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AUGUST
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GREAT FEATURE IN NEXT ISSUE

MONTH-END EDITION

VOLUME XXIX NUMBER 3

TWICE-A-MONTH

The Popular Magazine

AUGUST 15, 1913

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Among other contributors in the same number are:

B. M. BOWER
CHARLES R. BARNES
HOWARD FIELDING
HENRY M. HYDE

THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. XXIX. AUGUST 15, 1913. No. 3.

The Golden Goddess

By Henry C. Rowland

Author of "Footprints," "Corrigan the Raw," Etc.

A story of war and dressmaking. Dr. Rowland, with his genius for originality, picks for hero of this romance of the Balkans a *tailor!* Some fellow has said that it takes nine tailors to make a man. It would take many times nine men to make such a man as the tailor in this story, a true artist in the fashioning of feminine apparel, a sincere worker in his profession, and equally sincere, equally zealous and equally a genius when he buckles on a sword in defense of his country.

CHAPTER I.

MORITS LANDOVSKI was a tailor of Sofia. His father had built up the business, and had so far prospered as to rank with the leading merchants of the capital. With his wife and five children, he lived comfortably in one of the better residences of the city, a charming house, half hidden in a garden which had been carefully designed after certain of those in and about Teheran. The property had formerly belonged to Sami Pasha, an Ottoman of high rank, a studious, austere man, who had gone into voluntary exile on finding himself ground between the millstones of the orthodox Osmanlis and the Young Turkish Party.

A splendid type of Ottoman of the old school was Sami Pasha, whom we shall meet again. He had incurred the displeasure of Sultan Abdul-Hamid by trying to prove to him such simple facts as that a dynamo which might be installed to light Constantinople was not run by dynamite; that the development of the coal outcrops along the beach in front of Kerkos might be achieved to the profit of the country, and with no danger of a twenty-mile subterranean tunnel to the Yildiz Kiosk; that the ancient squadron at Tchanak Kalessi could not be expected to maneuver by the grace of Allah alone, and that while a caracole might be sent out to patrol a country without rations, an army on the plains of Thrace would fight better if fed.

The latter-day Turks had been antagonized by Sami Pasha's politely expressed opinion that they were a pack of grafters and blackguards.

Wherefore, he had withdrawn to Sofia. But with the first darkening of the political horizon patriotism had conquered pride, and he had packed together his effects, and sold his residency to Landovski, the merchant tailor. "You

appear to be an honest man," said Sami Pasha to Landovski, "and one with a certain appreciation of the beautiful, and as such we have properties in common. Take good care of the garden. Some of the Persian tiles in the fountain are loose, and in danger of falling if not recemented. You had better cut down the pomegranate trees, as they have proved a failure. The winters are too severe, and the fruit does not come to maturity. Also, they attract the caterpillars, and shade the imported Spanish caper bushes which I have been trying to grow along the wall."

So Sami Pasha departed, and Landovski installed himself in the roomy, wooden house.

Landovski was a progressive man, and a patriot. He foresaw an important future for Bulgaria, and his ambition was to build up the best tailoring establishment in the Balkan Peninsula. To this end he had sent his eldest son, Morits, to London, where the young man had entered the well-known house of Whitefern, and speedily risen to the position of premier cutter and fitter. Morits was a graduate of Robert College, near Constantinople, and spoke English far better than most of his British associates. Morits was a good-looking young fellow, strongly and gracefully built, and a dash of Semitic blood had given him talent and imagination, with shapely hands and feet, regular features, and a clear olive skin through which there glowed a rich, warm color. His forehead was broad and intelligent, his eyes clear, with a direct and kindly gaze, and he performed his duties with a dignity and unwavering courtesy which had not a trace of servility, and won him the liking and respect of all with whom he came in contact, even to the "smart," and ofttimes haughty, clients of the house.

Morits had passed the educational test which entitled him to the privilege of serving but one year with the colors upon arriving at his twentieth year instead of the required two. Passing very highly another examination at the end of his service, he had been listed as second lieutenant on the Corps of Reserve Officers, and had then gone to London to perfect himself in the cutting and fitting of ladies' dresses. It had never occurred to him that there was anything ignoble about his profession, for which he had that respect which any able craftsman feels for his work. It was his ambition in time to return to Sofia, there to devote himself to the worthy task of making the Balkan ladies among the best-turned-out women of Europe.

Morits' leisure hours in London were busily occupied in studies of a military character and athletic exercises, principally fencing and shooting with the army revolver. With the broadsword and rapier he was rapidly arriving at a state of perfection where he rarely met his master. Also, he belonged to a club of which the members were entirely composed of Balkans—Bulgarians, Servians, Roumanians, Greeks, and Montenegrins and the like—who met frequently to discuss matters which were chiefly political, and where their individual differences and interests were either considered calmly or, as was usually the case, laid aside entirely for the more absorbing topic of that ancient common enemy, the Turk.

The dark war clouds which had been gathering on the horizon when Morits had gone to London had to some extent dissipated during his two years with Whitefern; but lately they had begun to mass themselves with even blacker menace, and the Balkan peoples were looking to the gears of their ship of state, and that not only on the peninsula itself, but wherever their children were scattered—in many parts of Europe, and even in far-away America. So Morits, like many of his fellows, studied and pondered, and husbanded his resources, and cut and fitted stylish costumes for petulant beauties who scarcely gave him more of their thought than to some busy worm of Kherson weaving its silk cocoon.

One day, as Morits was busy at his table, the voice of the manager called curtly:

"Step this w'y, please, Mr. Landovski."

Morits followed the pursy little man into one of the private fitting salons. As he entered a tall girl turned from the inspection of a model, and glanced at him with a cool indifference. Morits' first instinctive professional glance at her figure showed him that it was of the sort which tailors love to clothe—of strong, sweeping lines, the promise of maturity still draped in youth, supple and boyish to the casual eye, yet with subtle curves, and so exquisitely proportioned as to give a false impression of slenderness; the figure which lends itself so readily to the skill of the costumer to produce the desired effect, whether of slim girlishness or the fuller, stronger curves of a draped Diana.

Morits bowed slightly, and glanced at the charming subject for his art. She was undeniably lovely, yet her face, like her body, rather suggested the boy—a princely boy of a warrior race. Her type was rather Scandinavian, Morits thought—fair, with violet blue eyes of which the intensity burned through her most indifferent glances, full, thoughtful brows, a straight nose, rather low-bridged, but delicately chiseled, and a sweet, resolute mouth, full-lipped, but firm. Her hair looked dark in the shadow, but turned a pure gold where the light struck it.

"Miss Hasbrouck is a former client who has, I am happy to say, decided to return to us," said the manager.

"You'll have to do better than you did last time if you want to keep me," said the girl; and Morits noticed that her voice had the throaty quality often to be heard in that of linguists in command of a variety of tongues. "The last two jackets you made pinched me under the arms. Apparently your fitter does not understand muscle in a woman." She glanced at Morits. "Hope you do. There's nothing so wretched as a jacket that pinches under the arms."

"I can see that madame is athletic," said Morits. "It is necessary to consider the different dimensions of the arm and shoulder in different positions."

Her blue eyes flashed approvingly.

"Right!" said she. "You're the first cutter that I've seen who seems to have a sense of anatomy. Make 'em full. Give me room to swing dumb-bells if I like." She looked at the manager. "Those last two cloth suits of yours were like strait-jackets. Couldn't get into one now with a shoe horn."

"Ah, but you were growing, miss. We can't myke a jacket fit a growing young lydy for more than a year."

"Well, you needn't count on that excuse any longer. See that you give me room to walk, too. I've got long legs. Now, let me see; I want the two cloth tailor suits, and something rather more dressy in velvet, and a couple of shooting suits in tweed. Then I want a riding habit—two riding habits, I believe and——"

Morits returned to his work in a state of mind which was quite new to him. The girl's image remained constantly before his eyes. Up to this time a client had meant no more to him than a wax mannequin in a show window. It is doubtful if a paper hanger fitting his material to a plaster wall could have felt less personal emotion about the wall itself than had Morits for the often beautiful bodies which his art had arrayed. It had interested him only that his part of the work should be faultless in execution, of the required stylish elegance in effect, cunningly concealing physical defects, and enhancing anatomical perfections. But the human clay beneath his deft fingers had left him unimpressed except, perhaps, as it lent itself by its contours to the achievement of a satisfactory result.

The models of the establishment—for the most part, beautiful girls, with the figures of charming nymphs—had sometimes cast inviting glances at the dark, handsome young Bulgarian cutter, but Morits had been oblivious to them. With every moment of his professional and leisure hours occupied, light pleasures had never entered his scheme of life. In a year or two he would go back to Sofia to undertake the management of his father's business and to make of it the leading establishment of its sort east of Vienna, taking

no odds even from Budapest. Then no doubt he would choose some maiden of his own race, marry, and become an esteemed and worthy citizen of Sofia. Until then he would be content with his work and his political and economic studies in the effort to prepare himself for any national situation which might arise.

In the course of the next few days he learned from the gossip of the fitting salons, than which there is probably no gossip more searching, that Miss Alicia Hasbrouck was a young lady who despite her twenty-four years of age had been already much in the public eye. The only daughter of Sir Despard Hasbrouck, a writer and explorer who had been knighted for his various works of a geographical and economic character, Alicia had herself become a personality by reason of her beauty, talents, and daring exploits. It appeared that she was a cool and daring huntress of big game, a brilliant automobilist, a skilled aviateuse, and a horsewoman whom few men cared to follow when riding to hounds. The winter before she had driven her own motor boat to victory in the Monaco races, and during the past spring she had won the Dieppe circuit, driving her own racing voiturette. Also, she had some skill as an artist in aquarelles.

Nothing very definite appeared to be known of Sir Despard beyond the fact that he had amassed a fortune in some South African promoting scheme, and was supposed to be related to the Norfolk Hasbroucks. He and his daughter were frequently entertained by prominent members of the "smart set," and he was acknowledged to be a man of wit and polish. He had been for many years a widower, his wife, the daughter of a penniless baronet, having succumbed to Roman fever while her husband was engaged in making some archæological researches in Italy.

Morits learned also that Alicia was in the habit of riding early in the Row. He himself had a modest lodging off the Edgeware Road, and he formed the habit of making a detour on his way to work in the hope of catching a glimpse of her as she started for her matinal canter. Then one day he found a full-page picture of her in the *Tattler*, and this he had carefully framed and hung it in his little den. One may pause to wonder how many conspicuous beauties are thus enshrined and worshiped by some modest devotee far removed from their brilliant orbit.

And then one day he opened his paper to read of the great Waterkop Mines scandal, and the arrest on a charge of swindling of its promoter, Sir Despard Hasbrouck. Morits read the account carefully, then laid down the paper, and sat for a long time staring at the framed portrait hanging above his desk.

CHAPTER II.

The last week in June, Morits was sent across the Channel to confer with the premier of Whitefern's Paris establishment on the autumn and winter's models. It was the week of the Grand Prix, and on Sunday Morits went to the races. The day was superb, and the young man was thus able to combine the pleasure of seeing the horses run with the business of observing the different mannequins of the leading Paris modistes.

Dressed himself with exquisite care, and resembling rather a Russian prince than a London dressmaker, Morits stood on the promenade in front of the tribunal, his malacca hanging from his arm, and a cigarette between his fingers, watching the brilliant pageant. His alert eye was quick to discriminate between the three general classes of exquisitely dressed women as they passed —*femmes du monde*, mannequins (or gown models), and demi-mondaines. Most of the mannequins he was, furthermore, able to recognize from their pictures, continually appearing in the various publications devoted to the fashions. Otherwise it might have been difficult, as these wonderfully gowned and sylphlike creatures were often accompanied by men well known in the world of fashion.

Morits, like most Balkans, was a

lover of horseflesh, and after the first race had been run he strolled around to the paddock. For a few moments he stood admiring the entries for the second race as they were led in succession around the little circle, some nervous and fretful, some quiet and self-contained, their tension betrayed only in the brightness of their beautiful eyes or a fine ripple of the springy muscles under the satin skin, and some evincing a sullen ill humor, and moving with fitful, irregular steps, pointed ears laid back, eyes showing a rim of white, and tails flattened against their rumps as though contemplating a treacherous kick. The young man was meditating on the sharply drawn lines of individuality among the beautiful, high-mettled animals, when there came a rustle at his elbow, the faint fragrance of hyacinth, and a throaty voice said in his ear:

"How do you do, Mr. Landovski?"

Morits turned quickly, and looked into the violet eyes of Alicia Hasbrouck. He stepped back, raising his hat, and a warm flush glowing through his clear olive skin. He did not speak, thinking that she had merely given him a gracious greeting on finding him at her elbow.

The girl's eyes rested for an instant on a glistening sorrel which was passing in front of her. Then she turned to Morits, who was on the point of withdrawing, for, with his usual modesty, he had not thought of entering into conversation with her.

"Do you understand horses?" she asked.

"I am very fond of them," he answered. "In my country we have some very good ones."

"Where is that?" she asked.

"In Bulgaria, madame. I am a native of Sofia."

"Really? I have been at Sofia. Are you still with Whitefern, of London?"

"Yes, madame. I have been sent over to our Paris house to study the new models."

"I see. No doubt you recognize this one." She glanced at her gown with a faint smile.

But Morits had already recognized it, and that to his bewilderment, for he had been shown the identical gown at the Paris house, and been told by his colleague that it was one of their new exclusive models which was to be shown for the first time at the Grand Prix in anticipation of the season at Trouville, Aix-les-Bains, and other fashionable summer resorts. He looked questioningly at Alicia.

"I suppose you wonder how I happen to be wearing it?" she said. "It's simple enough. I am one of Whitefern's mannequins."

Morits stared at her a bit wildly.

"*You!*" he gasped. "You a mannequin? Impossible!"

His eyes rested on her face, aghast. His expression was that of the guardian of a shrine in whose presence the goddess has been profaned. But as he looked he saw that certain changes had been wrought. The girl's vivid coloring had paled, and there were the faintest of shadows under the violet eyes. Her cheeks were thinner, and there was the slightest droop at the corner of the sweet mouth. Recent suffering had left its traces on a face which he remembered as glowing with youth and vigor, and that trace of haughtiness which came of a self-confidence which had never felt the need to falter.

Yet the girl was lovelier than before, perhaps because trouble had effaced the boyish look of recklessness, and left in its place an unconscious expression of appeal. Morits drew his breath deeply, and a flame seemed to run through his veins.

"But your friends, madame," he muttered huskily, "your relatives——"

Alicia gave a slight shrug, and drew down the corners of her pretty lips.

"It's plain that you've never come a cropper," said she, "or you wouldn't speak of friends and relatives. Besides, I fancy I'm a rather difficult person to 'do something for,' as they say. Perhaps you may have read about my trouble—and disgrace——" She bit her full under lip.

Morits slightly raised his silk hat. It was an instinctive tribute of acknowl-

edgment to the compliment he felt she paid him in mentioning to him, her tailor, her own personal affairs. Alicia, observing the act, ascribed it carelessly to the servility of the tradesman. She was destined one day to know him better. He was, she felt, so far removed from her in station that it was easy to talk to him. Mannequin she might be through adversity, but aristocrat she was by birth and attainments, and as such might speak as pleased her.

"Yes, madame," Morits answered quietly. "I read of your misfortune with the deepest regret."

"That's more than most people did," she answered curtly. "I managed to pay the most of my own personal debts. When I settled with Whitefern for all those things you made, I said: 'Look here—now that we're square, can't you get me something to do? Some way to earn a living? Not in London, but with your Paris house. I understand dress, and I know a few people over there.' When he'd recovered a bit from his shock he gave me a letter—and here I am. I hadn't quite counted on being a mannequin, but when it came right down to business there wasn't anything else I could do." Her tone underwent a sudden change. "I say, I'm going to place a small bet. What do you think of that bay gelding that seems to want to strike at the stable lad? Durand is up, and he's a good jockey, and the gee is from Ephrussi's stables, and has a decent record. They'll list him at about forty francs because he's a bit rank."

"I think," said Morits, "that a better bet would be the chestnut coming toward us. This is to be a short race, and the bay may act badly and not get into his stride. I do not know what horse this is, but I like its style."

"What—this little rabbit going past?" She looked at him with a slight curve of her lip. "Why the beast has no shoulders."

"This is not a steeplechase, madame." Morits smiled deprecatingly. He knew her for a celebrated horsewoman, and disliked to place his opinion against hers. "Rabbits can run very fast for a short distance. I like his head."

"A horse doesn't run with its head," she objected.

"Pardon me, madame; it does."

She shot him a curious look. "Perhaps you're right," said she, a little doubtfully.

"Of course one cannot say," Morits remarked. "I do not know what this horse has done, but one can see from the expression of its face that it is honest and courageous. It makes no fuss here in the paddock, like some of the others, but if you will notice carefully the eyes are hot and eager. Some people are like that, and they do not often fail."

He felt the violet eyes playing over him again, and the rich color deepened on his cheek bones, which were high and of a Magyar prominence.

Alicia turned. "There goes the bell," said she. "I'm going to put a hundred francs on your choice." She consulted her card. "Ottoman——"

"What, madame?" interrupted Morits sharply. "Is that his name?"

"Yes; and his owner must be a Turk—Ohmed Hussein Bey."

"A military student at St. Cyr," said Morits. "Do not bet on this horse, madame."

"Why not?" She stared at him, thrusting out her square little chin. "Now that you speak of it, I like his face myself. And did you notice how he seemed to wake up on leaving the paddock? Looks to me like a good one. I'm going to back him a hundred francs to win——"

She turned on her heel, then glanced at Morits, who had not moved.

"You may stay with me if you like, Mr. Landovski. Some of the men here are inclined to be horrid."

Morits turned quickly. "Which ones?" he asked, in an odd, eager voice.

Alicia laughed. "Most of them," she answered; "but I don't ask you to defend me with a bodkin. And you needn't call me 'madame.' Henceforth I am 'mam'selle.'"

Again Morits' ready hand went to his hat, and his color deepened.

"But I beg of you not to back that horse," he implored.

Alicia stopped short to look at him. Their eyes met evenly.

"Why not?" she asked.

"Because his name is Ottoman," Morits answered doggedly, "and his owner is a Turk. The Osmanli star and crescent are fading, leaving only the field of blood."

"Now you talk more like a Balkan conspirator than a quite respectable cutter and fitter, Mr. Landovski." She drew a hundred-franc note from her purse. "Will you be so good as to place that to win on Ottoman? You'd better hurry; they are mounting."

Morits took the note from her hand, then asked:

"What was the number of the other horse, mademoiselle? The bay which was your first choice?"

"I don't remember," she answered shortly, and Morits saw that she had read his ruse. He colored to the eyes.

"May I ask to see your card?" he asked. "I want to place a small bet myself."

She handed it to him with a lift of her square chin. Morits glanced at it, then smiled.

"Here is a horse called Mon Amour," said he. "I shall place a bet on him."

"You think the name a lucky one?" she asked, looking at him curiously.

"I should not call it that," he answered, "but the colors are Bulgarian."

He hurried to the betting booth, and placed the two bets, then returned to Alicia. The tribunal was already filled, so they stood on the sloping turf opposite the judges' stand. As there were but six entries, the start was quickly made. Morits handed his field glasses to the girl.

"Ottoman is second," said she, as the first turn taken the race began to form itself. "I doubt he can catch that sorrel, though; the brute has a stride like a kangaroo. My first choice is fighting—as you said he would—and the jockey's fighting him back, like a fool. What's that spadger doing to Ottoman—whipping already, as I live! Ottoman's climbing up that hill like a hare. I believe he'll catch that sorrel thing on the turn. Hello! Here comes your Balkan hack. Look how he goes through! I believe the boy's pulling him; he's all doubled up. Look! Here comes Ottoman! *Vive le Turc*——"

"No, no, please!" Morits implored.

"He can run—my word! He's honest as a pint of home brew—and here comes your Balkan gee, ramming all over the field. The sorrel's out of it—can't hold the place. Look at Ottoman! Oh——"

The exclamation was lost in the clamor that rose from many thousands of throats. The race was plainly Ottoman's, for the sorrel was dropping back, his jockey whipping furiously. Mon Amour, who seemed to have fallen into his stride, swept past him, crowding close on the flanks of Ottoman, but no longer gaining. And then, within a hundred meters of the winning post, a strange thing happened, for Ottoman's jockey suddenly appeared to reel in his saddle, pitch forward, then lurch back, snatching at the reins as if for support. He swayed to the side, then fell, clutching at one rein. The next instant horse and jockey were down in a hopeless tangle on the turf, and Mon Amour swept past to victory, the sorrel a neck behind.

"Did you ever see the like?" she gasped. "What happened the boy?"

"He appears to have a fit," said Morits, taking the glass. "You see, mademoiselle, I was right."

"But why should he? The race was won. All he had to do was to ride."

Morits shrugged. "I have won," said he.

"On a name——"

"On the colors of Bulgaria. That is more than a name, mademoiselle."

"You have yet to prove it," she retorted, hot and angry at her loss.

Morits did not answer. He was staring through his glasses at the jockey, who was being carried from the field, writhing convulsively.

"Fancy putting up an epileptic!" said Alicia resentfully. "However, I hope the poor thing is not hurt even if he has cost me a hundred francs that I could ill afford to lose."

Morits glanced at her with a smile.

"You have not lost a hundred francs, mademoiselle."

"What do you mean? Surely you placed my bet?"

"Yes; but not on Ottoman. I placed it on Mon Amour."

"But I told you to place it on Ottoman," said she angrily.

"I could not back a Turkish horse—even for another person," Morits answered. His face was a little pale, and he did not meet her angry eyes. "You do not understand what anything Turkish means to me, mademoiselle. I played your hundred francs on Mon Amour to win, and, as he appeared to be an outsider, from the betting, it is probable that you have won perhaps a thousand francs. Our tickets were numbered only five and six, which speaks well for the odds. Here is yours ——" He took the crumpled receipt for a hundred francs on No. 7 from his pocket, and handed it her.

Alicia turned it slowly in her hand. She glanced at Morits, and her angry face softened slightly. At that moment the money meant a great deal to her; also, she was amazed at his having dared such a thing.

"And what if Ottoman had won?" she asked.

Morits glanced up at her, and his white teeth flashed in a smile that was boyishly mischievous.

"In that case, mademoiselle," he answered quietly, "you would never have known that I had not placed your bet on him."

CHAPTER III.

In the tiny salon of the pension where Alicia lived, Morits was leaning over the center table, carefully examining a series of designs done in water color. Opposite him the girl, in a simple muslin blouse, with elbow sleeves, handed him her sketches one by one, then watched his face eagerly as he studied them.

"Here is one that I rather fancied," said she, in her low-pitched voice, which if one had not seen the speaker would have passed for that of a youth; "it's a black chiffon velvet of the finest, most supple stuff, and coming up in one piece to just under the bust. It is slightly draped, you see, with the bust rising out of pale-pink mousseline de soie, heavily embroidered with small brilliants, and veiled with pink tulle. The flesh itself, with its jewels, would merge in a single tone with the diamonded pink tulle. What do you think of the light butterfly sleeves, weighted with a diamond tassel?"

Morits glanced across at her in surprise. Alicia's face wore a slight flush, her eyes were of the darkest shade of ultramarine, and her bright hair, twisted snugly around her small patrician head, glowed pure golden under the mellow light of the tall lamp.

"It is excellent!" said Morits. "You have great talent for designing costumes, Miss Hasbrouck. Have you shown any of these sketches to Monsieur Plasson?"

"No," she answered. "I was rather afraid he might think that I was trying to steal his thunder. I did tell him that I had made a few designs, and asked if he would care to see them; but he shrugged, and said that he had not the time, and that anyhow he and Madame Plasson were quite capable of getting out what new models were required. He advised me to confine myself to my duties of mannequin." She smiled slightly, drawing down one corner of her mouth.

Morits nodded. "I am not surprised," he answered. "There is a great deal of professional jealousy in the dressmaking business. Plasson would turn green with envy if he could see this ball gown. It is better than anything he has put out this season."

"That's putting it rather strongly, Mr. Landovski. He has really created some stunning things." She looked across at him with the faintest trace of suspicion in her eyes.

Morits leaned back in his chair, and drummed on the table with his strong, well-shaped fingers. Alicia had already observed his hands with approval. She did not think that they looked like the hands of a tailor.

"I cannot help thinking, Miss Hasbrouck," said Morits, "that you are throwing yourself away in your present position. Since you are obliged to work for your living, and have seen fit to choose——"

"There was no choice," she interrupted quickly. "There was nothing else for me to do—that I was willing to do. After all, it is not a very ennobling profession either for a man or woman, do you think?"

"For me it is an art," answered Morits quietly, "just as much as painting or sculpture or applied design. If one is to get on in one's profession the first necessity is to respect it."

She threw him a curious look. Heretofore a ladies' tailor had seemed to her far less admirable an individual than a footman or butler. She would have carelessly placed him in the same class with a coiffeur, a valet de chambre, or a "beauty doctor," if she had thought of him at all as a male individual, which she had not.

