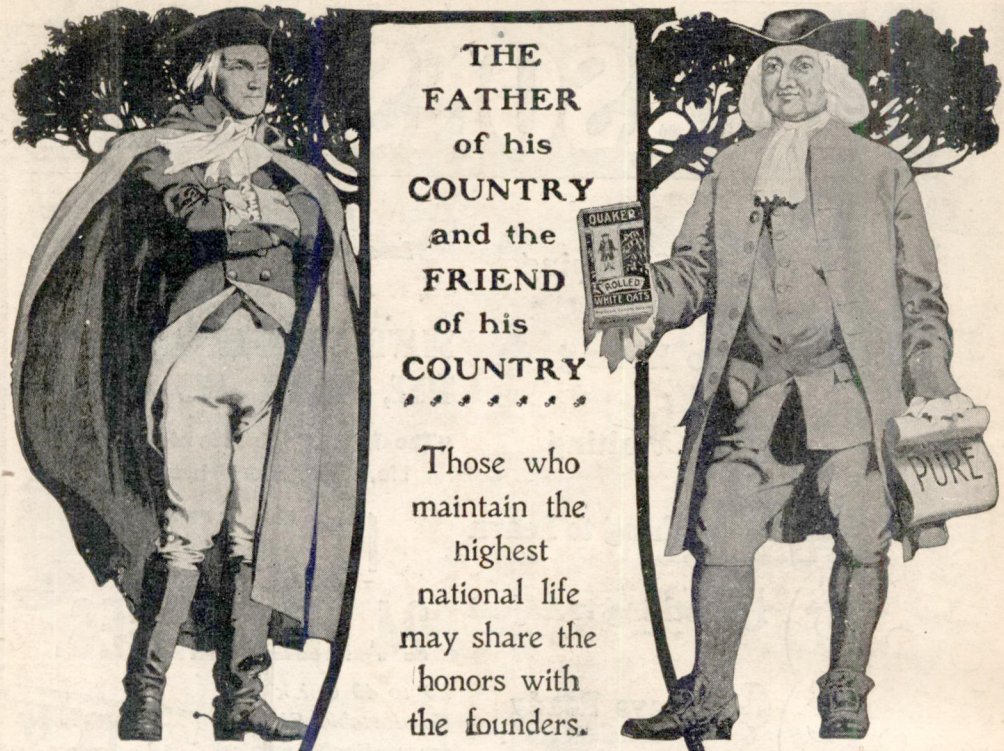

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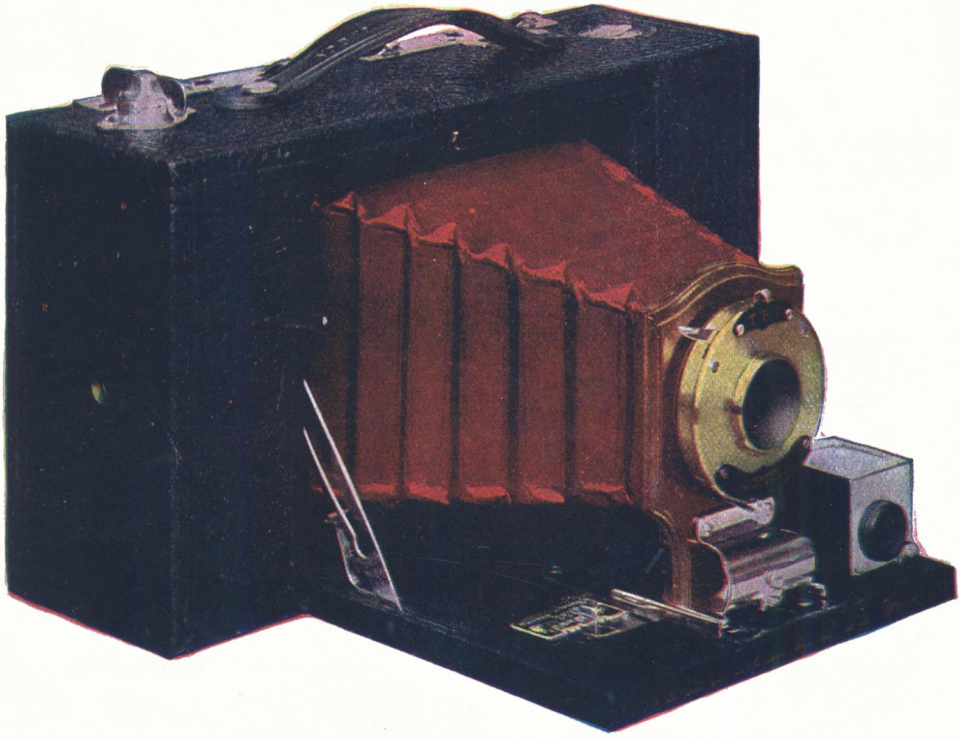

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