But Morits seemed actually human, and possessed of a personality, and although the girl could not quite master her secret contempt for a man who would voluntarily select an occupation which consisted of cutting and fitting women's clothes, she was beginning to admit to herself that it might perhaps be possible to do so without a complete loss of masculinity. She was thinking this over to herself when Morits looked up and caught her eye. It seemed for the moment as if he read her thought, for he smiled slightly and as though to himself. Alicia felt the color coming into her face.

"There are two sides to the question," said he, "if one has the imagination and takes the trouble to consider it. For the lady client the tailor is scarcely a human being; he is a sort of emasculated machine. But there is also the cutter's point of view. His clients are very apt to be mere puppets so far as he is concerned, mere lumps of animated clay which he expends his talent to beautify—just as a sculptor might drape his lay figure, or a blank canvas which a painter might cover with a masterpiece. There are of course beautiful subjects which it is a pleasure to adorn, just as a decorator might enhance the naked beauty of a salon, perfect in proportion and design as it comes to him from the hands of the architect. Since society decrees that we must be clothed, why grudge the clothier his due credit? Personally I see little difference in the man who clothes his fellows and the man who feeds them so far as his manhood is concerned."

"But tailors are caterers to our vanity," objected Alicia. "And you must admit that in most cases they are rather servile and effeminate."

"People are a good deal what society makes them," Morits answered, with a shrug; "and tailors must be respectful to hold their clients, just like other tradespeople. However, that is not what I came to say. I have called, Miss Hasbrouck, to offer you a position which I think might prove to the advantage of us both."

"What is that?" she asked, opening her eyes a little wider.

"It is purely a business proposition," said Morits. "You must know, Miss Hasbrouck, that I came to London for the purpose of perfecting myself in my profession of ladies' and gentlemen's tailor. The former branch of the trade is particularly what I wished to learn."

"Then I think that you have succeeded," she answered. "Those suits you made for me were the best I've ever had."

"I am very glad to have pleased you," Morits answered; and Alicia felt herself congeal slightly at the suave professional tone. "In another year," he continued, "I expect to have finished with Whitefern, when I am going back to Sofia to take charge of my father's tailoring establishment, which I hope to make the most renowned in eastern Europe. We shall have the money and the goods, and can count on a rich and fashionable clientele."

"'We've got the men, and we've got the guns, and we've got the money, too,'" quoted Alicia half mockingly.

Morits looked up so sharply that the

girl thought for the moment that she might have gone a bit too far.

"What is that you are saying, Miss Hasbrouck?" he asked, in a voice which was almost stern, and unlike any tone which she had ever heard him use.

"Oh, nothing," she answered, a little awkwardly. "The way you spoke put me in mind of a patriotic song. Excuse me; I did not mean to be rude."

His quick smile showed that he had understood, and that there was no offense. Alicia rather liked his smile, which had a trick of coming swiftly out of a face that was usually grave, and with a tinge of melancholy, like the faces of so many of his race. It showed his strong, white, even teeth, which were large and set with a slight and curious upward curve at the center. When he smiled she almost forgot that he was a ladies' tailor.

"Yes," said he, nodding, "we have those things also, and some day, Miss Hasbrouck, our having them shall make us a power to be reckoned with—both in peace and war."

"You expect war?" she asked.

"We hope to avoid it, and no doubt we shall—if we have the men and guns and money. I trust so, as, aside from the needless slaughter and suffering, it is very bad for trade—and I am a tailor. However, whether it comes or not, Bulgaria is surely destined to become an important country of Europe, and that brings me to what I wish to say. My own business out there is a good one, and can be made very profitable. What we need now is an able staff. Not long ago I received a letter from my father, asking me to look about for some ladylike person of good references and ability who had some idea of designing and showing modish garments. Both my father and younger brother are fairly expert cutters, but we need an intelligent woman to attract our richer and more fashionable feminine clients. I am thoroughly convinced of your ability to fill the position, and if you care to undertake it I shall take pleasure in offering you the place of première vendeuse."

Alicia leaned back, and stared at him with parted lips and wide-open eyes.

"Mr. Landovski!" she exclaimed. "But what do *I* know about the work?"

"You would very quickly learn. You have natural talent, a charming personality"—he bowed slightly and without a smile—"and there is no person better qualified to understand stylish costumes than the woman who has always worn them. At first your compensation would not be large, but it would probably be more than twice what you might expect to earn at first in any dressmaking establishment in western Europe, while your expenses would be insignificant. After my return to Sofia, which I expect will be in about a year, you may probably be sent twice a year to Paris for the latest models. Then you may expect a commission on your sales, and an increase of salary as the business grows more important. I should advise, if you see fit to accept this offer, that you live at my father's house. It is a cheerful and comfortable place, with grounds and gardens, and you would find my family very kind and worthy tradespeople. Of course, all of your initial expenses would be defrayed."

Alicia had managed to overcome her first surprise, and was listening with a flushed face, her chin in the hollow of her hand, and her round, bare elbow on the table.

"But I can't speak your language," she protested.

Morits smiled. "All the members of my family speak French, German, and some English," he answered. "Most of the customers you would have to deal with speak French, like all other educated Europeans. But you would soon pick up our Bulgarian tongue, which is not difficult for English people. Now, I shall ask you to consider this proposition, Miss Hasbrouck, and let me know your decision as soon as possible. I expect to return to London the day after to-morrow."

Alicia threw back her head, and gave her low, gurgling laugh. Morits observed the creamy perfection of her throat, and was conscious of a hot wave

which seemed to send the blood tingling through his body, to glow warmly through the clear skin of his lean cheeks. One hand gripped the edge of the table with a strength which may have come from the constant manipulation of his shears.

Suddenly Alicia lowered her head and looked at him.

"My word!" said she. "Mademoiselle Alicia Hasbrouck, late of Whitefern's, Paris, Première Vendeuse of Messieurs Landovski et Fils, Sofia, Bulgaria! I must have some cards engraved to send to all of my friends."

Morits mistook her meaning, and leaned suddenly back, his face a swarthy color.

"The Landovskis are worthy people, Miss Hasbrouck," he said quietly, "tailors though they may be."

Alicia gave him a startled look, then leaned forward quickly, and, quite forgetting that he was a fitter and cutter, which at that moment was not difficult, dropped her hand on the back of his. It felt to Morits like one of the damask roses which bloomed in his father's garden. His eyes darkened, the pupils dilating until they crowded back the deep zone of clear olive green which usually passed for black.

"But, Mr. Landovski," Alicia cried, "you don't understand! I am not sneering at you—quite the reverse. I am delighted. Of course I accept your generous offer. Did you think that I was trying to be sarcastic? Who am I to be sarcastic—the penniless daughter of a—a convict——" Her voice broke a little. "Do you know, you are the first person who has offered me real kindness since my—my trouble——" She stared at him with swimming eyes.

Morits gripped the edge of the table with his other hand. He was fighting with all the force of his hot, Slavic nature the wild impulse to bend his head and cover with passionate kisses the little hand which still rested, unheeding, on his. He tried to speak, but his voice was caught in his dry throat. Again Alicia mistook the real source of his emotion. She leaned still farther forward. Her flushed, charming face was thrust toward his, and there reached him the faint odor of hyacinths, which more than once had caused his hand to tremble in the fitting room.

"Don't feel hurt," she implored, almost tearfully. "I laughed because—because it seemed so odd. My life has been so different, so very different—though not always so easy as many people think. And within the last few days it has seemed to me as if I had reached the end of things. You know yourself what a mannequin is compelled to face; and my father has never been out of my mind, though we never were in sympathy. But I have thought at times that I ought to save him from prison—at any cost; and only yesterday the chance came, but the—cost was too great. Of course, I will go to Sofia, and I will serve you faithfully—and thank you—thank you——"

She flung herself back in her chair, and burst into tears. Morits rose slowly. His eyes were burning, and his face was very white. For an instant he stood looking down at her, and the tenderness that poured from his eyes seemed to envelop the sobbing girl and bring her comfort, for suddenly she dropped her hands and looked up, smiling through her tears.

"When do you want me to go?" she asked.

Morits found his voice with some difficulty.

"We will discuss that to-morrow, Miss Hasbrouck," said he, in his usual quiet tone. "I will call here at about this hour, when we can arrange for your journey. I am—very glad that you have decided to accept."

He flashed his quick smile at her, bowed, and left the room. As he went down the narrow, winding stairs he raised the back of his hand and crushed it to his lips, holding it there until he had reached the door.

CHAPTER IV.

Alicia descended from the Orient Express, and looked about her with curious eyes. Eight years before, when en route for Constantinople with her

father, she had spent three days in Sofia, and remembered the place as a curious mixture of ancient and modern; the meeting place, as it were, of Orient and Occident.

Morits had told her that she might expect to find a great change, and the West crowding the East into a small compass, as ever since the year eighteen-seventy-eight, when the Turks had been driven southward by the Russian troops and Bulgaria had been given its independence, the industrious little nation had been busily occupied with its work of modernization. National pride had decreed that Sofia should soon vie with Budapest in the importance of its trade and in civic institutions, and Alicia's first glance showed her that little time had been lost in the effort to achieve this ambition.

As she stood upon the platform, she saw coming toward her a pretty, dark-eyed girl of about fourteen, in whose pleasant, smiling face she recognized a strong resemblance to Morits. Beside her was a thickset young man who bore the same family resemblance, though lacking in his brother's grace of manner and expression. Michael Landovski was more of the pure type of Bulgarian—rather heavy, stolid, inclined to brusquerie of manner, but kind at heart, intelligent, and honest. Morits had inherited from his mother the Semitic strain which gave him gentleness and imagination.

Both were dressed simply but tastefully in European clothes, and close at their heels came a ruddy, black-eyed girl who wore the national dress of dark velvet prelisse cut low at the neck and showing the white under bodice, very short in the waist, and held beneath the arms by a wide band of braid with a pattern of flowers. The skirt was also of velvet, stopping a little above the ankles with a pattern about the hem. Around her plump neck were several necklaces of colored beads.

At sight of Alicia the young girl paused for an instant as if in doubt; then, seeing that she was alone, and looking about expectantly, she came forward with a brighter smile and a richer color on her really pretty face. The young man, who looked about twenty, raised his hat.

"You are Mees Hasbrouck?" asked the girl, in a strongly accented English.

"Yes," answered Alicia. "You are Miss Landovski, are you not?"

"Yes; I am Anusia, and zis is my Brother Michael. Our servant will take your valise, and if you will gif to Michael ze ticket he will take care of ze ozzer bagages. You haf had a pleasant voyage?"

Alicia answered pleasantly, and followed the young girl to a carriage drawn by two spicy little horses who saw fit to perform at the sound of the locomotive. They set off briskly, and were soon passing down one of the principal streets of the city, Anusia pointing out the various objects of interest.

Alicia saw that great changes had been effected since her previous visit. The shops and other buildings looked well built and prosperous, the gaps which she remembered between the more modern ones as filled with rubbish and acacia shoots being now occupied by modern edifices, while some of the ancient mosques appeared to have been converted into markets, Christian churches, and even public baths. Ancient St. Sophia, which she remembered as a vast, tumbling ruin, had been restored in places; and as they approached the royal zoölogical gardens she observed that the houses in this more residential section were of wooden construction, with flat roofs, but comfortable in appearance, and surrounded by attractive gardens.

Anusia had pointed out the Landovski establishment as they turned into the Boulevard Dondukoff, and Alicia was pleasantly surprised at its dimensions and up-to-date appearance. A good many people were abroad, and she observed a general air of brisk enterprise which was cheerful and encouraging. The carriage halted finally on the street which approaches the Tomb of Alexander, and turned into an attractive-looking residence inclosed by a high wall.

"Zis is where we live," said Anusia brightly. "Once before a Turkish gentleman live here. Now he have gone away. Most all ze Turks have gone away."

Alicia was welcomed by a handsome, elderly woman with a shrewd but kindly face. She spoke English brokenly, but French a little better. She showed Alicia to the room which she was to occupy—a spacious, cheerful apartment, simply furnished, but exquisitely clean, and with two long French windows which looked out upon a charming garden. As Alicia was washing the stains of travel from her face and hands Anusia came in with a tray on which were some cakes, fruit, and a half bottle of excellent wine from the vineyards about Kirk Kilissé which much resembled a good Bordeaux.

"Mother says you are to rest," said the girl, with the quick smile which reminded Alicia of her Brother Morits. "You must be tired."

Alicia thanked her, and complimented her upon her English, asking her where she had learned it.

"At the school of the American mission, in Samakov," Anusia answered. "That, you know, is here in Bulgaria. My Brother Morits went to Robert College. He speaks also very good French and Turkish, as well as most of the Balkan tongues."

"And what are they?" asked Alicia.

Anusia knitted her dark eyebrows. "Oh, there are several—Serbo-Croatian, Roumanian, Greek, Armenian, Albanian, Kutzo-Wallachian Yiddish, and the Chingéni of the gypsies. But here we speak mostly Bulgarian and Turkish. You may soon learn Bulgarian; it is not difficult, like English. Now you must rest." And she slipped out, closing the door softly behind her.

When she had gone, Alicia stretched herself out upon the bed to rest and think. The oddity of her position interested and amused rather than dismayed her, as it might have done a woman who had always had a home. But Alicia scarcely knew the meaning of the word "home." The early years of her life had been spent in a French convent; then, after the death of her mother, she had accompanied her father on his extensive travels, serving as his amanuensis in the compiling of his works of geographic description. She had been a dweller in ships and camps, tents, caravans, and native huts. In the great centers they had lived in pensions, furnished lodgings, and, when their means permitted, palace hotels. When in England they had visited or occupied modest lodgings in London.

Sir Despard had never had a settled income, and had spent his money as he made it. Only of recent years had they lived in affluence, this money earned in various promoting schemes to which he had been induced to lend his name and wide acquaintance. He was a brilliant, sanguine man, though often morose of temper, and at times given to a sodden sort of dissipation which had finally robbed his daughter of much of the affection she had felt for him. But he had been shrewd enough to hide his moral lapses from the world, showing it only his more attractive side, and saving the darker one for his daughter. Yet when prosperity came he had been lavish enough in his generosity to her, no doubt enjoying her notoriety as a sportswoman.

Since her eighteenth year Alicia had been encouraged to spend freely, which she had done without thought of the source of their prosperity. She was young, accomplished, and full of the joy of living, and if she had always been careful of herself it was because she had always held herself high, and possessed that innate purity of heart which is a better protection than wise counsels. Certainly none of her father's maxims had ever helped her.

But in the last few years father and daughter had drifted morally and socially apart. The man had coarsened, grown selfish in all ways but the spending of the money to which Alicia now believed they had never had any honest right. He had lent himself to the promulgation of financial enterprises which he had known to be shifty and dishonest. His attitude toward Alicia had become brutalized, and her love for him

had suffered its deathblow when he had tried to bring about her marriage to a multimillionaire whom she knew that in his heart he despised. So that when at last he grew careless, and had brought upon himself and others the penalty for dishonest dealing, the pity which she had felt for him was of the head rather than the heart.

And now he was in prison, with the good chance of remaining there for the next decade, and Alicia, the much flattered and much envied, was the première vendeuse of a Bulgarian dressmaker. The girl smiled bitterly to herself.

"No doubt we've both found our proper levels," she thought. "People usually do in the end. Poor dad—and poor Alicia! Why couldn't he have been content to write, and leave mines and railroads and land-development schemes to the folk that understand such things?"

There was at least one emotion which for all her varied experience had never touched the girl. She had never been in love, never felt the slightest stir of physical attraction to any living man. Brought up rather as a boy than a girl, she had formed the habit of regarding men from a masculine viewpoint. The thought of love had always rather disgusted her as a mawkish, silly sentiment. Love stories she abominated, and when reading an exciting novel usually skipped over the amorous passages with a curl of her red lip and a sigh of mingled boredom and contempt. She had been good pals with more than one attractive man, only to turn from him with contempt when he had leaned toward a softer relation. Alicia had no love of luxury in her nature, and this lacking quality made her appear cold to some pleasure-loving folk. Perhaps at times she may have been rather hard on the softer members of society and those who were not blessed with her own vigorous health and high vitality. It is difficult for one to be sympathetic who has never suffered, and Alicia had never had an ache nor a pain.

She despised softness and soft folk. Violent sports thrilled her so long as they were actual sports and entailed fair play. Cruelty, on the other hand, roused the fiercest passions which she had ever felt, and supporters of pigeon shoots and rat killings and badger baiting and the like were apt to get the rough side of her tongue. She had once nearly started a riot at a bullfight, and it had taken all of her father's nerve and diplomacy to get them out of the amphitheater unhurt.

Such was Alicia by nature at the time of her coming to Sofia. Of softer qualities it is only fair to say that she was naturally kind to the helpless, with a rich fund of unconscious maternal protectiveness. She had also her full share of tact and charm.

Alicia soon became very fond of the Landovskis. She liked their simple honesty, industry, and quiet, natural self-respect. As time wore on, she discovered that these were fundamental Bulgarian qualities, and that these patriotic citizens of a new nation possessed the soul of democracy to a degree which she had never before witnessed. There seemed to be among them no distinctions of caste and class beyond that which was military and for the safety of the state.

She heard King Ferdinand freely criticized for the assumption that he was superior socially to his people, and for his attempts to establish a new national aristocracy. As a matter of fact, he was an autocrat, and the country itself an autocracy, but this the Bulgarians appeared to accept rather as a military necessity. Otherwise they seemed not to comprehend any social distinction. A government official did not consider it beneath his dignity to wait on the customers of his father's café when off duty. All honest professions appeared to be regarded as equally worthy so long as they were honest.

Landovski, the tailor, was respected equally with Ratzchoff, the rich landowner, or Georgevitch, the architect. And little by little Alicia began to find herself imbued with the same spirit of democracy, which would seem at first sight paradoxical in a monarchy. Where

at first the Bulgarians had seemed to her brusque and taciturn, almost rude at times, she soon learned to look beneath this uncouthness, and to esteem the qualities of kindness and fair dealing which lay beneath.

Gayeties also were not lacking. There was a good theater which was well patronized, and music of the best was to be heard in the public squares—for the most part the wonderful music of the Chingéni, or Balkan gypsies. Her work was light and agreeable, and she was happy in knowing that she gave satisfaction. And so her life passed contentedly enough for a year, when suddenly the distant rumble of Mars' devastating hurricane bellowed from south and east, and the tempest which for thirty-four years had been gathering and subsiding, only to regather with closer menace, rose black and lurid to the Balkan zenith. The long-expected tempest was about to break.

CHAPTER V.

Morits found Alicia in the rose garden, staring into the clear water of the Persian fountain as though trying to read therein Bulgaria's destiny and her own. She looked up questioningly at his approach.

"When are you off?" she asked.

"To-night," he answered, with a smile that failed to hide the eagerness in his face.

"But I thought that your regiment was not to start for two days?"

"That is so. But I have been done a great honor. I start to-night for the frontier, where I am to be given fifty troopers with which to ride south to reconnoiter ahead of the army."

Alicia's eyes flashed. "But why have they chosen you?" she asked, none too flatteringly. She found it impossible to think of him as a soldier. She had read enough of history to know that such a command demanded a rare combination of judgment and daring, swiftness of decision, and resource which could only come of study and experience.

Morits smiled again. He did not tell her of the warm commendation of his commanding general when he found that Morits had familiarized himself by constant, diligent study of topographical maps with every hectare of ground which might possibly fall within the seat of war; that he knew the depth and width of every river, the height of every hill and mountain, with passes, roads, bypaths, forests, villages, and towns, and had predicted with a quiet confidence which came of a well-based theoretic knowledge the probable course of the Turkish advance, and the sections where food and forage might be obtained in considerable quantities.

So he answered simply: "No doubt the more experienced men were needed elsewhere. There will be plenty of opportunity for all. Besides, I know the country better than some others, and I speak most of the dialects of the Balkans. Turkish I speak as I do Bulgarian."

"And what do you expect to accomplish?" she asked, but partly convinced that the general knew what he was about.

"Our orders are to locate the possible sources of food supply, to report on different strategic points, and, as far as possible, to reconnoiter the position of the enemy."

Alicia stared. It seemed incredible, ridiculous even, that the general should send a dressmaker in command of an early and important reconnoissance. Morits read what was passing in her mind, and his color heightened.

"But why locate sources of food supply?" she asked doubtfully. "Surely the army will keep in touch with its supply train?"

"Naturally," he answered; "but it may prove necessary to dispatch flying columns to this region or that. Our policy is to strike swift, consecutive blows, taking advantage as much as possible of the well-known Turkish lethargy. We wish to secure a foothold in Thrace before the enemy wakes out of his sloth. Probably the first big battle will be fought at Kirk Kilissé—but I hope to connect with the main column in time for that. I am to have picked

men and horses, and we shall travel fast."

Alicia's eyes sparkled, yet she asked incredulously:

"But what do you know about war? Have you ever been under fire?"

"No," he answered; "but I have studied strategy and evolutions, and I served my year wtih the colors. I passed as second lieutenant of the reserves."

"But the reserves are not soldiers," she persisted.

A sudden gleam shone from Morits' clear eyes.

"Perhaps before the war is over you may think differently," he answered. "We believe that all Bulgarians are soldiers. But, tell me, are you still determined to serve with the Red Cross?"

"Of course I am. Do you think that after studying for the last six months and passing my examination I am going to back out?"

His face softened. "It is not required of you," he answered. "You are not Bulgarian——"

"I am for the next few months," Alicia retorted. "Let me tell you something: My own country wants none of me—and no doubt for a good reason. Bulgaria received me and sheltered me and made it possible for me to earn an honest living. Do you think that I am the sort to desert her now in her hour of trial?"

She looked at him with glistening eyes. Morits felt his heart expand. He turned his head away, unable for the moment to speak. Alicia was not watching him. She was staring down into the fountain.

"I have learned a great deal since coming here," she said presently, in a subdued tone. "I am no longer the little snob that I used to be. It may seem a hard thing to say, but I have got to feel more like a daughter to your father and mother than I ever felt toward my own; and Michael and Yanush and Kasimir and Anusia have treated me like a sister. I never knew before what it meant to have a family. When your father told me that war would be declared, and that you had written to say that you could place me well with Whitefern if I wished, I could have cried. That was the only thing that has ever happened here which made me feel like an outsider. But I am not an outsider. I won't be considered an outsider. I speak Bulgarian now with the others, and I have been trying to forget the old life."

Morits turned to her eagerly, his face quite pale.

"What you say nearly suffocates me with happiness," he cried; and there was no mistaking the glow in his eyes. "It is more than I ever dared to hope. And do you really think that you could think of this place always as your home?"

Alicia glanced quickly up, startled at the intensity of his voice. Her eyes met his for an instant, then were turned to the fountain again.

"Yes," she answered slowly, "as long as I know that you feel toward me as the others do. Listen, Morits—for I am going to call you that if you don't mind. I have learned, among other things, that one may be a dressmaker and yet very much of a man. Your father is that, for he has placed his whole fortune at the disposal of the government, and he actually wept because he was too old to serve. You are that also, because you have given up everything to fight for your country. I can never forget your kindness to me, because I know now that it was out of pure, disinterested kindness that you urged me to come here. If what I said a few minutes ago hurt your feelings I am very sorry, because I did not mean to. It was only that I couldn't get it through my silly head how a man who had been trained to shears and a tape could possibly understand the use of a saber and a bridle rein. Even now I can't, but no doubt I shall learn it, as I have so many things. But there is something for you to learn also." She raised her head, and her steady eyes looked straight into his glowing ones. "You must learn to think of me as a sister—or not to think of me at all."

Morits drew in his breath deeply.

"I shall try—Alicia," he answered

chokingly; and, turning on his heel, strode off to the house.

CHAPTER VI.

With her head swimming from the fumes of anæsthetic in the cabin where the field surgeons were ceaselessly at work, Alicia picked up her hooded cloak, and stepped out into the black, blustering night. There had come a moment's respite in the work until the next ambulance from the front should loom up out of the murk with its groaning cargo.

Alicia stepped under the lee of the cabin, drawing the hood down over her head, for the wind was harsh and raw and filled with a fine, driving mist. The firing had ceased, and the place seemed plunged in gloom and silence. Scattered here and there lights blurred through the windows of the few huts still standing, or flickered up to disappear again from the direction of the tabor. Dull glows in the distance, moving like will-o'-the-wisps, marked the course of an orderly bearing a message to the trenches, and close at hand were pale, quadrangular patches where the light struggled through the sides of the hospital tents.

As Alicia waited, crouched in the lee of the cabin, there came a point of light zigzagging out of the black infinity, followed by a splashing, sucking noise in the mud. A gruff voice and the crack of a whip was borne down to her on a gusty flaw of the wind. It was cold and wet where she stood, but the free air was welcome after many hours of the sickening odors of blood and anæsthetic.

Alicia stepped to the door and opened it. "Here comes the ambulance," she said to the haggard surgeons.

The vehicle dragged up heavily through the mud, and stopped, when a dark, cloaked figure swung down from the rear.

"Three," said he, in Bulgarian. "That is all for the present. There will probably be no more to-night. The firing will not begin again until daylight. It is too dark."

"Then leave them here, and take the ambulance to the rear," said the surgeon. He looked at Alicia. "Go back with the ambulance, and get some sleep," said he. "Doctor Georgeovitch will help me."

The wounded men were carried into the cabin. With a word of good night, Alicia crawled into the ambulance, and sank down in the corner. She heard the flaillike blows of the whip on the soggy hides of the horses, and the vehicle lurched ahead.

It was some distance to the rear, and Alicia, who in her fortnight of field service had learned the value of snatching sleep when she might, sank off immediately. How long she slept she had no means of knowing, but she was suddenly awakened by the ceasing of the motion. Leaning forward, she looked out. Blackness, utter and impenetrable, weighed down on every side. Not a light, not a single break in the styxlike murk. Not so much as the reflected glint from a puddle. Even the lantern rigged out on a staff from the pole had gone out, and the two horses were standing motionless.

Stepping out into the mud, Alicia walked forward. The driver, huddled in his military cloak, was fast asleep, and snoring heavily. Alicia reached up, found his elbow, and gave it a tug. The man did not move. His head had dropped forward on his chest, and he seemed on the verge of pitching out at the side.

Reaching for the whip, Alicia prodded him violently with the butt. He muttered a little, but did not awake. Alicia realized that his physical exhaustion had reached practically the state of coma, that he had fallen asleep, leaving the horses to wander forward on their own objective, finally to come to a halt; but how far they might have gone before stopping she had no idea.

She knew that they could not have kept their direction to the rear, as in that case they would have struck the main body of the tabor, and come on troops bivouacked in the mud. Neither could they have gone to the front, as in that case they would have been long

since halted by a sentry, or, failing this, come upon the trenches. Even on the flanks it was difficult to understand the possibility of wandering outside the lines unless they had been flung much farther out during the night.

Considering it impossible that they could be outside the camp, Alicia finally succeeded in awakening the driver—a heavy, stolid peasant at the best. She was unable to make him understand, whether through his being naturally too stupid to catch the meaning of her limited Bulgarian, or because he was still half insensible from need of sleep. At any rate, he appeared to realize that they were lost, and after a few heavy grunts and a peering stare into the murk he gathered up whip and reins, awoke his sleeping team, and they lurched forward again.

What had happened was this: The driver, on leaving the field dressing station, which was not far from the front, had fallen almost immediately to sleep, when the team, straying blindly in the dark, had struck and followed a road which led to the left flank. On reaching the inner lines, a sentry had halted the ambulance and awakened the driver, who, in answer to the challenge, had answered simply "An ambulance." The sentry, having verified this fact, had passed him on, doubtless thinking that the driver knew his errand, when the latter, stupid with fatigue, had urged his team on, then fallen to sleep again. The lantern had gone out, and the ambulance had passed the farther outposts, which were more widely drawn, unchallenged and unseen.

Alicia had not awakened the first time that the ambulance had stopped, and, deciding to herself that the driver probably knew where he was going, promptly fell asleep again. Meanwhile the team, a comparatively fresh one, moved ahead patiently on a trail which led toward the foothills of the Istrandja Dagh.

To the average person it might seem impossible that a sleeping man and a sleeping girl could have blundered out through the lines of a sleeping camp and past a double cordon of pickets, no matter how thick the night. But the average person has never experienced that benumbing, drunkenlike condition which is the result of overpowering fatigue due to prolonged physical effort with a minimum of sleep. Persons who have never encountered this can no more understand it than they can the state to which a human being may arrive when too long deprived of food in the face of hardship and physical exertion. The first is a passive state of irresponsibility; the latter a fiercely active one. Even great generals have understood the need of leniency when the conditions have been such that the gravest military delinquency, such as sleeping on guard, has resulted from a condition past the limits of human volition. Bonaparte acted as much from sense as sentiment when he stood the guard of the sleeping sentry.

In any case, the ambulance moved on along the muddy trail, the native horses trained to toil on while the driver slept; and daylight found the equipage on a stony track which mounted gradually toward the first slopes of the high range of hills which separates the plains of Thrace from the Black Sea. Here the tired horses gradually slowed their pace, and began to loiter, cropping at the wisps of yellow grass. Finding that they were no longer urged, they presently began to hunt for better pasture, when the fore wheel of the ambulance struck a rock, and the driver pitched out, landed on his head, and awoke.

The jar had roused Alicia also, and after the first bewildered look she scrambled to the ground. The day was making a gloomy effort to break through a low gray blanket of cloud. The wind was still high, and swept forlornly across a barren, rolling waste, driving with it scattered drops of icy rain. A flock of plover drifted overhead, piping plaintively, and as Alicia stood listening and staring about her there came from the distance a low, muttering rumble that suggested thunder. It died, then rose anew, the detonations blunted and tremulous as borne by the eddies of the gusty wind. Savoff was at work on Adrianople.

Ahead, the road climbed over bare, bleak hills. Below, it had crept up through a gully, and on either side were muddy stones, dried grass, and a few dwarfed trees. Alicia looked at the driver.

"Where are we?" she asked sharply.

He shook his head. His fall appeared to have stupefied his senses, never sharply alert.

It was plain to the girl that she must take the initiative. She knew that they could not have come far—a few miles at most.

"Wait here, you," she said to the driver, and started to climb to a small eminence at the right. She had taken but a few steps when she heard behind her the clatter of hoofs. Four troopers were coming up the trail at a smart trot, and, to Alicia's relief, she saw that they wore the uniform of Bulgarian cavalry.

And then a swift and startling thing occurred. At sight of the ambulance they reined up sharply, cast a quick look on all sides, then came on swiftly but warily. Alicia turned and started down the slope to meet them. She was still at a distance of thirty or forty yards when she saw the leader ride up to the driver of the ambulance and ask him some question. The man, who had clambered to his feet, apparently answered, when, without more ado, the trooper whipped out his saber, and thrust it through the body of the peasant soldier, who flung wide his arms and fell with scarcely so much as a groan.

Alicia's knees tottered under her, and she sank to the sodden turf. There was a swift word, and two of the troopers turned sharply, spurring their horses up through the stones to where she stood. As they drew near, she saw that they were swart men, savage of face, lean, but big-boned and muscular. The first reined up within a few paces of her, and drew his saber. Alicia screamed, and shrank back, clasping her hands with terror. Her face was hidden to the eyes in the heavy woolen hood of her cloak.

"Stop—stop!" she cried, forgetting in her terror that she spoke in English. Then, as the man seemed to hesitate, she flung her arm toward the ambulance, and shrieked furiously: "We are of the Red Cross!"

The saber was lowered, and the man thrust out his head, glaring down at her. His beady black eyes glittered like the eyes of some beast of prey. He stared for an instant, then glanced back at his companion, and said a few words in some guttural tongue which Alicia did not understand. The other man stared likewise. He was a burly, muscular ruffian, with a fierce Mongolian face, savage, but not without a certain sinister intelligence. His forehead was low and receding, the eyes set on a slant upward and outward like the eyes of a wolf. His cheek bones were high and prominent, the nose aquiline and hooked over a wide, thin-lipped mouth with a heavy jaw and a pointed chin. Both men had wiry black mustaches drooping at the corners of their cruel mouths.

There was a short argument between the two. Both glanced back toward the plain as they talked. Then the thick-set man dismounted, and, striding up to Alicia, took her by the elbow, and said, in Bulgarian:

"Come!"

Alicia tried to twist away, but the man's grip tightened. He said a few words to the others, when one of the ambulance horses was taken from the harness, and a saddle improvised with one of the leather cushions and a looped rein to serve as a stirrup. The burly man picked the girl up as though she had been a child, and set her astride the ambulance horse. Its mate was likewise stripped of all but the bridle, and taken on a leading strap, when the party set off up the slope at a brisk canter.

Fortunately for Alicia, she was not only a perfect horsewoman, but had accustomed herself to ride astride. The man with the Tartar face was eying her keenly, and she had slight doubt but that if she had shown herself unable to stay on she would have been sabered on the spot. What these men were who were armed and uniformed as Bul-

garian cavalry she could not imagine, unless they were thieves or guerrillas who had ambushed and killed the troopers to whom the horses and accouterments had formerly belonged.

As they reached the crest of the swelling rise, Alicia looked back. The firing had slightly swelled in volume, but seemed far in the distance. In the growing light, she could see the camp, but indistinctly through the misty haze. It appeared to be about three miles distant across the shallow valley. She could see the white tents against the dull, brownish green, and it seemed to her that there was some movement taking place. Then they began to descend, and the slope of the low hill hid all beyond.

The four ruffians who had captured her appeared to be heading for the mountains, and once the footing became more secure spurred on their horses, traveling swiftly and in silence. Once they made a detour to avoid a village or small town. At another village which was smaller and apparently deserted, they drew rein in front of a tavern, and one of them, dismounting, disappeared, presently to emerge, dragging an old man behind him as one might drag a sack of grain. Flinging him against the wall, the trooper drew his saber, and, with the point against the throat of the old peasant, began to question him. But, either through stubbornness or lack of information, the unfortunate man seemed able only to shake his head and mumble. The voice of the trooper grew more menacing, and suddenly the old man screamed. Alicia turned away her head, and a dark mist seemed to gather before her eyes. She swayed slightly on her makeshift saddle, fighting hard to keep from falling. Just what happened she could not have told, but a moment later there was a sharp order, and they were again in action. Alicia dared not look back.

Presently her senses cleared, and she looked about her hopelessly. The trail had turned abruptly to the south, and they appeared to be skirting the foothills of a wild and lofty range of mountains. The flying clouds had thinned, and at times the sun gleamed coldly through a rift in the eastern sky. The view of the plains of Thrace was shut off by a long, low ridge, and from the bottom of the wide valley to the west came the glint of a small, winding river. Here and there across the bleak, desolate stretch small habitations were to be seen, sometimes singly, sometimes in groups; but there was no sign of any living being except occasional flocks of wild fowl passing overhead, or a lonely jackal slinking from a heap of stones.

Alicia's captors rode swiftly and in silence—first the broad-shouldered, sinewy man whom she took to be the leader, then he of the Tartar face, herself, followed closely by a small, wiry man who led the spare horse, and at a little distance in the rear the fourth of the party, who occasionally struck the led horse with the end of a lariat which he carried, Tartar fashion, on the pommel of his saddle.

No word had been spoken to her since her capture, but several times Alicia had gone suddenly faint and sick at the sidelong glances thrown her by one or the other of the party, and which seemed charged with an evil admiration. She dared not think what fate might be reserved for her, and thought bitterly of the little automatic pistol which for the first week of the campaign she had carried in the pocket of her skirt. But for the present, however, the party seemed bent on getting away from the region with all possible dispatch, and Alicia thought it probable that they were aiming for some fastness in the mountains, the higher peaks of which, white with new-fallen snow, were beginning to appear as the low, storm clouds lifted.

The girl was growing faint with hunger, and the horses beginning to lag, when there appeared ahead and slightly below them a little hamlet on the banks of the river. The leader drew rein, and studied it intently. From a single house there rose a column of thin blue smoke, and on the edge of the stream was a woman driving a bullock hitched to a clumsy cart. At a sign from the leader they advanced again, presently to draw

rein before the house from which the smoke was issuing. It appeared to be a dilapidated inn, for there was a slight inclosure in front of it, over the gate of which hung a lantern with a roughly painted sign in Turkish characters.

As they drew up before this gate the leader dismounted, and, turning to Alicia, scowled, and laid his finger on his lips, then motioned for her to get down. She obeyed, when the others, at a sign from the leader, also dismounted, and hitched their horses to the fence. As they did so, there appeared in the doorway a woman in a dark cloak who eyed them suspiciously, veiling the lower part of her face with a fold of the shawl which was over her head.

The leader said a few words in what Alicia took to be Turkish, at which the woman appeared to be reassured, for she called back over her shoulder, when a sharp-featured boy slipped out and led the horses to the rear of the house. The party entered, the woman giving Alicia a curious look as she passed. Apparently she asked the leader some question concerning her, for when he answered she shot at Alicia a look which seemed to hold a faint expression of pity.

The party sat down at a rough table, Alicia being motioned to her place on the bench between the leader and the big man. The woman disappeared, presently to return with a loaf of black but nutritious bread, black olives in oil, onions, a piece of cheese, and a pot of coffee. The men ate wolfishly, and Alicia took what the woman offered her, seeming again to intercept that fugitive look of pity. She had thrown back the hood of her cloak, but instantly regretted it as she noticed the character of the glances bestowed on her bright hair. But her courage, naturally high, returned to some extent under the stimulating effect of the food.

The meal finished, the men produced small silver tobacco boxes, and rolled their cigarettes, talking together in low, guttural voices, with occasional glances through the open door, where the small, bright-eyed boy was keeping watch at the gate. Occasionally they looked slantingly at the captive. Alicia stared back stonily, fighting hard to preserve a boldness of front. Some instinct told her that the only chance of salvation lay in showing no outward sign of fear. It was plain that her captors were puzzled in regard to her. In their staccato conversation she caught certain words which led her to think that she was being held with some idea of ransom, for the word "lira" was frequently repeated with numericals prefixed. She began to think that these bandits—for she had come to the conclusion that such they must be—were inclined to believe her some woman of rank who had seen fit to lend her efforts to the work of caring for the sick and wounded. The idea gave her a certain courage, and made it possible for her to preserve her attitude of haughty defiance.

It is possible that her captors were discussing the price which she might bring in a slave market of Asia Minor. As they argued among themselves, the Turkish woman passed in and out, and once lent her voice to the conversation. Alicia felt that she was advising the men to leave her at the inn, but if so the plea met with disapproval.

The halt may have lasted for an hour, when the horses were led out, and the march resumed. The road had improved, and they pushed on steadily, making speed as the condition of the ground permitted. From the position of the sun, Alicia saw that they were traveling south. Villages were no longer avoided, and late in the afternoon they arrived at a hamlet on the edge of the plain, where they drew rein before an inn. It was a spot which would have been attractive to one visiting it under different circumstances, situated on the lower slopes of a range on the edge of broad, flowing plains which had recently been cultivated in wheat, maize, and tobacco. A first glance showed it to be a Turkish village, and on the outskirts was a picturesque mosque, from the minaret of which the muezzin was uttering the call to prayers as they rode up. The cry—or, rather, chant—in its long, quaver-

ing cadences fell wildly on Alicia's ears: *"Allahu Akbar—Ashadu an lah ilaha ill 'llah—Ashandu anna Mohammadan rasulullah—Hayya 'ala 's-salati —Hayya 'ala'l-falah—Allahu Akbar."* ("God is most great—Great One, I confess there is no God but God—I avow Mahomet to be His Prophet. Come to prayer. Come to salvation. Save our souls. God is great. There is but one God, and only God.")

The call had just begun as Alicia's captors reined up in front of the khan, or inn, a clean and pleasant-looking place, for the village was a prosperous one in times of peace. Few people were in sight, but the four men dismounted quickly, and, flinging their cloaks upon the ground, knelt, facing the east, and performed their devotions. Not far distant were two Mevlevee dervishes, the one a sheik, as designated by his green turban, the other in a tall yellow cap without terk or turban. Aside from these, no able-bodied men were to be seen, for a Turkish recruiting caracole had stripped the place of its military material immediately on the declaration of war by Montenegro, which had occurred nine days before Turkey declared war on Bulgaria and Servia.

Alicia's heart seemed for a moment to stop its beating as the leader arose from his devotions, and, with a scowl, motioned for her to enter the khan. The night would soon be there, when she would find herself alone with these murderous men, who she was now convinced were escaped Turkish prisoners, captured at the fight at Kurtkale, when the Bulgarian advance had taken that place.

Already several loiterers, among them the dervishes, were approaching to question her captors, taking them for Turkish troopers on witnessing their response to the call of the muezzin, and probably never having seen a Bulgarian uniform. The leader did not wait to speak with them. Turning angrily toward Alicia, who was leaning, faint and sick, against the high gatepost, he took her by the shoulder roughly, and thrust her forward toward the black, open door.

CHAPTER VII.

There was nobody in the room but a loutish, unwashed youth with the air of an imbecile. He was standing with his back to a smoldering fire, and stared at the newcomers from under his shaggy hair with his lower lip sagging and his head pitched forward. The leader gave him a contemptuous look, then pushed Alicia toward a bench. She sank down wearily, yet managed to meet the look of her captor with a certain proud defiance. He glowered at her for an instant, then turned on his heel, and went out.

The idiot mumbled to himself, and followed. Left alone, Alicia cast her eyes about like some trapped animal. Through an open door in the rear of the room she could see out into a court, and, acting on a sudden impulse, she sprang to her feet, and, crossing the room stealthily, went out. There was nobody in sight. Next door to the inn was a small dwelling, closely shuttered, and apparently deserted, like most of the habitations of the region. A ragged fence separated its garden from the yard of the inn, and, acting entirely on impulse, Alicia climbed over it, and looked about.

She had scarcely done so when she heard an angry cry and the clatter of boots from the inn. A clamor of voices followed, and into Alicia's hunted fright there came a desperate idea. The horses were standing before the inn, and it occurred to the girl that if she could slip along behind the fence she might be able to dart out, mount one of them, and make her escape. Even if she were killed in the attempt, that would be preferable to what might otherwise be in store for her.

Slipping out of her cloak, she stole along behind the fence, which, fortunately for her, was thickly covered with vines. The fence ended in a wall of stones and clay. Alicia ran to the gate, which was not locked, and looked out. The four horses were standing with drooping heads in front of the inn, that of the leader being nearest her, and not more than twenty feet away. In front

of the gate was a group of idlers consisting of two old men, a woman, and three children. Some distance farther beyond were the dervishes, who had started to walk away, but had paused to listen to the clattering and curses proceeding from the inn.

There was not a moment to lose, so Alicia stepped boldly out of the gate, and walked swiftly up to the leader's horse. So sudden and unexpected was her appearance that before the thick-witted spectators thought of raising an alarm, or attempting to interfere, she had flung the reins over the animal's head, and put one foot in the stirrup. Then one of the dervishes emitted a howl, and, staff in hand, sprang forward to seize her; and in so doing played directly into her hand. For the horse, tired though it was, took fright at the wild, gesticulating figure, and shied away even as Alicia was swinging herself into the saddle. No doubt also her fluttering skirt alarmed the animal, for, with a frightened snort, he bolted back over the road which they had just come.

But Alicia's handicap was a narrow one, for even as she seated herself and turned to look back over her shoulder she saw the leader rush through the gate and fling himself onto the bare back of the led horse. Her heart sank, for she knew that this horse, not having carried any weight throughout the day, would naturally be fresher than the one she rode. Neither had she whip or spur, but as she turned in her saddle to gather up the end of the reins she made a thrilling discovery. In the holster attached to the saddle bow was a loaded army revolver. She drew it out, cocked it, and looked back over her shoulder.

Urging on his horse with heel and hand, and bent low on the neck of the beast, came the leader. He had not seemed to have shortened the distance between them, for Alicia's horse was the swifter, and, alarmed at the fluttering skirt, ran like a deer, ears back, eyes bulging, and nose straight out. But Alicia knew that he could not hold the pace, for she was herself of good weight, and the horse was tired. Also, the other three men had mounted, and were following fast, and it was possible that when it came to a race one of their horses might prove faster than her own. Determined to save the last cartridge for herself, she swung about in her saddle, aimed as well as she could at the head of the leader's horse, and fired.

Startled at the report, her own horse sprang forward gamely. Her shot had missed, however, and its only effect on her pursuers was a savage yell. Ahead, the road curved sharply down into a gully at the bottom of which flowed a small stream. The descent was short, but steep, and Alicia shoved the revolver back into its holster, and gathered up her reins, for she remembered that the place was slippery and cobble strewn.

Onward she flew, not daring to look back, for the gully opened ahead. Reining in, she made the descent in safety, swerved sharply, splashed through the shallow water, and was dashing up the opposite side between the steep banks when her horse snorted and checked its pace in a series of short bounds. Alicia glanced up, and screamed. Deployed on either side was a row of crouching figures, and ahead the trail was blocked by a cluster of men.

Alicia felt herself swaying in the saddle. She saw that these were soldiers, and whether friends or enemies it mattered little. She was staring wildly from side to side, when there came the crash of hoofs behind her, followed by a harsh order from the top of the bank. Then there came a man rushing up to seize her horse, and as her eyes fell on him she saw that it was Morits. She felt herself drawn from the saddle, supported in a pair of strong arms.

"In the name of God, what are you doing here?" said a voice in her ear; but before she could answer there came the sound of a scuffle, a curt command to halt, and men were swarming down the bank. Morits, holding her with one arm, was giving swift orders.

"Who are these men?" he demanded. "And how did you get here?"

Alicia rallied her strength.

"They are bandits, Morits. They killed the driver of the ambulance. We got lost last night, and these men captured us. They would have killed me, too, if they had dared——"

"Sergeant, line those men up against the bank," said Morits. "I think they are the ones we had orders to look for. Strip and search them."

The captives submitted in sullen, fatalistic resignation. Only the leader kept his glittering, beady eyes fastened on Alicia.

"Take the lady up the bank, and let her rest for a moment. Spread out some cloaks." Morits' voice sounded to Alicia quiet and comforting. "I will join you in a moment," he said to her. "I must question these men."

Assisted on either side by a sturdy trooper, Alicia climbed the bank, where at a little distance she saw the horses in charge of their tenders. Morits had heard her shot and the yell which followed it, and, the place being favorable to await whatever might be coming, had quickly dismounted, and deployed his men on either side of the road. It was a disposition of his small command of fifty troopers which might easily have checked the advance of a squadron. Alicia sank down on the cloaks quickly spread for her, and the troopers questioned her eagerly. She was describing what had happened in her broken Bulgarian to her admiring listeners when the voice of the sergeant called crisply:

"Down here, a corporal and six men."

There was a scramble over the edge of the bank. A moment later Morits appeared. Alicia looked up questioningly.

"If you feel able, we will ride on," said Morits. "It is getting dark."

He assisted her to mount. There was a curt command or two, and a minute later the troop was in motion. In column of fours they crossed the gully, and proceeded at a rapid walk toward the village. When they had gone a little way Alicia turned to Morits, who was riding silently beside her, with a subdued, expectant manner, as though listening for something.

"What were those men?" she asked.

Before he could answer there came from behind them a muffled volley. Then silence, broken by the croak of a heron which rose heavily from a marshy spot on their left. Alicia turned her startled face to Morits.

"What was that?" she whispered.

"They were spies," he answered quietly.

"Spies!"

"Yes."

"Turks?"

"Turkish spies. I think that they were Crim Tartars. They had general passes from the Ottoman commander in chief to pass in disguise through all the Turkish lines. I ordered them shot."

Alicia said nothing, and they rode on in silence. Presently Morits said:

"I don't see how I am going to get you back to the base. My orders are to ride south toward Lule Burgas, then reconnoiter the country along the Tchorlu River. There is a Turkish party somewhere between us and Kirk Kilissé, and I learned an hour ago that there is a column of the enemy moving toward Adrianople from Sarai. It may not be true, but if so its advance guard might be in a position to cut you off if I were to try to send you back with a squad to Kirk Kilissé. Besides, I have no authority to lessen my force except as I need couriers."

"Then you will keep me with you?"

Morits twisted the end of his incipient black mustache. "I'm afraid there is no other way," he answered regretfully.

"You don't seem very keen about it," said Alicia.

"I'm not. Do you realize that we have got to go right through the heart of the enemy's country, working our way between Turkish columns and cavalry squadrons and reconnoitering parties like our own?"

"I'm not afraid as long as I'm with you."

Morits said nothing. He was thinking of some of the sights he had seen in the wake of a Turkish column composed largely of the wild and savage

Kurds from Asia Minor. Alicia, glancing at him expectantly, noticed for the first time that he wore a captain's chevrons.

"You've been promoted!" she exclaimed.

He smiled slightly. "Promotions come quickly in such a war as this," he answered, not seeing fit to mention the high praise which he had received on coming in from the end of his first ten days' reconnoissance. "We shall spend the night here," he continued. "Let us go in. I want to hear what happened to you."

They dismounted, and Morits turned to the sergeant.

"Take a squad, and forage what you can," said he. "Let the men sleep here in the khan, and a stable guard with the horses. Post your sentries at least a kilometer down the road on either side."

They entered the inn, where they found two frightened Turkish women, who, at a few curt words, set about to prepare two of the upper rooms and to get what food the place could offer. As Alicia was bathing her face and hands there was a knock at the door, and she opened it to find Morits with a bundle under his arm.

"It is going to be very rough for you," he said.

"I have roughed it before. Please don't bother about me."

"Here is a uniform," he said. "You had better put it on, since you've got to ride a troop horse with an army saddle. It appears to be clean and new."

"Thank you," said Alicia. She did not dare ask the source of the uniform. She thought that she could guess. As a matter of fact, the sergeant had stripped the four spies before having them shot.

Morits and Alicia supped together by the light of an oil lamp. He listened with silent amazement to the story of the day's adventures.

"You are wonderful!" he said, when she had finished. "The chances are that you would have escaped even if we had not been there. That was a good horse you rode. Now you must sleep, for we march at daylight, and you are exhausted. Take the lamp. I have a tallow dip."

"But I want to hear about yourself," pleaded Alicia.

"To-morrow will be time enough for that. You must sleep now."

It seemed to Alicia that she had scarcely closed her eyes when Morits was rapping at the door to say that it was time to get up. He lighted her lamp, then went out, and presently one of the Turkish women appeared with a jug of hot water. Alicia bathed and dressed, shuddering a little as she drew on the heavy trousers and tunic over the clothes she already wore. She slipped her feet, shoes and all, into the clumsy cavalry boots, first getting Morits to wrench off the heels of her shoes. When she came out, fully equipped, he gave her a glance of approval.

"You will pass muster," he said, with his slight smile.

After a breakfast of black bread, eggs, and coffee they went out to find the men already in the saddle. Alicia, at her urgent request, was given the strong, wiry little horse on which she had made her escape, and which she promptly christened "Tartar." No time was lost, and they swung off under the stars, now glittering brightly, and a pale light glimmering in the east.

Presently, when it grew lighter, they left the road, and turned out across the open plain; and now Alicia discovered that the little troop did not travel in a solid column, but with small squads thrown out perhaps a mile in front and rear and on the two flanks, these communicating by a simple system of signals devised by Morits himself and given with the cap held at arm's length.

Alicia observed also that the troopers were carefully chosen for their quickness, intelligence, and horsemanship, and the horses for speed and endurance. Most of the troopers were small men, light in weight, but wiry and muscular. Their discipline also appeared to be perfect.

"My sergeant," Morits said, "is a barber of Sofia. His father is a rose

farmer of Kazanlik, but before that he raised horses, and the boy grew up in the saddle. One of the corporals is a famous driver of trotting horses in the races at Presbourg, in Austria, and also at Vienna; the other is the son of a rich importer of rose attar in New York. He returned to serve in the war, bringing with him a donation of five thousand dollars from his father. He is a wonderful revolver shot, but does not speak Bulgarian as well as yourself. Very few of these men are peasants. They are chiefly clerks, waiters, agents, and the like. There is also another tailor besides myself. We had two more, but they were both killed when we joined the column to attack Mustafa Pasha."

Alicia looked at him remorsefully. "I told you I had learned that it does not take nine tailors to make a man," she said, "and that I expected to learn that a tailor might make a soldier, too. But I did not expect to find one the trained soldier that you appear to be. I cannot understand it."

Morits smiled. "You said something also about reservists," said he. "These men are all reservists, though carefully chosen ones. I like them better. The regular soldier takes fighting as part of the day's work for which he is paid. Most of these chaps would pay to fight. That is, in fact, their chief drawback. They would rather engage than observe, and we are out to do the latter." He glanced at her with the quick, flashing smile that so lighted his rather melancholy face. "For my part, I would much rather observe. The science of war is fascinating as a theory, but its practice is terribly sad."

For a while they rode on in silence, both busy with their thoughts. The dawn had brightened from pale silver to a faint flush of rose and amethyst, but the sun was slow in coming, as though reluctant to lend its light to another day of strife and slaughter. The high gale overhead of the day before had swept away the dark clouds of evil portent, as though to offer an example to the sons of men, and a soft breeze from the south stirred the wisps of yellow grass and whispered among the sear leaves of the scant dwarf oaks a promise that one day they should live again in their posterity. Hares leaped from beneath the horses' feet, and bounded off across the plain, while from overhead came the flutelike whistle of snipe and plover rising from the marshy pools and flying to welcome the sun, whose rosy promise was reflected from their breasts in tongues of flame.

Then up over the broken rampart to the east there rose a glowing segment, which grew and swelled as its darting rays swept wide to smear the plain in swimming crimson. The slopes of the mountains awoke and clad themselves in mauve and purple.

Alicia looked at Morits. He was riding at her side, and the bright rays struck full upon his face. It seemed to the girl that some new and thrilling quality invested the young man. Whatever it was, she felt that she shared in it by virtue of a clearer comprehension born within the last few hours. She was conscious of a sudden timidity in his presence. She wanted to speak to him, to call his attention to the beauty of the morning and the joyousness of living. War and its turmoils seemed infinitely remote in the sweet peace of that rosy sunrise. Alicia's heart swelled, and she wondered what it was that thrilled even while it soothed her. She was conscious of something precious found, some vital lesson learned, and as she looked at Morits she felt that he alone could explain this glorious awakening.

But Morits seemed oblivious to her. He was staring intently to the left, and as Alicia followed his gaze she saw on a distant rise two small gyrating bodies which seemed to swim and eddy like motes against the glowing orb of the newly risen sun. Morits raised his arm.

"Look!" said he. "The outriders are signaling."

CHAPTER VIII.

The signal, which was a single downward sweep of the arm to the right, signified a discovery. Morits swung his horse sharply to the left, and, with

Alicia at his side, rode straight toward the sun. Hardly had he done so when there came, as it seemed, from the ground beneath their horses' feet a low, muttering rumble, which swelled and died and swelled again. Marsh birds in the shallow pools about them took to flight, filling the air with their plaintive cries. Morits looked at Alicia.

"Savof's guns opening on Adrianople," said he.

Urging their horses forward, they soon reached the outriders, who were sitting motionless, awaiting them. As they came up they saw that the soft turf was cut by the tracks of many horses which had been traveling in a direction parallel to their own. Morits dismounted to examine them.

"These have passed since the rain," said he, looking at the sergeant.

"Less than two hours ago, captain," answered the former barber of Sofia. "Yonder is the proof. The traces are scarcely cold."

Morris nodded. "Their number is about the same as our own," said he, "and they were traveling at a trot, as you can see from the way the hoofs have cut the turf."

"Captain," said one of the corporals, "these horses were not shod in Bulgaria, and some of them are not shod at all."

"You are right. It is probably a small detachment, like our own, which has been reconnoitering our advance on Adrianople, and is now on its way to report to the Turkish western army. I wish that we might cut it off."

"I do not think they number over thirty," said the sergeant, looking hungrily ahead. "It is probable that they have been traveling through the night, and will soon halt to eat and rest."

"That is my own idea," said Morits. "Sergeant, take ten men, and follow this trail at a good pace. Keep your eyes open, and if you see anything of this detachment send a man back to report. We will follow about a mile behind you. Don't attack under any circumstances, and if you should be attacked yourself fall back on us. Do you understand?"

"Yes, captain." The sergeant saluted, and quickly picked out his men, starting off on the trail at a brisk trot. The rest of the party proceeded slowly after them in the same formation as before.

"I should like to cut off this party," Morits repeated, looking at Alicia. "No doubt it is carrying important information as to our movements. Besides, it would be a good lesson not to reconnoiter our position too boldly."

"Then why not push on with all your force?" asked Alicia.

"Because in that case the enemy might take alarm, and try to check us, sending on a courier or two. I do not want to let a man escape to carry any news, and if they have been traveling all night, as I believe, we ought to be able to accomplish this. Ten men will not alarm them, and they might even drive them back. If they do so we will spread out and attempt to surround them."

"Do you think there are no more than the sergeant said?"

"I think that there are nearer fifty than thirty. I compared the tracks with that of our own thirty-eight. Ours were the smaller."

"But they may push on without stopping until they reach their own lines."

"They can scarcely do that if they have already traveled throughout the night. I think that we will come upon them before noon."

"And there will be a fight?"

"It is probable. In that case, you must remain in the rear, and wait until I send for you."

"But I want to fight, too. I can shoot."

Morits shook his head. "You will stay in the rear," said he quietly, yet with finality. "For one thing, you are a woman; and for another, you are a member of the hospital corps, and as such a noncombatant. If through any accident you should fall into the hands of the enemy, slip off your soldier tunic and show the red cross on your blouse. But if you were to fall into the hands of any of the Asiatic troops you had

better put the muzzle of your revolver to your head, and pull the trigger."

"I meant to do that yesterday if I were caught," said Alicia, in a low voice.

"Please God, we may soon drive those hellhounds back to Asia, never to return," said Morits, so fiercely that Alicia was startled. She threw him a quick glance. Morits' face had turned suddenly pale, as the girl thought, with passion. In reality, he was thinking of women he had seen in a Macedonian village through which he had passed in the wake of a Kurdish column.

Presently he turned and gave the order to trot, when the horses moved forward with the easy, gliding gait which made the use of the stirrup unnecessary. For an hour they advanced at a good pace, few words being spoken. The day brightened and grew warm.

"We shall soon strike a river," said Morris, "one of the many tributaries of the Tchorlu."

The ground had risen slightly, and the scattered habitations began to grow more frequent. Here and there across the plain, and higher up on the lower slopes of the mountains, were small villages, while the country itself looked fertile and productive. They were crossing a field from which the corn had been recently harvested when over the crest of a low ridge there appeared a horseman riding rapidly to meet them. As he drew near, they discovered it to be one of their scouts. Reining up in front of Morits, he saluted, and said breathlessly:

"Captain, the party ahead has crossed the river and turned east, heading directly into the mountains."

"How many are there?"

"About fifty men. They look to be regular Turkish cavalry."

"They have struck a road on the other side of the river, have they not?"

"There appears to be a rough trail. The river is not deep, coming only to the bellies of the horses."

"Did they discover you?"

"I do not think so. We dismounted under the brow of the hill, and crept up to the top on hands and knees."

"How far are they ahead, and how fast are they traveling?"

"They are about two miles ahead of us here, and after crossing the river they pushed forward up the hill at a trot."

"Good! They are probably going to Media. It is useless to follow them farther. We cannot get around them in the pass, and might simply fall into some trap."

The eager faces of the troopers fell. Morits was about to give the order to proceed when over the rise ahead appeared another trooper, coming at a gallop. He dashed up with a salute.

"Captain," said he, "the party which we have been following has met with another, about a hundred strong, and they are returning. The second party appears to be regular cavalry also, but has a light fieldpiece. They must be crossing the river even now."

Scarcely had he spoken when up came the others, and confirmed the report, the sergeant expressing the opinion that it was the advance guard of a Turkish column disembarked at Media.

Morits glanced quickly about him. They were skirting the rolling plain at the foot of the lower slopes of the Istrandja Dagh, the range of mountains which rise from the eastern boundary of Rumelia and follow the coast to the Bosphorus. It crossed Morits' mind that the party which they had been following had probably been sent to reconnoiter ahead of the advancing Turkish column, with the advance guard of which it had just joined. But before dispatching couriers with this information to Kirk Kilissé and the Bulgarian army investing the region about Adrianople, he wished to discover the character and strength of the approaching enemy.

Westward, the plains of Thrace stretched away to the blue horizon. Eastward, the ground rose brokenly to the Istrandja Dagh. Not more than half a mile distant in this direction was a long, low ridge, behind which the little troop might disappear, to slip away like a pack of wolves to the higher slopes. But there was no time to be lost. Their

tracks, of course, would betray them, but there was no choice between this method and a hasty retreat on the trail which they had come—a retreat which in the face of overpowering numbers might easily become a flight.

Morits acted quickly. Indicating to the sergeant a high, forest-covered plateau, he told him to take half the command, ride back on their trail for a couple of miles, then in single file strike straight for the mountains, keeping under cover as much as possible, to join him at the spot indicated. Instructing his own men to keep each in the tracks of the man ahead, he put the two small bands in motion, he himself leading the way to the low ridge to the left.

Once under cover, two men were left to observe the movements of the enemy as soon as it should come in sight, while Morits led the main party up through a narrow defile which soon broadened into a little sheltered valley planted in tobacco. Skirting the northern slope of this, they plunged into a growth of beech and oak, through which they made their way to the higher ground. Coming out presently on a still verdant meadow which suggested to Alicia one of the mountain pastures of the Alps, Morits left his band on the edge of the woods, and rode to a point whence he could reconnoiter the plain beneath.

From this point the view was extensive. The plain rolled off like a sea to the blue distance, its only feature the river which wound across it like a silvered tape. Directly beneath were low, irregular ridges cut and serried by the torrential wash of the spring rains. But aside from the scattered habitations, which for the most part appeared deserted, their occupants having fled into the hills at the prospect of being caught between the grinding millstones of the Christian and Moslem armies, there was no sign of active life.

Morits could see the ford where the party which he had been pursuing had crossed the river, and where, according to the reports of his scouts, they must have recrossed with the advance guard of the approaching Turkish column; but of the body itself there was not the slightest sign. Morits stared about, baffled and perplexed. What had become of them? He could see on the far side of the river a trail which wound along the roughly washed bank through a growth of willows, scrub oaks, and occasional tall sycamores, finally to disappear in a ravine.

He was staring in that direction when a small, rapidly moving object on the near side of the river caught his eye. Fixing it with his glass, he saw a mounted trooper who he knew must be one of the two men he had left to observe the movements of the enemy galloping along a sandy gully which twisted between two long, bare mounds not far from the river's edge. As he watched, the trooper disappeared in a willow copse, but almost at the same instant the other came in sight, working his way up the side of the slope to the higher ground.

Morits suddenly understood. The enemy must have crossed the river at the ford, then turned upstream, marching along the bank, and hid from his sight by a low but steep bank. In this he proved to be correct, for presently there emerged into plain view a cavalry column proceeding in ragged order, owing to the inequality of the ground, and apparently heading for some point higher in the hills. As he watched them through his glass there came in sight a team of four horses hauling what at first he took to be a gun. But, to his surprise, on focusing carefully, he discovered it to be a gun carriage without the gun itself.

Morits was completely puzzled. Here was a force about one hundred and fifty strong, dragging an empty gun carriage, and making apparently for some place in the hills quite outside the zone of war, and of absolutely no strategic value. It had come apparently on the road through the mountains from Media, where the Ottoman army was disembarking troops, and then, instead of proceeding toward the scene of war, appeared to be intent on crawling back into the Istrandja Dagh. Moreover, the road which it was taking was not one which any column would be apt to

follow for any reason which Morits could imagine. Also, why the empty gun truck?

As he watched its enigmatic movements, the head of the straggling array turned sharply from the river, and disappeared in a gorge. Observing narrowly, Morits could see that it was following a rough, stony trail which appeared to have shifted its course at different times, owing to the exigencies of spring freshets. The tail of the column followed, and the whole party passed from sight behind the brow of an intervening hill.

Morits sat down upon a stone, rolled a cigarette, and pondered. Even supposing that a party of some one hundred and fifty troopers saw fit to attempt a flank movement on the Bulgarian force massed about Kirk Kilissé, either to make a reconnoissance or to cut off possible supplies from the north, why go about it so laboriously? No unit of any importance would think of attempting such a laborious route when it might just as well land, to begin with, at some point like Sveti Stefan, and make a single traverse of the Istrandja Dagh.

He was turning this problem in his mind when one of the scouts came in —the man whom he had seen picking his way up through the gullies to the higher ground.

"They crossed the river, captain," said he, "then turned back up this bank."

"I saw them," Morits answered.

"My comrade is still watching them," said the man. "I came to report. Where the devil are they going, Morits?"

The trooper, a music teacher of London, and a member of Morits' club, mopped his face with his handkerchief. He had climbed the last quarter mile on foot, dragging his pony after him.

Morits smiled. "I'm sure I don't know, Gustaf," said he. "Get back to the troop, and tell the corporal to send me two active, intelligent men who will not get lost."

"But I——"

"Obey orders! You drink too much beer."

The trooper obeyed. He was an ardent young man, who in London had rather looked down upon his dressmaking compatriot. But things had changed. Gustaf had seen the quiet ladies' tailor send his best friend packing back to the base as incompetent for this particular service, and the self-indulgent musician did not care to risk a similar fate. So he merely saluted, albeit with a faint shade of irony which was lost on Morits, and retired.

The two young men who presented themselves in answer to Morits' summons were of a different stamp. One was the shipping clerk of a Berlin toy manufacturer who had a large custom in the Balkans; the other was the son of a swine raiser whose herds roamed the beech and oak forests on the slopes of the Shipka Pass. This young man had spent his life in the woods, and had the sense of location of a hound.

Morits took them to the precipitous edge of the slope, and showed them where the Turkish detachment had disappeared.

"I do not know where they are going, or what their object may be," said he. "That is for you to find out. Follow them warily, at a good distance, and if they halt let one of you remain and the other report to me."

"Where will you be, captain?"

"I shall wait here until noon; then, if no column appears, I shall follow the trail of the party which has just passed. Now, go; and if you discover anything of interest let one of you report with all haste."

The two young man returned to their horses, mounted, and disappeared in the woods. Morits ordered that the other animals be unbridled, girths loosened, and allowed to graze. The troopers stretched themselves out on the sunny sward, and slept. Presently the sergeant with the other half of the command arrived. They had seen nothing of the enemy, but in passing a deserted farm whence the occupants had fled on their approach they had managed to forage a sheep and some poultry. Mor-

its ordered that these be cooked immediately.

Alicia had followed the example of the troopers who had done sentinel duty the night before, and, with her head pillowed on her cloak, was sleeping like a child. Morits' eyes softened as he glanced at her. He noticed that the troopers hushed their voices when passing near her. All of these keen civilian soldiers were already devoted to the plucky English girl who had thrown in her lot with their cause. Not a man but would have sheltered her life with his own.

The horses cropped the succulent mountain grass which the frost had not yet withered. Small fires were kindled, and a meal prepared under the direction of a chef who before the war had been employed in one of the large hotels in Paris. Morits sat on the springy turf, smoked cigarettes, and watched the plain beneath. The still air vibrated almost continually with the distant rumbles of heavy detonations from the direction of Adrianople.

Two or three hours passed, when the sleepers were awakened to eat. Alicia roused herself, rested and refreshed, drank deeply from the canteen of a trooper who had found a spring of sweet mountain water, then attacked with good appetite the liver wing of a chicken brought her by the smiling chef. Then the remnants of the food were gathered up, the horses bridled, girths tightened, and Morits gave the order to mount. A moment later the party was in motion, picking its way down through the beech woods to strike the trail of the Turkish cavalry.

Detaching two troopers to follow a couple of miles in the rear, Morits led his command up a winding, rocky trail which appeared to traverse the narrow range. Alicia, riding at Morits' side, struggled a while in silence with her curiosity, then asked:

"Where are we going?"

"I wish to find out what this Turkish detachment is up to. The only thing which occurs to me is that it may be sent to convoy a herd of cattle hidden away somewhere up in the hills."

"And what if that is so?"

"I may try to ambush them on the way down, and break up the expedition."

"But we are outnumbered nearly three to one."

"Much can be accomplished by a surprise, especially as we could attack from a strong position on either side of the trail. In such a place as this"—he glanced up at the sides of the steep, narrow gorge which they were traversing—"a force like ours could hold a regiment in check."

Alicia's blue eyes glowed at him. She was rapidly becoming acquainted with this new Morits, who seemed to have utterly no relationship to Landovski, the fitter of Whitefern's. And yet the young man's manner was in no wise changed. He went about this business of war in the same quiet, confident way that he might have undertaken the fitting of a tailor-made suit. Alicia began vaguely to realize that, after all, it was merely a question of material and environment.

Morits adjusted the material with which his commanding general had supplied him to the result he desired to accomplish precisely as he might have cut a lot of valuable goods to make it go its farthest, and with the minimum of waste for the object to be achieved. Such base fabric as he might not be able to use he would discard with as little emotion as he might throw useless odds and ends into the waste hamper. Rubbish which might impede his movements would be quickly and effectually disposed of. Alicia had seen an example of this the evening before. She thought of it and shuddered.

She turned in her saddle, and regarded thoughtfully the serene profile at her side. Morits' fine brows were drawn down slightly as he studied the trail ahead, with occasional quick, comprehensive glances on either side. Alicia had already discovered that he seemed scarcely conscious of her presence at his side. He rarely spoke to her except when she directly addressed him, then answering with a polite and quiet terseness. He gave no sign that her

presence hampered him, nor did she believe it did. She had a conviction that he would proceed with the work in hand precisely as though she were not there. For this dressmaker there appeared to be but a single objective—to serve his cause as best he might with what power was vested in him.

Alicia pondered on the emotion, almost of repugnance, which she had felt when Morits first greeted her on his arrival in Sofia when she could not help but read his feeling toward her in the starved, hungry glow in his eyes and the expression of his face as she gave him her hand. Certainly there was none of that repugnance now. She stole a slanting look at his clear-skinned, resolute face, and her heart for some reason began to beat furiously, while a soft color stole into her cheeks. To her confusion, he felt the glance, and turned with a swift, questioning look. But, to her relief, and perhaps a little to her regret, he failed apparently to read what was passing in her mind, for he remarked briefly:

"You are looking better. The rest did you good."

"Yes," she answered. "I have had very little sleep for the past fortnight."

He twisted the tip of his black mustache. "It is too bad that you should have been thrown into such a situation as this."

"I am glad," she answered. "I love to see you at your work—and there is no doubt that this is it."

"This is merely circumstance. My real work is dressmaking."

"But don't you find this more to your taste?"

"No," he answered. "I do not like to kill and wound and cause bloodshed and suffering. But it could not be otherwise. The real cause of this conflict is not, as many people believe, for a greater Bulgaria, for mere conquest. It is a holy war, a sort of crusade, and its object is to free our fellow Christians in Macedonia from Moslem persecution. The faith of Islam has been the shame and the curse of eastern Europe. It has got to go once and for always, and no matter at what cost."

"But don't you find war thrilling and inspiring? Deep down in your heart, don't you find that it supplies some craving of your nature? Because if ever a man was a born soldier, you are."

Morits turned to her with his faint smile. "There are many things which one craves which one must try to deny oneself," he answered. "The lust for strife is inborn in us, and ought to be kept under the same control as any other primal passion. I should never think of taking up war as a profession. What is a soldier, anyhow? Merely a paid killer. But there are occasions when it becomes a sacred duty, and this is one of them. Just now it is agreeable to ride up through these hills with a troop of good fighting men at our heels. But to-morrow half of them may be dead, and there may be mourning in five times as many hearts."

Alicia did not answer. They rode on in silence broken only by the clatter of hoofs among the loose stones. Suddenly Morits raised his hand, and the little company halted.

"Somebody is coming down the ravine," said he. "It is probably one of my scouts."

CHAPTER IX.

The surmise was correct, for a moment later there appeared a trooper riding swiftly but carefully down the rough, stony trail.

"The enemy has halted by an old ruin at the top of the pass, captain," said he. "The horses are picketed, and the men are eating and resting."

"How far away?"

"Another hour. Josef and I hid our horses, and crept up among the rocks to examine them. The place is an ancient castle on a high plateau, and one can look down on the sea in the distance. There is a small Christian village, but the people have fled. Near the castle there is another ruin which appears to be that of a temple, or something of the sort, as some of the columns are still standing. The officers were poking about among the stones as

if searching for something. Josef has remained there to watch."

"Did you see any cattle?"

"The Turks were driving a few bullocks from the village."

"Does this road go down to the sea on the other side?"

"Yes. It is not very far to the sea. Three hours' ride at most."

Morits turned to the sergeant. "What do you make of it?" he asked. "If they have not gone after cattle, then what are they after? If they came from the eastern army and were going to Media they would have taken the customary road to the south. The force is too small to be of any consequence as a military unit, and, besides, there is nothing to be accomplished up in these hills. And why should they be lugging an empty gun carriage?"

The sergeant shook his head. "One thing is plain," said he; "they did not march up here merely to take the view."

"It is possible," said Morits, "that they have come to make a reconnoissance with the idea of landing troops on the beach below, crossing the mountain here, and executing a flank movement on our troops. But this would seem a foolish thing to do when they might so much better cross from Media. No, this party has come up here with some secret object which is connected with that gun carriage. The first detachment which we followed this morning was sent out to make sure that none of our troops were in the neighborhood before turning into the pass. We will follow them cautiously, and see what we can discover. Send two scouts on ahead, and give the order to march."

The little company proceeded slowly on up the winding trail. As they moved along the low rumble in the distance continued unintermittently.

"Our French guns are still hammering at Adrianople," said Morits. "They are good guns; our king chose them seven years ago. Some of them he saw made at Creusot."

"Are you going to attack the Turks ahead of us?" Alicia asked timidly.

"Not if it can be avoided. They are no doubt regular cavalry, and in numbers too strong for us. If it should come to a fight, you must keep well out of it. I wish that I could find some suitable place to leave you."

Alicia glanced at him quickly to see if he were joking, but her first look showed her that he was quite serious. A little tremor of fear passed through the girl. For the first time in her life she experienced the sensation of being an absolutely negligible quantity. She knew that at the slightest breach of discipline on her part she would be disposed of as a refractory child. Morits would quietly weigh the pros and cons of her welfare, and make his decision accordingly, and to this decision there would be no appeal.

Alicia struggled with mingled sentiments of resentment and the thrill which comes to a woman who finds at length her master, especially when she knows this master to be kind. Morits continued to scribble in his notebook. The willing horses picked their own way up the steep incline. The road emerged from the gorge, and entered a narrow, fertile valley on the farther slopes of which was a herd of sheep. Morits fixed in his mind their location. Higher up they entered the beech woods, where in spots the ground was cut and furrowed by rooting swine. These at least were safe from the foraging of Osmanli soldiers.

Presently the scout who had returned with the news of the enemy's position said that they were drawing near the top of the divide, and that the next turn of the road would bring them in sight of the ruined fortress. Morits turned in his saddle, motioning to the right, and the troop slipped like wolves into the forest.

"Dismount, and wait here," said Morits, and motioned to the scout to accompany him on foot.

"Take me to where you left your comrade," said he.

Toiling up the wooded slope, they saw presently a thinning of the trees ahead, and a moment later came out on a bare, bleak plateau, not over a mile in width, but stretching away brokenly to the north to lose itself in the forest.

Far beneath stretched a sweeping expanse of pale-blue water, which rose flawless and unsullied by smoke or sail to the white horizon.

At a distance of not more than a quarter of a mile from where they stood there rose from the dwarfed, straggling trees which covered the plateau a huge, quadrangular pile of ruins, which Morits judged to be the remains of one of the medieval Roman, or Venetian, or Genoese fortresses such as one finds throughout the length of the Balkan coast. Under the scrub oaks surrounding it the Turkish troops were bivouacked, their horses picketed or hobbled, and the smoke from a number of small fires was wafted to Morits' nostrils with a pleasant, spicy, resinous odor.

The keep of the castle was still in a fair state of preservation, and one tower was standing. The other four had crumbled down, demolishing a part of the great walls; but it was evident that there was still enough of the ancient pile intact to shelter a regiment. The soldiers appeared to prefer the open air, though a few men were passing in and out through the arched entrance. From the limb of one of the trees hung a freshly slaughtered bullock, and at some distance out upon the plain were some mounted men driving in a few scattered sheep.

But what interested Morits even more than the fortress was a peculiar-looking ruin which stood upon a low mound to the left of the fortress, and surrounded by a thick growth of very ancient cypress trees. It had been at one time circular in shape, as was shown by a few fragments of Ionic columns which were still standing. Apparently it had never possessed walls, or if so they had been within the columns, and had long since crumbled.

"That is the ruined temple of which I spoke," said the scout. "The officers were holding a consultation when I left to report to you. The other man is there where the cypresses touch the forest. His horse is back in the woods."

"And where is the village?"

"Just over the brow of the hill, behind the fortress. There are only a few small houses of shepherds and herders. It can be seen from farther to our right."

To Morits it was apparent that the Turkish force intended to bivouac where it was for the night, as some of the troopers had thrown off their tunics and were cutting cypress boughs as if for couches, while others were hacking with their sabers at dried branches for the evening's supply of firewood. Apparently they had no expectation of attack, as, indeed, it would seem that there was little need, for they did not appear to so much as have posted sentries. It looked to Morits as though the spot had been selected as a place of rendezvous.

"Let us question the other man," said he.

Passing quietly through the undergrowth, they made their way to the edge of the cypress grove, where the trooper imitated the note of a Balkan partridge. The call was answered immediately, and a moment later the watcher approached from the shelter of the dense shrubbery.

"What have you seen?" Morits asked.

"Nothing of importance, captain; but on creeping as close to this ruin in front of us as I dared, I heard the sound of men digging. They are still at it, though what they are after God only knows."

"How close is it possible to get without danger of being discovered?" Morits asked.

"The place is surrounded by a ruined wall about six feet high. One can creep up and look over the top without much risk."

"Then wait for me here," said Morits.

Making his way cautiously through the gnarled cypresses, he came presently to the wall referred to, which surrounded the temple at a distance of about fifty feet. As he crept up to look over the top he heard a confused clamor of excited voices, and occasionally a sharp command, with the ringing of iron on stone. Selecting a spot where

a low bough came down to the top of the wall, Morits found a foothold in a crevice, and looked over.

In the circle of broken columns were perhaps a score of men, several of whom were officers; and as one of these —a bearded, venerable-looking old Turk in the uniform of a colonel— turned in his direction, Morits received a shock of surprise. For the elderly officer was none other than Sami Pasha, whose former house in Sofia was the one in which Morits' family lived. He noticed also that the old man appeared much excited, and was strenuously haranguing the men about him. Morits could hear also the panting of the diggers as they toiled at the work of excavation.

Another thing which Morits was quick to observe was that the empty gun carriage which had already puzzled him had been brought to the gate of the inclosure. The space inside the wall appeared to have once been a little court or garden, for the flagging showed in spots through the vines and briers, and there were broken fragments of statues which had fallen or been thrown from their pedestals.

As Morits watched, completely baffled at what was afoot, there came a sudden shout, which was echoed the next instant by a dozen voices. Followed a wild, excited clamor, in which the name of Allah was frequently repeated, but in tones suggesting joy and congratulation. Sami Pasha, the dignified and scholarly old Turk, had drawn himself erect, and was standing, tense and watchful; and as Morits stared in wonder he saw one after the other of the officers step up and salute him in the graceful Turkish manner, with a gesture of the hand to the ground, the forehead, and the breast. To these apparent congratulations the old man replied in kind, his face wreathed in smiles.

Then, to Morits' bewilderment, a rough derrick was rigged, and the soldiers manned a primitive tackle. Some heavy object was apparently being raised from the newly dug excavation. Morits was able to look directly into the place, but whatever was being raised was hid from his sight by the surrounding group of soldiers. Up it came, was landed on the level of the floor, when once more there arose an absolute frenzy of excitement. So great was the uproar that it reached the troops about the fortress, many of whom dropped their tasks, and came running across the open ground, only to be turned back by a sharp order from one of the officers.

Morits' curiosity was unbounded. He knew of Sami Pasha as a profound scholar, archæologist, and deep student of ancient lore. Unquestionably he had located something of great interest and value in the temple, and had obtained permission to take a detachment of troops to go in search of it. But what this might be, aside from actual treasure, Morits was unable to imagine.

Then as he watched the gun carriage was backed up to the crumbling steps of the temple, and a mass of men which completely hid the object they handled appeared to be hoisting it onto the truck. Morits caught a glimpse of what appeared to be a fieldpiece in a tarpaulin gun cover. The procession moved off in the direction of the fortress.

Morits slipped down from the wall, and walked slowly back to where he had left his two men.

"Whatever it is," said he to himself, "I've got to have it."

CHAPTER X.

On returning to where he had left his command, Morits called the sergeant aside, and gave him concise directions. The ex-barber of Sofia listened with many shakes of the head, and his eyes turned often to his captain with a look of admiration. But he made no protest, merely nodding as he fixed his instructions in his memory.

"You are a brave man, Morits," he said, when his superior had finished. The two had played together as children. "I doubt that you will be able

to manage it. Would not Sami Pasha remember you?"

"No," Morits answered. "He has not seen me since I was a child, and then he would not have noticed me. When you attack, the lady will be left with the horses."

"Your orders shall be followed strictly," replied the sergeant. "God be with you, Morits."

Morits made his way to where Alicia was sitting at the foot of an oak. She looked up questioningly.

"I am going to leave you for a few hours," he said. "I have a plan for splitting up this Turkish detachment. While I am gone, you will obey the orders of the sergeant, who is in command."

Alicia glanced up at him, and her color faded.

"Where are you going?" she asked.

"I cannot stop to explain my errand now, as I have no time to lose. Do precisely as you are told, and ask no questions. Good-by, and God keep you."

He turned on his heel, and mounted his horse, which had been led up by a trooper. Alicia rose, and stared after him with a pale face as he picked his way down the rough hillside under the trees. The sun was getting low, and the shadows in the forest were beginning to darken. The air was still, and it was growing colder as the evening approached.

A little farther down Morits came out upon the trail, when he turned sharply and rode back up the slope for the Turkish camp. Drawing near, he spurred on briskly, and, rounding a corner of rock, saw ahead a Turkish sentinel standing in the road.

The man had apparently heard his approach, for he had come to the port arms.

"Halt!" he challenged. "Who goes there?"

Morits drew rein. "A messenger for his excellency, Colonel Sami Pasha," he answered, in Turkish.

"Advance," ordered the sentinel, and passed the word for the binbashi of the guard.

Morits approached at a walk. The soldier eyed him curiously.

"You are in Bulgarian uniform," said he.

"You wear woolen clothes," retorted Morits, "but that does not make you a sheep."

"*T'chk—t'chk*—here is the binbashi."

Morits dismounted. "I have a message for Sami Pasha," said he. "Is he here?"

"Follow me," said the binbashi curtly.

He led the way to the entrance of the ruined fortress, where an orderly was standing at attention. Passing through what had been the guardroom, they came to a small antechamber, where a group of officers were sitting on fallen blocks of stone, engaged in conversation. Morits came to attention, and saluted. At sight of his uniform the Turks looked at him sharply.

Sami Pasha, a distinguished type of the Osmanli Turk of the orthodox class, examined Morits closely with his keen, deep-set eyes. The colonel must have been seventy years of age, but was still of strong, erect frame, with the thoughtful, benevolent face of a philosopher.

"Who are you?" he asked quietly. "And what is your errand here?"

Morits took from his pocket a wallet, from which he drew a piece of folded parchment paper.

"Here are my credentials, your excellency," said he.

Sami Pasha took the paper, and held it to the light. It was a general pass through all the Ottoman lines for one Ahmed, the son of Ali, a spy, and signed by Nazim Pasha himself. It stated that the bearer was acting under orders from headquarters, and was not to be detained. This pass, with other papers, had been found on the leader of the four spies whom Morits had ordered shot the previous day.

Sami Pasha handed the pass to another officer, and looked up at Morits.

"And what is your message?" he asked.

"I come from Nazim Pasha with verbal orders for your excellency," said

Morits. "I had also a letter, but this I was ordered to destroy if in danger of falling into the hands of the enemy. This happened not three hours ago. There is a troop of Bulgarian cavalry encamped on the river at the foot of the pass. I managed to slip around them, but, fearing capture, I destroyed the letter, according to orders."

Sami Pasha and his staff exchanged quick glances.

"And what was the verbal message?"

"The verbal message was that you were to return at once before it was too late, and that the object of your expedition might be accomplished from the sea."

Sami Pasha began to play with the little rosary of beads which, like most of his class, he carried in his pocket.

"Do you yourself know the object of this expedition?" he demanded suddenly, with a keen glance at Morits.

"Yes, your excellency. It was to reconnoiter the pass with a view to the landing of troops from the Black Sea and striking the Bulgarian advance on the left flank."

Sami Pasha nodded. "You appear to be an intelligent man," said he. "Now, about this Bulgarian troop that you avoided. What do you think it to be?"

"I think that it is a reconnoitering party which has fallen on your trail, and will try to cut you off, attacking either to-night or early to-morrow morning. But, as your excellency no doubt observed in coming up the pass, there is a spot about a mile from the plain where the road leads through a narrow ravine. If your excellency was to dispatch a hundred men immediately they could ambush themselves at this point, and not a man of the enemy's detachment would escape."

Sami Pasha's eyes glowed. He nodded slowly to himself.

"You think the enemy numbers about a hundred?"

"Possibly more. It is probable that there are two full troops. I hid my horse, and observed them from the rocks on the side of a hill."

Sami Pasha looked with fatherly approval at the upright figure of the young man.

"You are a worthy soldier. What is your rank?"

"I am a sergeant of reserves. At present I am detached for special duty, owing to my knowledge of the country and the fact that I speak Bulgarian even better than my own tongue. My father is a Bulgarian Ottoman."

"And what are your orders after reporting to me here?"

"With the permission of your excellency, I shall eat and sleep, then return to Media by the coast. I have not slept for many hours."

"Then I will not detain you. You say that these two troops are bivouacked near the mouth of the pass?"

"They are just above the ford, where the road passes under the high bank. That is why I think that they mean to come up the pass."

"Good! You may go. I shall remember you in my report."

"Your excellency is very kind." Morits saluted and withdrew.

"For the love of Allah," said he to the binbashi, as he went out, "give me something to eat and a place to sleep. For thirty hours I have scarcely been out of the saddle." He stretched his arms above his head and yawned. Indeed, he had slight need to affect fatigue, as his service of the past two weeks had been arduous in the extreme, though of a far more wholesome character than that of his comrades with the main army, who were fighting constantly. Morits, as a matter of fact, was reaping the benefit of his two years of preparation and study.

The binbashi furnished him with food—a chunk of nutritious black bread and a joint of fat mutton. He was eating wolfishly, occasionally pausing to answer the questions of the curious troopers, when a Turkish bugle sounded the assembly. The sun was perhaps an hour from the horizon, and a delicate new moon was in the southwestern sky.

Immediately the camp was in commotion. The troop horses were driven in from the field, where they had been

grazing, and quickly saddled. Morits had already observed that these were trained troops, and there were none better to be found in any of the armies of the world. Stretched out beside the smoldering embers of a camp fire, he saw Sami Pasha come out, cloaked and gauntleted, and ready for the field. Morits was glad of this, for he had conceived a positive affection for the fine old Ottoman. The success of his daring project had amazed him. He had expected a rigid cross-examination in which one slip might have proved fatal not only to his plans, but to his life, as the passport which he had presented put him outside the rights of a prisoner of war. His greatest danger had been in saying that he was sent by Nazim Pasha—first because he did not know exactly where the commander in chief was located, and secondly because he could not be sure that Sami Pasha was acting under his immediate orders. But this latter surmise seemed to have been justified, and Morits' bold and confident statements had done the rest.

Of the gun carriage and its mysterious charge Morits had seen nothing; nor had he asked any questions of the soldiers for fear of being led into a conversation which might have resulted in arousing suspicion. He had wisely played the rôle of an utterly exhausted man to whom all things were secondary to the need of food and sleep.

Stretched out now beside the fire, he watched the troopers falling into ranks, and his heart beat high. He had been afraid that Sami Pasha might try to force a passage with the whole of his command, and convoying the treasure; but it soon became apparent that only one troop was being ordered out, leaving perhaps eighty or ninety men in camp.

Nothing could have suited Morits better. It was, in fact, precisely what he had counted upon. It would take the attacking party at least three hours to get down to the foot of the pass. The guard left in the camp, knowing that it could not be approached except by the road which their comrades had just taken, would be utterly unprepared for the assault of Morits' party, which, according to the orders given the sergeant, would fall swiftly and unexpectedly once the departed troop was well away. Morits counted on being himself able to slip off into the woods and lead the attack in person. In the completeness of the surprise, he doubted that he need lose a man of his command.

But a surprise lay in store for Morits as well. Crouched in the shadow, feigning to be asleep, he watched the attacking party file out quickly and quietly, while Sami Pasha, enveloped in his cloak, stood watching their departure. Scarcely had they gone when Sami Pasha spoke to a young officer at his elbow, and a moment later the remaining troop proceeded to saddle. Four gun horses were harnessed and driven into the ruined keep of the fortress, to reappear immediately, dragging the gun carriage. The binbashi came to where Morits was lying, and shook him by the elbow.

"Come!" said he. "You will have to sleep in the saddle, brother. We are going to march."

Morits clambered to his feet and yawned. Sami Pasha, who was standing near, turned to him with a benevolent smile.

"Come here," said he.

Morits obeyed with a salute. The old man pointed to the gun carriage.

"Dost thou know what is there?" he asked.

"No, Baba," answered Morits, purposefully employing the "affectionate diminutive" used by the Turkish peasant redifs to their chief. He rubbed his eyes as he spoke.

Sami Pasha patted him upon the shoulder. That sleepy "Baba" had warmed the heart of the old man. He had been a lieutenant under Osman Pasha in seventy-eight; a reluctant survivor of the "Regiment Pensa" which lost at Plevna in the second of the four great battles two thousand out of three thousand men in a twenty-minute engagement. The simple inscription commemorating this event may be seen to-day, and reads, with unconscious

grandeur: "Sacred to the Memory of the Regiment Pensa, Which Lies Buried Here."

Sami Pasha was one of these silent heroes. In his time he had replied to Osman Pasha even as this young Osmanli patriot now replied to him: "Baba." It warmed his soul, and his heart went out to the young man.

"My son," said he, "on that gun carriage rests a great treasure. Do I say great?" He smiled and tugged at his snowy beard. "It may pay the cost of war against these vile giaours for a week."

Morits stared at the gun carriage. An orderly approached the old man.

"The column is ready to march, excellency," he said.

Sami Pasha turned to his horse. With one foot in the stirrup, he looked back at Morits.

"You may ride beside me," he said. "I see that you are a young man who has been well brought up. Your sleep will have to wait. We never slept at Plevna. Mount!"

The troop swung into the saddle. Sami Pasha rode ahead, with Morits at his flank. The old colonel glanced toward his captain.

"Put the column in motion," said he.

An instant later the troop filed out upon the road, and in open order turned toward the sea. Morits tried to fall back, but Sami Pasha recalled him to his side.

"You shall be my eyes when it grows dark," said he. "Once my sight could rival that of an eagle of the Despoto Dagh, but now I am his peer only in my silvery head and my love for my native mountains. And so you are an Osmanli of Bulgaria, and yet a patriot?"

"Yes, excellency," answered Morits, in a low voice; and the lie seemed to choke him.

"Call me 'Baba.' I think of my soldiers always as my children, and my heart warms to you. You are not like many of the subjects of our Padishah in Bulgaria who have refused their allegiance, and remain to till not only their own fields, but those of their giaour neighbors. Is your father alive?"

"Yes, Baba."

"I hope that you revere him. He must be proud of you, for your service is a dangerous one. If you were to fall into the hands of the enemy you would soon be sent to the bosom of the Prophet. War is terrible."

He stroked his snowy beard, then glanced at Morits.

"I shall recommend that you be given rank and an order if we come through in safety with that which follows us." He glanced over his shoulder at the gun carriage, which was lurching at their heels, two dismounted troopers braking when the steepness of the road made it necessary. "You would never guess what was there. I will tell you, for you have rendered a distinguished service. It is the life-sized statue of a pagan goddess, the Artemis of the early pantheistic Greeks, wrought in solid gold."

Morits gasped. "A statue in solid gold!" he exclaimed.

"Yes. Long ago I discovered its existence in my readings of ancient lore. It was first cast from gold taken in Persia by Alexander, from a statue by one Praxiteles, a sculptor of Athens, who lived five centuries before the coming of the Christian prophet, Jesus Christ. Later it was captured by the Athenians, and was hidden by a doge of Venice in a temple within a fortress known as La Rocca at a place called Asolo, not far from Venice. But this doge was driven out, and brought the statue with him here, where he erected the fortress which we have just quitted, and built hard by a temple for the Artemis. For ten years I have suspected that it was hidden there."

"But why did you not go in search of it, excellency?"

"For a double reason. In the first place, I did not care to profane a temple of any kind. There is good in all religion, just as there is a curse to him who has none. Secondly, I had no need of wealth, being blessed of Allah in money and estates. Then this war came. The government of the Padishah

is poor, and I thought to get this statue and turn it into money to feed my children—the soldiers—and to furnish them with clothes."

Morits did not answer. His heart seemed to have turned to lead in his bosom. Back there in the forest his men were even now astir, and as soon as darkness fell would slip out like timber wolves on the trail of the unsuspecting Turkish troop, who marched in a false security, thinking their retreat to be safely covered. Morits knew that his scouts would fall like wolves on the little band, and that perhaps in two hours' time the venerable Ottoman beside him would be trodden under many hoofs. His soul turned sick.

Yet whither did his duty lead? There was but one way—the way of the sword. A life-size statue of solid gold! A deep sadness filled him.

Sami Pasha babbled on with the garrulity of age: "When I asked our commander in chief for an escort to fetch the treasure, he thought that I was in my dotage. It was difficult to convince him that I was not stricken with madness. A life-size statue of a woman in solid gold. Let us suppose that such a woman in the flesh would weigh one hundred and forty pounds. Taking flesh to be of the specific gravity of water, which it nearly approaches, and the specific gravity of gold to be nineteen, it is easy to compute the approximate value in Turkish lira. I have estimated it at over one hundred thousand."

Morits' heart gave a bound. Nearly one hundred thousand pounds sterling was bumping at his heels on the gun carriage. He thought of what this sum would mean to Bulgaria at the present crisis, and tried to harden his heart. War was war, and sentiment had no place therein. He knew that the venerable patriot riding at his side and talking to him in the tones of a father would lay down his life a dozen times rather than see this contribution to his cause wrested from him by the hands of the infidel enemy. Then he glanced quickly at the face of the old man, and his heart swelled again.

"Nazim Pasha laughed at me," continued Sami Pasha, "but because of our ancient friendship he gave me the troops. He should have given me a squadron. But for you—who knows?—all might have been lost. It is not much—but it may feed my children for several days."

Morits turned in his saddle and looked behind him. Broad bands of crimson were searching the zenith, but the slim crescent of the moon was nearly quenched in the lurid flame from the west.

CHAPTER XI.

The rocky trail wound along the precipitous face of the mountain, now bathed in purple shadow, and far below the sea breathed softly from its dark, sleeping bosom. The night was falling fast, and as the darkness deepened the stars twinkled forth from a sky of smoothest velvet. The road shouldered the little troop almost over the brink, then widened to dip into a narrow valley filled with mist and sweet odors of the night. A noisy torrent was forded, the troopers pausing to let their horses drink.

The troop was thus disposed when from the rear came the noise of many hoofs. A sharp challenge rang out: "*Dur!* (halt) Who goes there?"

For answer a volley crashed through the stillness, and was hurled back from the mountainside. Bullets whistled through the murk, and the air was torn with shrill, savage yells. Horses struck by bullets plunged to the stones, or, maddened with fright and pain, bolted wildly, their riders struggling to restrain them and draw their weapons. In an instant the troop was thrown into indescribable confusion, when into the whirling vortex swept a mass of wild riders, dealing death on every side.

Morits had been prepared. At the first shock of the fight he had spurred against the horse of Sami Pasha, and, before the aged colonel could recover himself, had snatched the revolver from his holster, and flung it to the ground. Tearing the reins from the old man's hands, Morits flung them over the horse's head, and, urging his own beast

ahead, rushed across the valley and clear of the fight. No one checked his flight, for they were well in advance of the column, and the troopers following were occupied in a frenzied effort to form and repulse the attack.

At a distance of a hundred yards or more Morits drew rein and looked back. Sami Pasha had drawn his saber, and was rocking back and forth in the saddle, thundering maledictions. It is doubtful if he realized that he had fallen into the hands of an enemy. To the confused mind of the aged warrior, Morits' motive in rushing him out and away from the fight seemed to be entirely one of protection, and the rage of the sturdy old hero of a dozen stricken fields at being so treated was beyond all bounds.

It must, therefore, have been a considerable shock when Morits swung suddenly about and covered him with his revolver.

"Surrender, Sami Pasha!" said he. "I am a Bulgarian officer."

"What!" bellowed Sami Pasha. "You are of the enemy? You have led me into this trap?"

"Yes," Morits answered. "Put up your saber. You are my prisoner."

Deprived as he was of his reins, and covered by Morits' revolver, the old Ottoman was, indeed, helpless. But Sami Pasha was of a fiber which preferred death to disgrace. He had been tricked and humiliated, but at least he could die. With a shout, he drove home his spurs, and as his horse plunged forward Sami Pasha slashed furiously at Morits, who barely saved himself by turning the blow with his revolver, which was knocked spinning from his hand. His horse recoiled, and for the instant he was beyond the reach of the raging old soldier. Morits whipped out his own blade.

"Traitor!" roared Sami Pasha. "You have blackened my face——"

Again he spurred forward and struck, and again Morits parried the blow. Sami Pasha's horse, wheeling at the pressure of its rider's knee—for the beast was trained—jerked the reins from Morits' hands. Sami Pasha flung himself forward and recovered them. Morits might easily have cut him down as he stooped, but he could no more have slashed at that silvery head than he could have smote his own father. Swinging his horse to the side, he spurred back into the fight.

The Turkish troop, taken by surprise as it was, had lost heavily in the first shock of the encounter. But these were trained soldiers, and not to be routed at the first setback. Clamoring one to another, they snatched their sabers from the scabbards, and swung to meet the rush. The daylight had gone, but the stars twinkled brightly. There was light enough to distinguish an Ottoman fez from the military caps of the attacking party.

As Morits plunged into the mêlée a man lashed back at his face. He caught the blow, then thrust, recovering in time to parry a blow from the other side. A revolver flashed, and his horse groaned and sank under him. As he flung himself clear, a saber whistled over his head, and a heavy body pitched down upon him, pinning him to the ground. Morits wormed from under it, and struggled to his feet. Over him towered Sami Pashi, beset by men of Morits' troop. The old man's fez was gone, and his silvery hair and beard glistened frostily as he hacked and hewed. At Morits' side a riderless horse, overborne by the shock of contact, scrambled to its feet and stood snorting. Morits flung himself across its back, and as he did so Sami Pasha reined in upon him with a shout.

"Death to you, traitor!" he thundered, and swung up his dripping blade. Then, poised in the act to strike, he seemed to reel; the blow fell wide, and the aged hero of Plevna lurched forward in his saddle, and toppled to the ground.

Suddenly a silence fell. Morits looked about him. Horses were standing riderless, their heads low. Mounted figures were weaving back and forth, calling as they went. At a distance stood a dark group of dismounted men with four troopers towering above them. Near at hand was the gun car-

riage, standing where it had stopped. One of the team was lying on the ground; the others were spread out with their noses together. The truck had bogged down almost to the hubs in the spongy turf.

The fight was over. Dark figures, some groaning, strewed the ground. Several of his troopers crowded up to Morits as he stood looking about him.

"We have them, captain," said one. "Thank God you are not killed!"

It was the voice of the sergeant. Morits passed his hand across his face. He felt the hot tears in his eyes, and was conscious of an inexpressible depression.

"Muster the troop, and see how many we have lost," he said harshly. "Who are all these men?"

"Ours, captain. Our losses have been very slight. I myself ran the commander through. He was about to cut you down as you climbed into the saddle." The voice of the barber had a hard, jubilant ring.

"God forgive you!" muttered Morits. "I wanted to save his life. And where is the lady?"

"I left her in the care of a woman in the village."

"Good! Assemble the troop."

"According to orders, captain. We have not done badly—and captured a gun into the bargain. It is just as well that I kept my patience and waited for a place like this to attack. On the mountainside some of us might have got crowded over the edge. And when you make your report, Morits, don't forget that it was I who killed the colonel. As he swung up, I thrust him under the shoulder blade——"

Morits turned on him savagely.

"You are not cutting hair now," said he. "Make your muster, and be quick about it!"

The troop was quickly assembled. It had lost but four men killed outright, and the wounded—who numbered fifteen—were all able to sit their horses, though there were four or five in a serious condition from loss of blood. The Turks had lost nearly half their number killed, owing to the unexpectedness of the attack. Morits quickly inspected the wounded and those who had surrendered. To these latter he gave orders to bury their dead and depart with their own wounded to the next village. Then for a moment he stood with uncovered head beside the body of Sami Pasha. The sight of that pallid but serene face robbed him of the joy of victory.

"Take the body of your colonel with you," said he, in Turkish, to the silent group of prisoners, "and see that he be given a burial befitting to his rank. So may the God of us all, whether it be yours or ours, give you peace, and look with mercy upon your shortcomings."

He turned to his troop, gave the order to mount, and, a fresh horse having been harnessed in the place of the one killed in the team which drew the gun carriage, the party turned back up the slope. Morits rode in advance, his chin upon his chest. At times his lips moved in prayer.

"I tried to save him," he muttered to himself; "but God ordained it otherwise. No doubt he is happier than if he had survived the loss of the Artemis. Perhaps, too, I may join him before the night is over."

At the steepest part of the ascent, two more horses were hitched to the gun carriage, and, urged by Morits, the party pushed on rapidly. The wounded men rode uncomplainingly, though two had to be held in their saddles by their comrades. Morits pushed on relentlessly, and before long they reached the village at the top of the divide. Not a light showed from any of the poor cabins of the place. Morits called the sergeant.

"Where is the lady?" he asked.

"I left her at that first house on the right, captain."

"Listen," said Morits. "When the party which was sent down to the foot of the pass discover that there is no enemy they will probably suspect some trick, and return. But they will scarcely be able to get back before midnight, and it is also possible that they may remain there, sending back messengers

to say that the road is clear. Station sentries down the trail, and rouse some of these villagers, and get forage for the horses. Tell the men that we shall march at midnight."

"And how about the wounded, captain? There are three men who are unable to ride."

"We shall have to get a cart, and take them with us."

"Then you mean to attack the party below?"

"We shall have to fight our way through. I do not dare remain here, as the Turkish prisoners whom we liberated below will report what has occurred, and we do not want to be caught between two fires. Feed the horses, let the men rest, and be ready to march at midnight."

"According to orders," said the sergeant.

Morits dismounted, and strode to the house where Alicia had been left. As he approached the door there came from within the baying of a dog. Drawing his saber, Morits rapped heavily with the hilt. The baying grew clamorous, and he could hear the dog hurling its great bulk against the door.

"Open!" shouted Morits, in Turkish. "And fasten your dog."

There was no answer, but from inside the dog tore furiously with claw and fang at the stout oak. Morits renewed his hammering, and presently a quavering voice which sounded like that of a woman answered: "Who is there?"

"Open if you do not want a torch put to your house!" roared Morits furiously.

There was the sound of scuffling within. The dog whimpered, and there came the shock of blows. Then the door opened, and a woman with her head muffled to the eyes peered out.

"Where is the woman who was left here?" Morits demanded.

"She is gone, effendi."

"Gone where? Why did you let her go?"

"Four soldiers came here and took her away."

"Were they Osmanlis?"

"Yes, effendi. They were of those who rode away down the pass. The four were sent back with a message. They took the woman, and rode back down the pass."

Morits turned away with a sinking heart. There was no doubt that the terrified woman told the truth. It was not difficult to guess at what had happened. The Turkish party had found the traces of Morits' troop farther down the trail, and had sent back couriers to put Sami Pasha on his guard. Learning that a Bulgarian party had emerged from the forest and taken his trail, they had turned back, taking Alicia with them. The girl was a prisoner, and there was no longer any hope of a surprise. Only one thing remained to Morits, and that was to fight his way through.

CHAPTER XII.

Now that the enemy knew of the existence of an armed force somewhere between their divided party, there was no longer any hope of a surprise. Morits was outnumbered, hampered with wounded and the golden Artemis, and cut off from his own army.

For an instant he was tempted to return on the road leading to the sea, skirt the mountains at their base, and try to find another route back to the plain. But a moment's thought showed him the folly of this. Below were Turkish villages where the alarm would already be spread, and with so small a company he could not hope to force his way through. There seemed to be but one choice, and that was to wait for the dawn, and then attempt the passage to the plain.

For Alicia's safety he had no great fear. Her captors were Osmanli Turks of the best class, the troopers honest peasants, and the officers gentlemen. Morits knew the chivalrous attitude of such as they toward womankind, and he did not doubt that the girl would be courteously cared for. As a lady, and belonging to the Red Cross, she would meet with every consideration. These were not like the savage redifs of Asia

Minor, who gave themselves to such atrocities as had already occurred in Christian villages.

Calling the sergeant, he told him what had occurred, and that it would be necessary to wait for the light before attempting the passage to the plain, as at night the entire troop could easily fall into an ambush from which not a man might escape alive.

"We had better bivouac in the fortress," he said. "It is possible that they may attack or return to join the other troop."

This plan was carried out, and the night passed without alarm. At dawn one of the wounded men died, and was buried in the keep. The brief ceremony over, Morits ordered his command to fall in. An araba, or native cart, had been found in the village, and this, filled with hay, made a possible mode of conveyance for the wounded.

"We have no such play ahead of us as that of last night," said Morits to his men. "There is soldier's work waiting for us below. Let every man of you keep his head, and waste neither bullets nor blows, and remember that you can reach farther with your revolvers than with your sabers. Now, let me tell you something: What you see on this gun carriage is not a fieldpiece or machine gun. Come here and look for yourselves."

The men clustered about him curiously. Morits cast off the turns of rope about the tarpaulin, then flung it aside. A cry of astonishment burst from the assembled troopers. Stretched out upon the gun carriage in an attitude which had in it something curiously wanton lay the nude golden figure of the Artemis. Perfectly proportioned, and of a figure which combined lightness with strength, the goddess lay shimmering in her golden beauty in the first pale light of the dawn, and it seemed to Morits as he looked at the upturned face that it held a weirdly lifelike expression of scorn and mockery.

The statue had naturally been molded to stand erect, the weight poised on the left foot, and the left arm slightly raised. In the recumbent position, this gave a startlingly lifelike expression, as though the figure were on the verge of action. The beautiful face, with its expression of haughty chastity, held some sinister quality of menace which struck a chill through those who regarded it. Several of the troopers crossed themselves instinctively.

"The saints protect us!" muttered the sergeant. "What is it?"

"It is a pagan goddess, the Artemis of the early Greeks, and it is cast in solid gold. Sami Pasha unearthed it from the temple yonder. You can see that it is a treasure of great value. Now cover it up, and let us march."

He drew the cover back over the mellow golden figure, and secured it in place. The troopers turned to their horses, muttering to themselves. Morits had shown them the statue to impress them with the great intrinsic value of their charge. But as he turned away he felt that he had made a mistake. A curious chill appeared to have fallen on the troop. Girths were tightened in silence. It was as though the virgin goddess had cast some evil spell upon these puny mortals who had profaned her image. Men were saying to one another that Sami Pasha had not long survived her conquest.

Overhead the sky was clear, but in the southeast was a bank of huge, billowing clouds, and into these the sun rose from the still, blue sea in a wild riot of flaming color. Morits rode slowly to the head of his troop, and gave the order to march. They moved out under the frowning arch of the ancient gate, and turned into the trail. As they did so a flock of crows winged heavily from the edge of the forest, and flew across their path with hoarse croakings. The troopers crossed themselves.

Down the steep descent they rode, the horses scuffling among the loose stones. They reached the lower level, traversed the valley, and saw ahead the narrow opening of the gorge. High overhead a gray film was drawing itself across the sky, and the shadows cast in front of them were growing vague and indistinct.

Morits halted his troop, and care-

fully studied the sides of the gorge through his glasses. No sign of life was visible, and he was about to give the order to proceed when from a heap of loose bowlders fifty feet above the trail there came a single pale gleam. It disappeared immediately, but the secret was betrayed. That single flash of thin sunlight on a weapon raised incautiously above a rock told all that was necessary. Up there among the loose stones the Turks were ambushed like tigers, waiting for their enemy to pass.

The gorge, about a hundred yards in width, marked the ancient course of the river, which of later years had shifted its bed, due perhaps to an avalanche of earth and stones obstructing its earlier passage. It now expanded in the valley to form a little lake, then flowed off to the south through a marshy tract, to find its way to the plain through a wide ravine. Morits doubted that this route would be possible for mounted men, and least of all for the gun carriage with its heavy burden, but there was no alternative. It would be suicidal to attempt to drive the enemy from the rocks where it was lodged.

Proceeding at an angle, as though to reconnoiter the gorge before entering, the place was presently hid from view by the projecting shoulder of the hill on the southern side. Once out of sight of the enemy, Morits turned off sharply to the left, and gave the order to trot. The troop moved swiftly across the spongy turf of the valley, skirted the foot of the hill, and struck the river, which at this point flowed over a broad, sandy bed. On either side the banks were steep, and cluttered with stones and débris; but the river bed itself was passable, though for how long a distance Morits had no means of knowing.

Turning in his saddle, he gestured to his little band to follow, and rode out into the stream. The water was but knee-deep, and the bottom composed of sand and cobbles. Onward they plunged over rifts and bars, the wiry team in the gun carriage struggling gamely with their load. They rounded the low eminence which formed the southern confines of the gorge, and fell upon a rapid where the river narrowed to foam down over rough bowlders. Morits trembled for the wheels of the gun carriage.

The wounded men in the araba endured their jolting without a murmur, much of the shock being taken up by the loose straw on which they lay. But the trial was not for long, as presently the river widened again, flowing along the edge of a sandy meadow. Morits, glancing to the left, saw that they had passed around the narrow part of the gorge.

But he knew that the enemy would not long remain in ignorance of his altered course, and, not wishing to sustain an attack while down in the river bed, he presently found a spot where the bank sloped, and, quickly harnessing four more horses to the gun carriage, soon had it up the bank and on the solid ground. A mile away across the rolling sand hills lay the trail, and, anxious to reach it before the enemy could ride down to cut him off again where it narrowed below, he urged his party ahead with as much speed as the character of the ground permitted.

The troop was perhaps halfway to a point where the trail again disappeared in a ravine, when, glancing back over his shoulder, Morits saw a dark swarm of mounted men pour out from the opening of the gorge, and, evidently divining his purpose, head straight for the ravine, less than a mile from where they emerged. Morits' party was considerably nearer. It was instantly evident to every man of the troop that should the Turks be able to reach the place in time to dismount and deploy in the rocks their passage would be barred. Morits rose in his stirrups, and shouted the order to charge.

Then began a race on the two sides of a triangle of which the apex was the goal. The advantage was slightly with the Turks, for although they had slightly farther to go their road was better, being hard and level, whereas Morits' troop labored over rough ground broken by wide, shallow gullies. But the Bulgarians were light men on picked horses, and as the two parties converged it became evident that they

were destined to meet before arriving at the objective point. The gun carriage and the araba conveying the wounded were abandoned; but three of the less seriously wounded clambered from the cart, mounted the saddled horses attached to the vehicle, cut them free, and rode on after their comrades.

As the distance between the two hostile parties rapidly lessened, Morits saw that in numbers they were nearly equal, and that the fight was destined to be that most sanguinary of encounters which terminates only when all of one side are killed and wounded. He knew that his own men would never yield, and he was also aware of the stubborn fighting qualities of the well-trained, well-commanded Ottoman soldiers. Here was a case where every man must kill his man or lose his own life, and as the surrounding conditions favored neither party the struggle was destined to be swift and savage.

Both parties had strung out in the race, and as they drew together it was as though individual champions had sallied forth to do battle separately. Drifting closer with every stride of the racing horses, men began to choose their personal antagonists. At a distance of a hundred yards, the firearms began to speak, and two or three horses were down on either side. And then, as if moved by a mutual impulse, both sides abandoned the goal, and swerved in sharply to meet.

In such a conflict, men turn instinctively to steel. At the first clash, Morits found his saber in his hand as he spurred his horse to meet a swarthy, scowling Turk no less eager to come to grips. Morits swerved slightly to avoid the other's direct rush, parried the eager blow, recovered quickly, and thrust. He heard the smothered "Allah!" as the cold steel plunged home, and saw the flash of the white teeth. The trooper swayed in his saddle, struck again blindly, and fell.

A horse struck that of Morits on the flank, knocking the beast nearly off its feet, and Morits twisted in his saddle barely in time to stop a slashing blow which numbed his arm to the elbow. His antagonist swept past with a yell, and Morits saw him lift in his stirrups to hew down fearfully on the defenseless head of one of the Bulgarian troop engaged with another enemy. The sight maddened him, and as the soldier fell, cleft to the eyes, he spurred forward, and cut down his slayer with the relentlessness of one exercising on the parade ground.

Not a shot was being fired, but the clashing of steel from all about rose with a cadence almost musical. The combatants had drawn more closely together, and as Morits plunged to the aid of another of his troopers who was hard beset it seemed to him that there were none but enemies on every side. Horses screamed as the blows fell on head or flanks, but the men fought almost in silence. Hoarse panting rose from every side, and the dull shock of falling bodies.

All about the little battle was being fought grimly, silently, in small groups or individual combats; but as these found fatal issue the victors turned to hurl themselves on the nearest enemy at hand, he sometimes engaged already with two others. The result of this was that the fight was taking on a denser formation, drawing in, as it were, to a central point, and into this vortex Morits flung his horse, using his blade scarcely except to parry, while the dripping point bit deeply and often. In such a combat one good swordsman is worth a dozen clumsy sabers, and Morits was a master of his weapon. He had fought himself into a deadly calm, for it was evident at a glance that the Turks, heavier and stronger men, were more than a match for the small civilian troopers. Many saddles had been emptied, but often into these there clambered unhorsed men but slightly wounded, who had been flung to earth by the shock of contact or ill-delivered blows.

"Use your points!' roared Morits. "You can do nothing with the edge. "Thrust, you Bulgarians—thrust!"

"Thrust yourself, my friend!" called a mocking voice at his elbow, and Morits swung about to see a Turkish officer

bearing down upon him, a savage grin under his black mustache. At sight of Morits' face the Ottoman's eyes opened wide.

"Mashallah!" he cried. "The spy!" And he spurred his horse against that of Morits, cutting lightly at his head.

Morits caught the blow, and lunged. The officer slightly turned his body, evading the blow; then, before Morits could recover, his saber whistled down, and Morits flung himself back in bare time to escape a slash which would have bitten deeply into his neck. As it was, the point tore through his tunic, laying open the muscles of his chest. The sharp pain acted as a spur. He saw that he had to do with an able swordsman and a splendid horseman, well mounted, for the Turk controlled his little Arab entirely by the pressure of the knee. A Turkish trooper, his face streaked with blood, bore down on Morits, who turned quickly from the officer, and ran him through.

"This dog bites deep!" said the officer, and pressed him hard again.

Morits was twice wounded, once from a cut across the forehead, and once by a thrust in the thigh. His eyes were half blinded with blood, but he bided his time, defending himself as best he might until there came the chance for which he had been waiting. His saber passed through the sword arm of the Ottoman, whose blade dropped from his hand.

"Strike!" said he, smiling.

But Morits swung his horse aside, and, pausing to wipe the blood from his eyes, a voice said at his shoulder:

"We are getting the worst of it, Morits."

"Draw clear and shoot," panted Morits. "Our men are too light for this work. Pass the word for them to draw clear and shoot."

His own revolver was empty, and there was no time to load, so he spurred back into the fight again, noticing as he did so that the Turks whom he encountered now stood entirely upon the defensive. There was no dust, and in the intervals of action men had seen how their comrades fared with the swift, eager Bulgarian captain. Presently a sharp report clove the clash of steel, then another, and the firing became general. Wounded and dismounted men were beginning to bethink them of their firearms.

The combatants had thinned appallingly, but Morits did not notice this. Intent upon his own separate struggles, he did not pause to look about. Moreover, his vision had clouded, and there was a humming in his ears, while the blood which ran down into his eyes from the wound upon his forehead made it difficult for him to see at all. His fighting had grown automatic, and he seemed imbued with unnatural strength and skill, and when a man fell beneath his saber some mechanical tally registered subconsciously: "One less." It struck him also in a vague way that his opponents were less formidable than at first, that their blows lacked force and direction, while his own needed but slight effort to be effective. A nausea seized him, and he wondered sickly how long the shambles would last.

Then presently it seemed that there was no one with whom to engage. He wiped the sticky blood from his eyes, and looked about. To his half-stupid amazement, he discovered that he was practically alone. Here and there riderless ponies were standing, and close by was a mounted Turk slumped down in his saddle, his chin upon his chest, as though asleep. As Morits watched him curiously he swayed slightly, then fell forward on his pony's neck, and slipped to the ground, grotesquely sprawled.

Underfoot the damp, sandy turf looked as though freshly plowed, and Morits, casting his heavy eyes on all sides, saw that it was strewn with dead and dying men. Here and there huddled groups appeared to be conversing wearily. Some of the horses were lying down; others had strayed clear of the bloody zone and were browsing quietly on the tufts of yellow grass. There in the distance where he had left them were the gun carriage and the araba, the latter with but one horse attached of the four which had drawn it.

Morits' vision cleared a little. Al-

most at his feet were the sergeant and two Turks, all three dead. Turkish and Bulgarian uniforms appeared to be mingled indiscriminately. As he looked a great wonder and awe fell upon Morits.

"God be merciful! The sowing of the Dragon's Teeth," he said aloud, in English.

From his left a weary voice answered, in the same tongue:

"You are right, effendi. It is a full harvest."

Morits turned sluggishly in his saddle, and his burning eyes fell upon the Turkish officer with whom he had been engaged. He was sitting with his back against a dead horse, a cigarette between his blue lips, and a handkerchief bound tightly about his arm.

"I began to wonder if you, too, were dead," observed the Turk. "In that case I should have considered myself the victor."

Morits slid from his horse. Things were getting rapidly darker, and drums were beating in his ears.

"You may yet claim that honor," said he, and lurched heavily to the ground.

When he recovered consciousness it was to find that he was lying with his head on the officer's knee and the sensation of cool water on his face. Around him were crouched several of his own men, all pallid of face and variously wounded. They had crawled up apparently to discover if their leader still lived.

"Feeling better?" asked the Turkish captain, in perfect English. "That is a pity. I should enjoy the pleasure of your company on the next march. I have a bullet through the body, and doubt that I shall see the sunset. That is the worst of this detached skirmishing—a wounded man has no show. But you Bulgars can fight."

"You Osmanlis are good teachers," Morits answered.

"You are a master of the sword," said the young man, speaking with some difficulty. "I am Ahmed Hussein Bey. By whom have I the honor to be vanquished?"

"My name is Morits Landovski, and I am by profession a dressmaker."

The Turk stared, then his lips parted in a feeble smile.

"My word—a dressmaker! You Bulgars are wonderful. I think that you will succeed. A dressmaker! At least you know how to cut clothes. My arm is witness to that. And the sergeant yonder—he was a good swordsman, too. Also a dressmaker?"

"No; he was a barber of Sofia."

"A barber!" The young man laughed, and his features writhed in pain. "Well," he panted, "the barber also understood his work. I lay here on the ground and watched him part the hair of several of my troopers before he was killed. Listen, my friend. It is all the work of that accursed statue. I had a feeling that the wench would ransom herself in blood——"

He closed his eyes, and leaned back wearily. The cigarette dropped from his lips. His face grew livid, but a moment later he roused himself. Morits reversed their positions, taking the head of the dying man upon his knee. The captain opened his eyes and smiled.

"Tell Sami Pasha that his grandson, Ahmed, died like a soldier," said he.

Morits bowed his head. "He shall soon know it," he answered. "Will you tell me something, effendi? Where is the young English girl that your men took from the house in the village? The——"

"The golden goddess——" murmured the officer. His eyes closed wearily.

"The nurse of the Red Cross."

"I know. I called her 'the golden goddess.' They looked alike. She is very beautiful. She is very——"

"Where is she?" asked Morits, seeing that the end was near.

"Where? She went—she—went she——"

The voice strangled in his throat. A tremor shook his strong, lithe body. His head fell limply to the side.

Morits lowered him gently, and struggled to his feet. There was much for him to do. From all about came the feeble plaints of the wounded.

Then as he stood fighting for the strength which refused to come the light

faded before his eyes. The moving hills swam and rolled in front of his vision. The drumming rose louder in his ears, and, cleaving it, he heard the voice of Alicia calling from a great distance: "Morits! Morits!" He felt himself falling—falling, as it seemed, into infinity.

"This is death," thought Morits; "and I am glad."

CHAPTER XIII.

A jouncing and swaying, accompanied by racking pain in his wounded thigh, recalled Morits from hours of an unconsciousness due to loss of blood.

He put out his hand, and found that he was lying upon straw. Opening his eyes, he looked straight up at the star-lit heavens. All about him was a sound of moving bodies. Something stirred at his side, and a weak voice asked:

"Have you regained consciousness, captain?"

"Yes," Morits answered, almost inaudibly.

"Then I must call the lady."

"What lady?"

"The lady of the Red Cross. She came on the field after the fight, and got us into the araba with the assistance of some of those who were not so badly wounded. We marched for several hours, and on the plain fell in with a Bulgarian squadron. They are convoying us to the base. But I should call the lady——"

"Wait!" said Morits. "How many of us are there left?"

"About fifteen, all badly wounded but three or four. The others are following in carts found in the neighborhood. The lady arrived just in time to keep the peasants from killing or plundering us. I myself helped until overcome by weakness. Here is the lady——"

Morits saw a white face bending over him.

"Alicia!" he muttered.

"Oh, Morits, are you conscious again?" Alicia's voice broke.

"Yes. Tell me what happened."

"I watched the fight from a little distance. Morits, you were terrible!" Her voice shook. "Men fell wherever you passed. I saw you fight with Ahmed Hussein Bey. I met him once in London when he was attached to the embassy. When the fight began the men who were guarding me ran to join, so I watched from the distance. After it was over I rode up, and found you unconscious, with your head on Ahmed's knee. He told me to gather some canteens and ride to the river to fill them, and when I got back he was dead, and you were still unconscious. How do you feel now, Morits, dear?"

"I am very weak. I lost a lot of blood."

"I know—oh, I know! I bound up your wounds the best I could. Oh, Morits, what an awful fight!"

"What happened afterward?" he asked feebly.

"Some Turkish peasants came along the trail with three carts. They were making for the hills before our army. They were ugly at first, but the Turkish soldiers who were less badly wounded frightened them into doing what I said. We put the wounded in the carts and came away. I had them bring the body of the sergeant and Ahmed Bey."

"Were did we meet our squadron?"

"Not far from the river. We are to camp soon, and then I will make you some broth. Now you must rest."

The wounded, with their convoy, fell in with the main column near the village where Morits had rescued Alicia. Here they bivouacked for the night. Thence the pitiful little handful of survivors of one of those savage encounters of which partisan warfare is so filled, and so few of which are ever chronicled, was sent on to the base, later to be invalided home.

The golden goddess here passes out of the story. Perhaps a replica of her was made in the interests of art, but it is more likely that she went straight to the melting pot, which fate, it will be admitted, she most richly deserved in atonement for her sacrifice of Christian and Moslem blood. It is to be hoped, however, that the precious metal of

which she was cast was duly exorcised before its coinage into many thousands of gold pieces which are of themselves, without the curse of a pagan deity, a source of ever-present danger to the souls and bodies of the sons of men.

To Morits the ultimate fate of the goddess was a matter on which he did not care to think. There was another goddess, and a Christian one, at that, of whom the substance was far more precious to him than that of the Artemis of Praxiteles. The shrine of this goddess was in his heart, and as the days of his convalescence proceeded he worshiped her daily with added fervor. And if she was to him a goddess, then for her he also represented something rather more than a man, which some fool has said requires nine tailors for the making.

It was on this same question of tailoring that Morits and Alicia came one day to a serious discussion. It was Alicia who began it, for it seemed to her that the gallant survivor of a stricken field ought scarcely return to the cutting of clothes for pampered dolls whose estimate of character was no more subtle than to be biased by a string of tape and a pair of shears.

"You are a born soldier, Morits," said she, "and after this war you can surely have what you ask for in Bulgaria's army. God knows there will be vacancies enough."

Morits' pale face was lighted by its swift smile, but the look of melancholy did not leave his eyes. He was thinking of other vacancies in hearts and homes, for he had recently learned that two of his brothers had fallen before Adrianople.

"I have tried to do my duty as a soldier, Alicia," he answered. "I must now think of my duty as a son. This war has brought my father to a low ebb of finances, as it has so many others. My earning capacity as a dressmaker is far greater than my earning capacity as a general. It is probable that by the time I am fit for the field again this war will be over. Whitefern's will be glad to get me back again."

Alicia stared down at her feet. "Then you mean to return to London?" she asked.

"That is best. We Bulgarians will not have much to spend on our bodies these several years to come. In time we shall be more prosperous than ever before, but not for a number of years. As for you——"

"I shall go with you. You said that you could get me something there."

"But your old associates——"

"My old associates can go hang!" she cried hotly. "What do they know of dressmaking and war and——"

Morits' face turned suddenly pale. His eyes glowed up at her yearningly.

"And what, Alicia——" His voice trembled.

"And love——" she whispered, stooping to gather him in her strong young arms.

THE STAR PERFORMER

WHEN the citizens of Washington gave a farewell banquet to Uncle Joe Cannon, many newspaper correspondents and members of Congress did their utmost throughout the evening to make things merry.

At the close of the festivities a small group near Mr. Cannon was talking about how sincerely everybody had worked in order to make the affair a success.

"I think we've all hung up a record in the entertaining line to-night," said one of the crowd.

"Well, you can take it from me," said Uncle Joe, shifting his cigar to the far side of his mouth, "that Ollie James, the senator from Kentucky, hung up a brand-new record. I watched him, and I know. He ate steadily from half past seven o'clock until a quarter to twelve."

Consecrated Ground

By Alan Sullivan

Author of "Na-Quape's Defiance," "The Servant of the City," Etc.

Jamie was as welcome as the gray goose when he joined Macdougall and Suggemah, the Ojibwa, in their lonely camp up North. Macdougall spent a lot of time trying to convert the Indian. Suggemah always would have the same answer ready: "Your God cannot speak, but I hear my Manitou in the wind and the water." Jamie said nothing, but at the end, while on the bleak trail over the ice-clad bay, he was the means of making the Ojibwa acknowledge the God of the Christians. A strange, weird story wonderfully told, of a Scotch boy, the son of pious parents, who suddenly exchanges the primness of the golf links at Musselborough for the pine-tossed skyline of a Canadian wilderness—a real wilderness, with one lone missionary in a hundred thousand square miles.

THE Musselborough links march beside the Firth from Eskmouth eastward, and on the south the ancient town pulls itself up sharply against long green undulations of close, velvety turf.

"Musselborough was a borough when Edinboro was none,
Musselborough will be a borough when Edinboro's gone."

So ran the old saying, and every time-worn cobble-paved lane in the old fishing village seemed to testify to its probable truth.

The mother of Jamie Peters got her fish at Portobello, packed them in a creel, and carried them four miles to Edinboro. All day her "Caller herrin" shrilled out, till at dusk she tramped back six miles to Musselborough with a few shillings clinking cheerfully in some remote receptacle of her short, voluminous skirts. But Jamie's earliest memories were not of fish, they were of the links. By the time he was three he had learned to keep his eye on the ball. At the age of five he could follow through and hit clean, and ere he was nine he was a caddy.

He started wisely and took golf seriously, and, as the years passed, soaked in all the concentrated wisdom of that historic course. There was something about the sharp click of a good drive that got into his blood, and when he saw old Tom Morris tee his ball on his old-fashioned watch, and lift it over the grand stand with a full iron swing, golf became something more than a game, or even a ceremonial.

It was a May day, with a west wind whipping the Firth into life, when Jamie left for the first hole exactly six steps behind the Honorable John Selkirk. The Honorable John was playing his friend, the Bishop of Edinboro, and his thickset calves in their coarse, homespun casings were matched, if not shamed, by the sturdy shanks that swelled beneath the episcopal gaiters.

"Ye'll be pullin' this a little I'm thinking," said Jamie, thrusting a brassy into the hands of the Honorable John. "The wind's i' the wast."

But Selkirk did not pull. He sliced

—sliced horribly. His ball leaped the low fence and lay in a rut by the roadside. "What about that?" he said, and looked at Jamie.

Jamie was disgusted, more—he was hurt. "I've seen waur, sir, but no muckle waur. We'll take the iron noo."

Some kinder fate smiled on Selkirk. He lifted the ball with a clean, sharp snoop straight for the green, where it dropped, rolled a foot or two, and lay dead.

"Yon's no so bad," said Jamie, with evident relief. "The bishop's i' the bunker."

Selkirk looked back. Angus Edinboro was engaged in ecclesiastical excavations. His niblock rose and fell viciously. His black-coated body was obscured by clouds of sand, through which could be distinguished a clerical expression devoid of any appearance of sanctity. "Jamie, I've always pitied a bishop because he cannot swear," he said mirthfully.

"Wha says that? Ye've never caddied for a bishop. Take the hole. He's picked up."

Halfway round the course the bishop's serenity was restored, he was one up. "Where's your son now, Selkirk?"

There was a moment's pause. Selkirk frowned slightly, and addressed his ball. It was not like the bishop to talk so inopportunely. His vexation infused itself into the stroke, and he topped his drive. "Damn—my son's in Canada, somewhere in the north, and I beg your pardon, sir."

The bishop stiffened slightly, then relaxed into a smile. "I'm sorry, Selkirk. It was quite unpardonable," he said, and drove straight into another bunker. "I feel inclined to ask you as a layman to make the appropriate remark," he added ruefully.

At the eighth hole, Selkirk was two up and one to play. He was talking freely about Canada, and Jamie was close up on his heels, sucking it in. The mere distances gave him a queer sensation. Once only had he been as far as Corstorphine to see the games, twelve miles to travel in his twenty-five years. Then Selkirk told about the big trout in the Nepigon River, that falls into Lake Superior. There were sea trout in the Esk, where it split Musselborough in halves—that is, if the overflow from the gas works was not too great, and the dyestuffs from the mills higher up were not too poisonous. Jamie had whipped the Esk till he was tired, but this sounded differently.

The Honorable John lost the last hole by missing a three-foot put, but Jamie was too absorbed in new reflections to care. "Selkirk was going to Canada to join his son—would he—would he?"

"Ye'll no be needin' a caddie ower there," he said tentatively, an hour later, depositing a bag of burnished clubs.

Selkirk shook his head with a smile. "No, lad, no; but would you be leaving Musselborough?"

Jamie cast a thoughtful eye about him. To the west lay the gray clubhouse, its front dotted with men in bright-red coats, southward rose the bleak grand stand past which the Musselborough races annually plowed their deliberate course. Eastward rolled the smooth lift of the links, and beyond all rose the misty undulations of the Pentlands. It was all fine, just fine, but he was suddenly tired of it. "I'll dae anything ye like if ye'll tak me," he said pleadingly, digging his toe into the turf, from which crime he would have shrunk in a normal mood.

Selkirk looked at him seriously; as it happened, he wanted a man. Jamie would make an excellent servant, there was no doubt of that, and his pawkiness had often been balm to Selkirk's soul. "I'll think it over," he said, scanning the freckled face. "You'll hear from me the day after to-morrow."

"I' the morn's morn," replied Jamie quickly.

"Yes, lad—i' the morn's morn."

Affairs progressed quickly for once in Midlothian. A month later Jamie stood amid a crowd of second-class passengers, staring at the Laurentians as the *Huronic* steamed up the Gulf of St. Lawrence. He was trying hard to adjust himself. He had been traveling for a week, and this was the first time

he had reached anything. That in itself was difficult to comprehend. The home ties that promised to be so hard to break had slipped from him like his old golfing-coat. But most wonderful of all was the way his mother took it. Selkirk's letter arrived as promised on the morn's morn. He read it, swallowed an unaccustomed lump, and turned to his mother: "Mither, I'm ganging tae America wi' Mr. Selkirk."

His mother was cleaning fish. She finished her fish, and then stared at him. "When are ye gangin', lad?"

"The week's end, forbye it's no sooner."

The fishwife put down her knife and rubbed her hard, frosty face. A herring scale stuck there, and that was Jamie's best memory of his mother—with a strange look in her eye and the herring scale glinting like silver on her cheek. "Wull ye promise me one thing, Jamie?"

"I wull, mither."

"If anything haps tae ye, ye'll be burrit in consecrated ground?"

Jamie fingered the new one-pound Scotch notes in his pocket, for Selkirk had sent him wherewith to equip himself. It gave a cheerful sense of independence. Nothing could happen to a man with sixty shillings in his trews. "Aye, mither, I promise."

And that was about all there had been to it; just in the manner of hard, angular people, who, having a depth of affection stowed away somewhere, would never reveal it, for be it known that the Scotch may express sentiment for their country, but rarely for each other.

The Honorable John bore letters to George Simpson, chief factor of the Hudson's Bay Company, and while Jamie waited in the big anteroom at the head office in Montreal, he could almost have sworn he was back in Scotland again. From all around came the lift of his native tongue—the smooth, sibilant accents of the Highlander, the soft inflections of the Lothian lad, the choleric abruptness of a Glasgow clerk, and the rasp of the Hebrides. It was a wise man who ordained that the Scotch should be the backbone of the H. B. C., for it was never broken.

"We will go to Prince Arthur's Landing to meet my son," said Selkirk, returning from his interview with the factor, "and then we will fish the Nepigon."

Now, of that journey and of the pink and red trout in the icy waters of the Nepigon, is it not written in Jamie's letters—letters that were thumbed and borrowed, read and reread, till something of the fury of the chase filtered into half the caddies on Musselborough links. Angus Edinboro caught something of it when he overheard a shock-headed boy mutter scathingly: "A pound of fush tae an ounce of rod! Well, ye ken what Jamie is." But all the time the ancient Celt was awaking in the wanderer. He was responding like a questing hound to the call of the wilderness. Something in him became alive, and he revolted at the prospect of Selkirk's return, at exchanging cataracts, and great spaces, and pine-tossed sky line for the primness of Musselborough links and the ordered life of old.

Selkirk was an understanding man. Jamie admitted that when he stood in front of his master digging his toe, this time into the moss and seeking for words wherewith to excuse himself. "I'll come if ye say so, Maister John; but dinna tak me if ye dinna need me."

"And what would you be doing?" said Selkirk, looking at him as he did that day in Musselborough three months ago.

Jamie swung his arm eloquently. Behind him the river, split by a rocky pinnacle, rushed by in twin torrents of thunderous foam. All around him the forest marched to its brink, and the air was full of sweet tumult and the unfathomed mystery of untenanted places. "It's yon," he almost whispered. "It's got me and I would na' leave it."

There was that in Selkirk which moved in response. He knew it and felt it too, this call that summoned so many of his countrymen to lonely lodges. And Jamie would go like the

rest till, by and by, with an Indian wife, he would rear a family of the finest men that ever threaded any wilderness—a family of Scotch half-breeds. So it came that Selkirk, in another month, had another round with the bishop on the Musselborough links, while Jamie went north with a party that headed for Fort Albany on Hudson Bay.

It was the end of August that the white stockade of the fort faded behind him, as he stood on the deck of a trading schooner bound for Fort Churchill, still farther north. The call was getting very clear now. In his quiet, dogged way he was doing his best to answer. The barren lands stretched ahead, naked and forlorn—a country sheared of ease, and comfort, and delight. And ever as the barrenness increased Jamie's soul stripped away the shell that incased it and came forth nakedly to meet it. The Musselborough caddy was wiped clean out of him, he had become the primordial Celt.

Macdougall was in charge at Churchill, and there was also Suggemah, the Mosquito, an Ojibwa interpreter. Into their circle dropped Jamie, welcome as the gray goose, herald of summer in the barren lands. Macdougall held close to the kirk, but Suggemah was a heathen. Evening after evening had the trader hammered at the inflexible Indian, till by now he was on the fourth round of arguments that apparently ended in the smoke that shot in quick little puffs from the copper-colored face.

"Your God cannot speak," said Suggemah stolidly, "but I hear my Manitou in the wind and the water. Shall I leave a god who has a voice for one that is silent?" And that was how it always ended.

As for the rest, Suggemah opened himself to Jamie, till the lad read in him the inherited forest wisdom of the ages. When the snows came the two went off together for days, and the lad saw exhibited all the marvelous unwritten skill of the red man in the wilderness. But it is particularly of Jamie's last day at Fort Churchill, the first day of the new year, that you must read.

How it happened, Suggemah could never tell, because he did not see it. Jamie was shooting ptarmigan with Macdougall's muzzle-loader, his freckled cheek laid close against the gun-stock, his gray eye glancing sharply along the brown barrel. Suddenly there was a report so strangely unlike the sound of Macdougall's gun that Suggemah came running across the ridge. Face down on the snow stretched Jamie, beside him the muzzle-loader, with shattered breech.

For a day and a night he lay babbling, unresponsive to all that Macdougall or Suggemah could do. As the end drew near, he talked of many things, talked ceaselessly in a thin, cracked, high-pitched voice. Just before the very end he grew strangely quiet, and looked up with one parting flicker of reason. His mind had tottered back to Musselborough, to the day he had given Selkirk's letter to his mother. "Ha'e ye ony consecrated ground here?" he whispered painfully.

"Not here, laddie; at York Factory, but not here," whispered back Macdougall.

"Wull—ye—bury—me—there?" He forced it out with difficulty, for things were growing dark again. "I promised ma mither."

For an instant Macdougall hesitated. To York Factory was one hundred and sixty miles across the bay ice. Jamie caught his indecision, and an extremity of pleading rushed into his eyes. "Promise," he said weakly, "promise, for ma mither."

"I promise, laddie, I promise," replied the factor firmly. "Sleep, laddie, sleep." Then Jamie turned on his side, smiled happily, and the rest was silence.

The York Factory trail follows the shore forty miles to Cape Churchill, and swings with it due south for another hundred and twenty. Suggemah called it four days with fair going, and for the first day he broke trail. After him came a dog team with sleeping bags and provisions, then another toboggan with the rigid body of Jamie. The weather was clear and hard. On their right lifted the stark hills that rimmed

this section of the great bay, while beyond the wind-whipped ice widened into the speechless North. In these latitudes, in the winter, words are few. At four o'clock the little caravan turned landward for the night's shelter. At five camp was made in the lee of a titanic fragment of the overhanging bluff. A hundred yards away, higher up on the gaunt hillside, rested the shapeless form on the toboggan.

The night fell black and cheerless, as a wind whined out of the north. It picked up little rifts and flurries of snow, and drove them dancing southward, like wraiths in the gloom. The dogs curled tighter in the circular beds that ere morning would sink into pits with the warmth of their sturdy bodies. Close beside the red embers of the fire were the sleeping bags of Macdougall and Suggemah. Within them slumbered those weary with the weight of the trail.

One hour, two hours passed. A dog's forehead wrinkled and a pair of black ears twitched sharply erect. Then the gray head lifted, the wolfish eyes blinked, and the nostrils quivered and expanded. Sleep had vanished with a sense of something strange. In another instant his muzzle went up, the jaw dropped, showing its white fangs, and there thrilled out one long, desolate howl into the night, the howl of fear and terror. On the instant seven other fierce protests joined the clamor, and the air was split with an inferno of sound.

The sleeping bags stirred, and from them two faces stared toward the dogs. Macdougall's arm shot out, and his grip closed on the rifle that lay beside him. Then, suddenly, the sound ceased and dropped into an abyss of silence, in which he could hear the dogs panting. Through a hollow in the wind came a cry. It thrilled out with the wild appeal of one in mortal agony, who flings his last breath into a piteous scream for help. It was the voice of a man, yet not of a man; it was human, but it came from where no man was. Macdougall felt his heart contract, and prickly fear ran over his skin. Again it rose straight from the darkness, where the toboggan rested beneath its motionless freight. "Help, help!" In hoarse horror it assailed him out of the gloom.

The rifle shook in Macdougall's hands, but he crawled out of his fur robes. Suggemah had turned a ghastly pallid yellow, but he, too, rose, and followed, with his gunstock at half-shoulder height, its muzzle pitched forward, and his finger on the trigger.

The factor's knees knocked as he moved slowly through the deep snow. Then out of the gloom ahead came a sound of soft, large movements and scuffling. He drew a little nearer. The barrel of his rifle described uncertain little circles, but he held it as steadily as might be toward the sound. In another moment something large and shapeless rose in front, and two great white arms thrust out toward him. On the instant Suggemah fired from behind him. There came back a choking cough, and at that moment the moon slid from the shroud of clouds that had enveloped it.

In the half light a she-bear wallowed in the snow, and, where it rolled, crimson patches lay dark. Close beside was the toboggan, overturned. Beneath it, the body of Jamie lay twisted and distorted. One arm was extended, torn from its swathing, and the stiff white fingers curled inward toward the rigid palm. His face was bare, his mouth was open as if for speech, and on the dead face was frozen an agony of fear.

The great beast choked its life out in a red flood. The moonlight came clear, and Macdougall, whose features had grown suddenly old and gray, stood peering down at the still face. Then he turned to Suggemah, and his voice shook. "Who called?"

But Suggemah only rolled his black eyes from Jamie to the bear, from the bear to the factor, till the whites of them shone oily and lustrous.

"Who called?" said Macdougall again. His tone was pitched high in a whimpering quaver; he had just met with fear for the first time.

Suggemah shook his head. There were tales abroad of a Thing that walked by night on the shores of the bay, a Thing that no man might meet and live. Perhaps—he stooped over Jamie, delicately replaced the torn wrappings, and laid the outstretched arm straight again. "I do not know," he said simply. "Now I wait here."

Morning came with leaden feet, and again the dog train furrowed its way southward. Behind them the wind smoothed out their tracks as the water closes in to obliterate the wake of a ship. So passed the day in silence and wonderings of what the night would bring. But on that night and the next there came no message from the dead, and then there was but one day's journey left to consecrated ground.

There is an ominous hour that heralds the dawn. Macdougall shivered beneath the weight of it, as he lay sleepless with burning eyes. His brain had turned in on itself with vain imaginings. In these great spaces the mind of man is very naked. There is nothing to cloak it from the cycle of the mysterious processes of nature, for not only is life itself primal, but Death tramps the trail till his face is familiar from many encounters. Now, however, Macdougall felt that something that lay between himself and the world of ghosts had been ripped away, and he could almost put out his hand in the dark and touch that which was not of earth.

In that hour it came again, the ghostly, unearthly wail for help, but this time wilder, more agonized than before. He knew it was coming; a sharp shrinking of his spirit warned his body to summon all its powers in the darkness. But his heavy limbs revolted from their duty. His heart moved on, but behind dragged that physical part of him which was riven with unutterable horror. Strive as he would, he could only crawl toward the sound. Then past him glided Suggemah, very smoothly, very swiftly. The Indian's eyes were flashing, he seemed animated by some superb infusion of courage.

His figure vanished into the scant timber where rested the toboggan. A sound of locking jaws and tearing of cloth made Macdougall feel suddenly sick. Then the sharp crack of a rifle, and silence, broken only by the snapping of twigs as something raced inland through the underbrush.

When Macdougall reached him, Suggemah was stooping over the body. Again it wore that agony of fear. "Wolf," he said.

Day broke clear and hard as the two set forth. There was no need for speech. A dumb, blind burden of oppression had fallen over them. They could do nothing but tramp doggedly on with quick glances at the shore line, where the hills were already smoothing out toward York Factory. Through the brain of each moved a dead wonderment, enveloping thought and spirit alike in a choking, mystifying fog. It was hard to breathe. It seemed astonishing that they should ever have been able to laugh—they could never laugh again.

At the York Factory was Missionary Simpson, who wore the only black coat in a hundred thousand square miles of wilderness. Macdougall had never thought much of missionaries before, but he experienced a strange slackness of relief at the sight of this man of faith. He felt allied at last to some one who could deal with his own spiritual extremity.

At sundown on the next day, Simpson stood on consecrated ground. With him were the two brothers of the trail, and a gathering of silent men looking wonderingly at everything except that which lay directly in front of them. Simpson turned to the magnificent ceremonial with which the Church of England bids farewell to her children, and read on with steady voice. Suddenly Macdougall looked up. *"If, after the manner of men, I have fought with beasts"*—what did Simpson mean by that? He racked himself for an answer. Again came Simpson's voice. *"Behold, I show you a mystery."* He waited expectantly, for mystery had him in its grip. *"Forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain."* That was it—thank God, that was it!

He had a quick sensing as if something that bound him tight were being cut away. The strangling weight that had choked him since those first mysterious cries came through the night was lifted. He took his first long, deep, free breath, and the hot blood went pumping strongly through him.

The same change came over Suggemah. The Indian stood erect, his black eyes fixed unswervingly on the missionary. On his face was written a great resolution. The brief service ended, and he spoke quietly, slowly, but with something in his tones that Macdougall had never heard before.

"I have heard the message of your Manitou. Four night ago it came, but I did not understand. Two nights ago it came again, and I began to understand. My Manitou speaks in the water and the wind, but yours can give a voice to the dead. I, Suggemah, am now his servant."

And was it not strange that at that identical moment, the bishop, who was having a morning round at Musselborough, should pause as he was settling himself to drive, and remark thoughtfully: "I say, Selkirk, have you never heard from that caddy you took to Canada with you?"

WHY THE BALL PLAYER'S CAREER WAS METEORIC

JOHN McGRAW, manager of the New York Giants, has demonstrated many times a business acumen indicating that he would have been successful in other endeavors than baseball. One of his greatest of foresights was the institution of professional training for his team, a custom which since has been taken up by all major-league clubs, and by some of the minors. It is the professional trainer who has upset the "dope" of the wisest managers, writers, and fans in the last half dozen years.

All degrees of experts have been predicting annually: "Matty is bound to go back. He's been ringmaster in the big show too long. The Giants can't win this year." And: "Bender and Plank can't go on forever. The Athletics are due to slump." And similar requiems for Lajoie, Wagner, Crawford, Mullin, Tinker, Chance, Wallace, Evers, Sheckard, Bresnahan, and other seemingly everlasting stars. These predictions are based on the experiences of the early grandees of baseball, when the meteoric career was the mode—up to zenith in a flash and to oblivion in five or six years, à la Luby, Getzein, and Shreve, idolized in their time, but so quick to decline that only the students of the game can detail their achievements.

But many of the older stars of to-day, still scintillating after more than a decade of wonderful ball playing, were caught in their prime by this new force in baseball, the trainer, and carried along with it, to confound the prophets. And the new ones, in all probability, have from fifteen to twenty years of active service before them.

Had this force been manifest in baseball a dozen years ago, Hughie Jennings, the famous "Wee-ah" manager of the Detroit Tigers, very likely would have remained to this day the peerless shortstop of them all, instead of earning his emoluments pulling grass on the side lines. He avers, himself, that his throwing arm went wrong because in the old days there were no trainers to minister to the tired, overheated wings of baseball players when cold breezes might be blowing away their vitality. McGraw might not have been compelled to renounce active playing in his prime had that injured leg received proper care after each strenuous afternoon on the diamond. Years ago there were no clubhouses at the fields for the visiting players, and in some cities not even for the home teams.

In Somaliland

By Robert Welles Ritchie

Autnor of "Fate Maketh His Circuit," "The Goblin's Treasure House," Etc.

The man who writes red-blood stories about adventurers extraordinary is not necessarily an adventurer. In this story you will hear of a fictionist of the red-blood school who was domiciled in the peaceful borough of Brooklyn and had never himself been flung into anything more strenuous than a Brooklyn Bridge crush at 5:30 p. m. Came the one big moment, however, when Opportunity gripped him and he woke from his quiet to find himself in a very whirlpool of adventure whose eddies laved the coast of far-away Somaliland.

(*A Novelette*)

CHAPTER I.

AND so," said the red-necked adventurer, "we hiked out for Somaliland in a dhow—Rough Mike Pidgin and me. And we had the pearls sewed up in a shark-skin bag next my chest—those pearls we'd swiped from the Sultan Ali Beg's daughter after killing the three eunuchs. Sky like the inside of a copper bowl above us; water just crawling with sharks about us; and back there at Djibouti a Frenchy gunboat casting off to give us the hot chase through the blasted Red Sea."

T. Berkeley Manners took three gulps of his Medoc superieur in exultant abandon, warming and thrilling to the tips of his polished finger nails. Ye gods! Pearls in a shark-skin bag—crawling with sharks! Here was life! Red, raw romance this!

"And I said to Rough Mike Pidgin, said I: 'When we get to Wadi Humpha—God and that Frenchy gunboat being willing—we'll have to knock these Somali boys who are sailing us over the head, leave 'em in the dhow, and let her wallow out to the black horizon. Dead men are safe men,' I said.

"'Better plug 'em each with an automatic pill,' Rough Mike replies, 'and cast 'em overboard to the tigers. Easier and safer, that.'"

T. Berkeley Manners nudged his companion, who was the man from Spitzbergen, and nodded at him, bright-eyed.

"This is the stuff that gets *me!*" chortled T. Berkeley, in an ecstatic whisper. "To have the real thing—Life, you know—brought to Sixth Avenue and dropped, dripping, on a table where all sorts of good fellows from all sorts of places can grab it firsthand. Nothing in my experience——"

The red-necked adventurer held up his hand with a dramatic palm outward. Imperiously he hushed even a buzz of appreciation.

"And then, gentlemen, the stars popped out like diamonds on a Burmah girl's forehead, and back there where the day had suddenly been doused was a black streak against the sky—the gunboat, racing like the wind, and us a good five miles from Wadi Humpha. I leave it to you, Mr. Man from Saigon—you over there who's just told us about stepping on a basketful of cobras in the dark—didn't I have the edge on

you for thrills out there in that stinking Red Sea, with death playing seven-come-eleven at my elbow? Rather!"

Undoubtedly he did. He had patted Death on the head, and called him by his middle name. To T. Berkeley Manners, writer of red-blooded tales of the untamed West, and here at this board in Paquin's in this rare company of swashbucklers and adventurers by dispensation of sweet providence and the editor of *Ripping Romance,* the red-necked adventurer was superman. With what straightforward naïveté he told his tale of grim endeavor; how with the rough words of a doer, and not a writer, he sketched in the blood and iron background of his story! T. Berkeley was somewhat shocked when he looked across the horseshoe table to where the editor of *Ripping Romance* was seated at the right hand of the Guatemalan conspirator, and saw that he was idly toying with his cigarette holder. Harkins, that corking judge of real knock-out fiction, discoverer of One-eyed Wilkins, the sailor poet, didn't seem to be warming up to this tale of Somaliland.

Still, T. Berkeley reflected, Harkins must be more or less inured to this sort of thing; the edge of this rough-hewn material straight from the quarry must be rubbed off for him, who had to read all those manuscripts submitted to *Ripping Romance.* His was the critical attitude. T. Berkeley, mentally toasting the pearls in the shark-skin bag as he quaffed deeply his Medoc, thanked whatever gods a strong man can recognize that he had the creative, not the critical, faculty. Bright idea, though, this stunt of Harkins to bring together in a New York restaurant all these chaps who had traveled the world's jungle paths. Ruddy Kip—good old Ruddy Kip, who knew the game—had dashed off some lines once to the Company of Adventurers, or something like that. T. Berkeley wished he could recall them; he'd get 'em off when it came his turn to speak. But meanwhile——

"There under the moon I fought him—yes, gentlemen—fought him to a standstill, the dead Somali boys cumbering our feet as we each tried for a leg hold; the sharks bobbing their noses out of the sickly green and white phosphorescence—thick like molasses—to see how the fight was going on. And when I'd got him down and had my fingers on his gullet, I said to him, said I: 'Rough Mike, we'll divide these here pearls; that's what we'll do. We won't kill each other for them.'

"Just then *whang!* comes the first shot from the gunboat, and our mast drops down like a shot giraffe——"

"Fella's lying forty ways from the ace," the man from Spitzbergen breathed into T. Berkeley's ear. "Dhows don't have what you could regularly call masts; I've ridden in 'em—before I went whaling to Spitzbergen."

"It is hard for real adventurers to sit in judgment on another man's word," said T. Berkeley, with simple severity. "It's not playing the game."

Then he turned just a shade of a shoulder to the man from Spitzbergen—enough to be appreciated by a sensitive mind—spilled a splash of his wine on the table in refilling his glass, and surrendered once more to the stygian night, its mysteries of Somaliland. The tale whirled to a roaring end. Applause crashed from hands that had hurled the walrus spear in Baffin Bay or slain the bounding kangaroo on his antipodean heath. The next man to take up the wondrous story of action in frontier lands was a bronzed and bearded orchid hunter from Dutch Guiana. Then came the ex-soldier's story of how he was once a dato in Mindanao. T. Berkeley Manners began to worry; his turn was only three removed, and——

To be perfectly frank, as proxy for T. Berkeley Manners, one puts his case baldly thus: He had always lived in Brooklyn, except the years he was at school in Massachusetts, and he never had an adventure. T. Berkeley was a perfectly dandy boy. He sold sectional bookcases six days a week, and on Sundays he wrote red-blood stories about the Great Desert in California and the thin, retreating line of the cowmen. When he put over that "Desert Threnody" his editor hoisted him to three

cents a word, and he had his photograph taken in broad brown "chaps," worn back side before. Though the only time he had seen a Joshua tree was when he visited the Bronx botanical gardens, T. Berkeley could create Nevada atmosphere that would make a coyote run headfirst into his manuscript before realizing the deception. In fact, atmosphere was T. Berkeley's forte—that and sentiment. Even as he rode to his home on a Union Street car each night after work, he saw outside the windows not the flat roofs of the tenement houses, but wind-scoured mesas; not the self-assertive Gowanus Canal, but the tenuous, thirst-inciting mirage.

Withal, successful though he had been at writing stories of forty-fours and squaw men, the soul of T. Berkeley had long thirsted for a firmer grounding in the knowledge of human nature by experience on the edge of things civilized. He had advanced so far in the secondary stage of wanderlust that the fore-sheet of a purple boat nosing into a golden West Indian harbor for sixty-seven dollars and up gave him a catch in the throat, and when Trinity's bells chimed the half hour they said "Hongkong—Kow-loon—Chee-foo Amoy." In a word, he was prime ripe for a dinner of adventurers, but green at adventure.

So when it came his turn to add to the wonder tales of the Seven Seas and the lands thereabouts, the creator of Honest Horace, of the Flying Flatiron, asked all the good fellows who had been gathered together that night for the first time—a veritable Lost Legion of Jerusalem—to believe him when he said that by their presence Romance had been made to rear her head for a fleeting hour on Sixth Avenue, and the rosy light of Things That Can Never Be conjured to penetrate even to the garish white night of Broadway. T. Berkeley would not speak of the festering borax lakes of Death Valley before men who had heard the splash of fluid lava in New Zealand and seen the sun devouring the basalt cliffs beyond the Mountains of the Moon. He would only recall to their minds the perfectly corking stuff got off by one R. Kipling when he wrote—ah—when he wrote that—how did it run now?—well, anyway, everybody knew what he meant; something about the chaps who drift—and drift—and, well, drift was the word. (T. Berkeley Manners cursed the vineyardist who first distilled Medoc superieur.)

But, whatever that was old Ruddy Kip said so patly, wasn't it true that there was nothing in life but just the joy of playing tag with Adventure and dropping the handkerchief behind Romance every time you passed the little girl? A cowboy friend of his out on the Split Circle Range had a way of putting the thing somehow like this: "The happy maverick's the fella that allus stays in the long grass just one jump ahead of a boiled shirt and a hard hat."

"So here's to the 'happy mavericks' around this table!" T. Berkeley shouted, lifting his glass with a devilish flourish. "And may we all keep in the long grass on the fringe of the old humdrum world!"

T. Berkeley never could remember definitely just how conversation between his neighbor on the left—the man from Spitzbergen—and the fellow on his right, who was just up from Honduras, happened to take the turn toward the comparative merits as fighters of tarantulas and walruses. He did recall afterward that, as one familiar with the fauna of Nevada, he had upheld with some heat the tigerish ferocity of the hairy spider, and had matched tale with tale the proofs adduced by the Honduranian exile. One thing led to another—they always do when French wines, lights, and heat are in conjunction—and before he knew it T. Berkeley saw the dinner breaking up, little groups forming in the midst of cigarette clouds, men hunching themselves into overcoats. Then it must have been, as the author of the "Desert Threnody" afterward pieced together the loose ends of the film, that the person from Honduras said:

"You fellows jump in a taxi with me

around to my rooms, and I'll show you how a tarantula can scrap."

Then the fellows—two or five—maybe four, including T. Berkeley—boiled into a taxi. Lights—a traffic cop—honk, honk!—Jamaica boy at the elevator—up and up—— "Step in, gentlemen; make yourselves right at home."

One long living room with bay window looking out on the fire escape; then a bathroom, and behind a bedroom. Very nifty furniture all around, and a framed photograph of a banana plantation on the wall over the fireplace. Over on the other side of the living room a trunk with a pair of khaki riding breeches lying on top; a repeating rifle standing in the corner; a small, brown, and fuzzy monkey looking sleepily up from a Mexican serape on the couch. Typical man's room.

Of course, the first thing the Honduranian did was to have the bell boy bring up cracked ice and a bottle of seltzer; then he took a strange, crook-necked bottle out of the trunk, and said something about how "it will build a fire under you." All the fellows clinked their glasses; the monkey, with an angry squeak, dropped a piece of ice his master had handed to him, and a fire was built under T. Berkeley Manners of a surety.

"And now, gentlemen, just help me pile up these rugs and things somewhere above the floor, so we can have a free space there; then we'll pull off the hottest and weirdest fight Manhattan has ever seen."

They put the three chairs on the couch, piled rugs over them, cleared the corners of the room of papers and littered Spanish-American magazines, tidied everything up a good two feet above the floor level. T. Berkeley felt a little muscle behind each knee twittering; his forehead was damp, and breathing was hard. What in the name of all unholy was going to come off?

"Now, gentlemen, each climb up somewhere—on the trunk, or the mantelpiece, anywhere above the floor; it will be dangerous down there."

They obeyed with alacrity. The man from Spitzbergen chose the trunk; the fellow with the scar—chap from China or Anam he was—scaled the precipice of piled-up chairs on the couch, and sat on the topmost one. T. Berkeley cautiously planted himself between the clock and the Alsatian shepherdess on the mantel. And at the request of the host he held the brown monkey. Then the Honduranian disappeared in the bedroom for a minute; when he came back he held in either hand two little wicker cages, strangely woven. He set them down in the middle of the floor about two feet apart.

"Everybody safe?" queried the man who crouched over the two little pyramids of woven withes. "Then—let 'er go!"

He made a jump for the trunk, in each hand the detached tops of the wicker cages. The two round board cage bottoms remained on the floor, two feet apart. Against the white, planed surface of each, under the slicing light from the electrolier, showed a three-inch horror. One was a tarantula, furry with the mangy, red-brown fur of an orang-utan. Round of body, radiating high, crooked legs from nearly every point of a sinister circumference, the insect's bulk was lifted an inch above the floor by the stiltlike members. A pair of short, curved mandibles, like bison's horns in miniature, pushed out from the leprous wool marking the creature's head. The whole would have straddled a butter dish. Brown as mahogany, high polished like Japanese lacquer, the chain-linked figure of a giant scorpion was cut into the whiteness of the opposite board. The thing squatted low; two lobster claws, held menacingly outward, branched from the stubble of straddling legs under the short, mail-clad body of the thing. Like a stiff-wired chain of polished wood beads, a tail stretched out behind and curved over the body—a tail which twitched and brandished the double-pronged sting at its tip. Light glanced in arrow sheaves from the shifting weapon.

Absolute passivity for a full moment. The monkey in T. Berkeley's arms shivered and uttered a single screech. Then

the tarantula whirled with the quickness of thought to face his adversary on the opposite board. A strangling, rancid odor filled the room. The giant spider raised and lowered his body spasmodically several times upon the furred hinges of his legs; it was as if he were measuring the distance for a leap. The scorpion lay motionless, its barbed tail poised rigidly above its back.

"Now!"

The man from Honduras had hardly shouted the warning when a ball of red-brown fur was launched through the air, and, with a faint *plop*—the sound of a small coin falling on felt—it landed on the scorpion's platform. To the ears of the men balancing on the high edges of the furniture came the distinct click of the spider's mandibles biting nothing. For a quick backward leap had whisked the scorpion off the board and onto the polished floor a foot or more away. There it lay poised, tense, expectant, tail once more thrust sturdily forward like a lance. Again the tarantula balanced himself gingerly on his wire-tensed legs; the scorpion crouched even lower with a single little motion of setting himself for a shock. A leap—the upward thrust of a steel-rigid tail—a tiny shock of collision, and then the *pit, pit, pit* of pin-point, dancing feet. The tarantula was sheering off sideways in jerky leaps, inches long. A thin, dry noise, as of grains of rice dropped on a hard table—the scorpion was pursuing in quick, darting rushes.

A soft rope suddenly twined about T. Berkeley's neck. He gasped, and went suddenly faint as he whipped a hand up to his throat. It was only the monkey's tail. He looked down at the beast. A furry ball huddled far back in the hollow of his arm; eyes popped out from the wrinkled brow in a ghastly counterfeit of human fear; red lips were drawn back from two lines of white teeth, and a dry clucking sounded from the simian throat. T. Berkeley, of a sudden very limp, darted a glance at the other faces in the room. He saw jaws tensed, brows furrowed in excitement, primitive lust of battle in the eyes of the others.

"Look at that!"

The strangled ejaculation came from the scar-faced fellow. T. Berkeley's eyes whipped back to the arena below. Just in time to see the charge of the tarantula. In short, jerking leaps the devil bug of the tropics cleared half the distance of the room—the noise of his footfalls was the nightmare patter of ghosts' finger nails on a headboard—and in the last jump he lit fairly on the coiled watch spring of shining scales.

Micrographic handgrips of Titans! Combat of gladiators reduced to the *n*th power—the sword bearer against the trident and net! Creation's rule of all life exemplified on a parquet floor!

An instant they were locked. The *tick, click* of tiny jaws sounded. A minute clatter of scale armor—the very small noise of stabbing and lunging. Then the scorpion uncoiled with a sharp spasm, and threw his antagonist five inches from him. The tarantula ran madly around in a circle, one side of his body canting downward, a hairy leg flexed and quivered on the shining boards, quite severed. As for the mailed thing with the claws and sting, a strange trembling seized it; the tail lashed madly up and down; the claws weaved in fantastic parabolas.

"Che-e-ep! Chut, chut, chut!" screamed the monkey.

"Oh, stop it! Stop it!" babbled T. Berkeley.

"'S great!" yelled the man from Honduras. "More coming!"

T. Berkeley Manners shut his eyes, and clamped one hand over the monkey's. The sickening, fetid odor of the insects' combat gagged him. He trembled in an ague fit. To his ears came the dreadful little sounds of pit-patting feet, of springing, prancing, unworldly feet. Oh, Lord, why did he ever——

Crash! Bang—bang—bang!

A thin, high scream—pounding of feet—hoarse bellows—trill of a police whistle—and then bang, bang, bang!

All of this outside the room where scorpion and tarantula were doing murder. It was out in the night some-

where—out beyond the grille of the fire escape.

Bang, bang, bang!

"It's a raid!" the man from Honduras bawled from his perch atop the trunk. "Honest Mike McGurke's next door. They tipped me here in this house it was coming off soon."

"A raid—what?" called the man from Anam, balancing himself on the mountain of chairs as he tried to peer out of the window.

"Gambling joint, of course," the host answered. "One of you fellows nearest drop a shoe on those critters so we can come down and see what's doing."

Then the window opened, and a woman in a pink silk evening gown swung herself in from the fire-escape platform.

CHAPTER II.

T. Berkeley did not jump; he fell from the mantel, and sprawled on all fours. He heard a shout from the others, a gasp from the window, and with precision he pushed out a foot and stepped on something brown and furry that was lurching in crazy zigzags across the floor straight for him. Then from his knees he looked up to the vision in pink framed by the white curtains.

She stood there, one hand clutching a white throat, terror and madness fighting for place in great black eyes, lips parted wide in labored breathing. Piled-up masses of black hair had slipped low over her brow, and a diamond crescent pin which had crowned her coiffure, now loosened and dangling over her forehead, shivered and darted icy lights. Fair witch of the night she was—a plaything of the dark, tumbled and suddenly thrown, discarded, into the white light. Four men gazed at her, petrified.

"Oh, the brutes!" she finally gasped. "The yellow hounds of police!"

"Yes, ma'am," T. Berkeley murmured automatically.

"They—they—nobody thought they would—oh, dear, which of you gentlemen——"

"I will," T. Berkeley promptly put in before any of the other three could collect his fuddled wits. He made a little bow, cast a swift glance over his shoulder to see where the scorpion, still undispatched, might be lurking, and stepped closer to the girl with the wide eyes. The Honduranian person was down from his perch by this time; so were the man from Spitzbergen and the Anam chap. They crowded around her. The gong of a patrol wagon clang-lang-langed out in the street; there was a noise of raucous shouting, of stumbling feet, and glass splintering. The girl shuddered and swiftly drew the curtains between herself and the window.

"I don't know how I managed," she stuttered, in half-spoken thought; "they had the get-away blocked; I climbed along the ledge—jumped—ugh! But please which of you——"

"I said I would," T. Berkeley caught her up stoutly, and while the other men stared, not grasping the sense of the unfinished question, he slipped one of her hands through his arm with an assured air, and started with her toward the door. Maybe the others protested; that was another detail of the evening's activities which T. Berkeley could not definitely recall. However, the assurance which made him a good salesman of sectional bookcases gave him success as a squire of dames—of one dame in distress at least. She clung to his arm while she smiled her thanks to the others with an engagingly distrait air, and she stopped short in front of the mirror over the mantel to pat her disheveled hair into place and skewer it with the diamond crescent.

The soft, trailing folds of her gown brushed a dying scorpion as on the arm of the gallant tale teller she passed from the room.

In a palm-screened nook of the gilt-and-gold corridor downstairs they waited until a taxicab, hailed by a Jamaican Mercury at T. Berkeley's behest, trundled up to the rear entrance of the hotel, away from the still-simmering excitement in front. T. Berkeley did

not hear the address she gave to the chauffeur. Perhaps it was the exaltation of adventure that so thrummed and bubbled through his brain as to drown all incidental sounds. For he walked in the garden path of a delectable Versailles of dreams; he heard the plashing of fairy fountains, and the street lamps were flambeaux in the hands of turbaned blackamoors, lighting the way to—what?

"You—you are thinking about—me—and why I should come through the window of a gentleman's apartment several floors above the street?"

The murmur came to T. Berkeley's ears out of the gloom of the cab; came also a rare breath of acacia, of androgyme—some exotic scent that carried with it the picture of caravan camels kneeling about the bases of palm trunks in a desert. The taxi had been speeding through a black cañon of blind brownstone fronts for a full five minutes before the girl broke the silence. T. Berkeley had not wanted to; he was too occupied with conning the new frontier of romance to which he had come.

"No, I am not," he therefore answered truthfully. She sighed tremulously.

"If you could but know!" she breathed; and T. Berkeley thought he felt just the least little pressure of her shoulder against his—a yearning touch. "But of course you cannot—and, even knowing, would never understand. I—I am fearfully alone in this thing."

"But, my dear madam, I am with you," the red-blooded novelist was quick to contradict. "A rare good fortune has thrown in your path a man who——"

T. Berkeley felt a cold little hand laid on his in gentle expostulation. Automatically he imprisoned it in his own, and there was no resistance to the liberty.

"Ah, yes; for a minute you come out of the night to rescue me from a—a perilous situation, and for that I thank you out of the bottom of my heart. But like a night shadow you come, and in an instant you will be gone, and then—and then——"

Her voice trailed off in a distrait catching of the breath. T. Berkeley felt two little fingers, groping blindly, clutch his ring finger—sweet tendrils of despair. A rare tumult surged within him. In the presence of maidenly distress, of sweet mystery, the fantasy of a prankish hour, the man who from his two rooms and bath in Brooklyn had ridden cattle rustlers into the Black Hole without the flicker of an eyelash now felt all his bones dissolve to water and his resolution turn to pulp. He breathed heavily, scenting always the androgyme and the acacia of the romantic presence beside him; he felt a little trickle of perspiration course under his neckband.

The auto drew up to a curb with a quick stop. T. Berkeley somehow blundered out, and handed his companion to the sidewalk. For an instant they stood fronting each other in awkward hesitation. He could see her great eyes glowing like burnished metal in the dim light of the electric arc a half block away. Then resolution seemed suddenly to come to the girl.

"Pay the chauffeur and dismiss him, please," she said. "You must stay with me a few minutes more—until you have learned some things."

T. Berkeley parted from a five-dollar bill with the wooden celerity of an automaton, followed the faint silken rustle of skirts up a broad stone stair, and heard the click of a lock. A door closed behind him, and for an instant he was in musky blackness; the mystery of interstellar space bore down on him like a weight. Then a faint click, and, seemingly afar off, a little star glowed a pomegranate red, a subdued golden aureole was diffused from somewhere above, a clear white light split itself into segments through crystal. Under this fairy light shadows clotted and took shape; here the great carved back of a bishop's chair, damasked in dusky tapestry; there the crystal sides of a dull-glowing, gold cabinet filled with jades and cameos. White arms of statues lifted grotesquely out of pitchy

corners. Saracens with ringlets of chain armor about their ears glowered from the smudged perspectives of ancient tapestries. The white fangs of a tiger lay in wait for unwary feet on the velvet softness of the floor.

Over all this jungle of richness played the winking, fitful light, gold and pomegranate red and prismatic white, and in the midst stood a woman witchingly beautiful—all pink of gown and livid white of breast and arm, and with great, piled-up masses of hair, black as a beetle's back, crowning her godlike height.

T. Berkeley mentally clawed the illimitable fields of the Infinite to find and put a diamond hitch on his ego.

"Since this might be considered highly irregular," she was saying, "though you and I will just call it unconventional, let us just make believe that we were little playmates at the old red schoolhouse together, reunited after long years of bitter absence. Better yet—we're Jack and Jill before the fall—and with no unpleasant household duties ahead of us such as fetching pails of water."

T. Berkeley's goddess of the fire escape laughed in a full-throated contralto crescendo when her eyes caught the blank wonder in his face, and she took him by the hand, led him to a huge chair, made a hollow niche of white by a great polar-bear skin that was thrown over it, and there bowed him to his seat with mock obeisance. Gone was her air of breathless terror; gone the attitude of clinging helplessness that had made her pitiful in the taxicab. Instead, here was a willful gypsy on a frolic—a Juno off her dignity behind the eyes of Olympus. Laughter was hiding in the curve of her red lips, sparked from her eyes. Her voice was vibrant with suppressed fun, rollicking, hobbledehoy humor.

"Come, come, Jack!" She flounced before T. Berkeley, sitting dumb and open-mouthed, and she made a wry face at him. "No Jill would ever trust herself to fetch a pail of water with such a brilliant conversationalist; he'd have her in convulsions with his repartee before ever the top of the hill was reached. You don't mean to confess that you can be surprised into silence by the mere fact of unconventionality?

"Perish the thought, my dear Jack! Music—ah, would that bridge the chasm of embarrassment? Presto, we have it!"

The girl skipped lightly to one of the darker corners of the room, and, as if she had tapped an aërial pipe line from the Metropolitan Opera House, rippling, liquid music followed her in a cataract. It was the overture of Berlioz's "Carnival Romain," in the crystal clarity of some remarkable Swiss music cabinet. Even while the opening bars of the exotic music fell like the clinking of shattered icicles the magician of this melody disappeared through dusky velvet curtains into the dark beyond. T. Berkeley was left alone in complete paralysis of body and spirit. He heard, somewhere far off, tinkling chimes, followed by two deep, booming strokes—the hour echoed on other clocks in other keys.

Soon she was back again, carrying a tray of crystal, upon which stood a beaker of pounded Arabian brass and two cobweb Venetian glasses.

"Thy slave anticipates the master's every want," the girl murmured, and she stood before T. Berkeley and filled both tiny glasses with a rich amber liqueur. "He has music; he has wine from Bagdad, and he has—his slave."

T. Berkeley Manners suddenly got into action. As he reached for the glass he attempted to make with his other arm an *advance en escalade* upon the trim, satin escarpment that offered itself for attack. Instantly he regretted his impetuosity and boggled. Not that rebuke came, but simply that the writer of roaring romances could make his hero carry off Dew-of-the-morning, kicking across his saddle bow, but found no such cavalier audacity in himself. The author of his confusion smiled impishly, curled up at his feet, and ticked the edge of her glass against his.

"It is the custom of Bagdad," she began, "for the slave of the lord to entertain him while he sups his nectar.

Maybe Jill simply told Jack stories, but in Bagdad they told tales. Harken, my lord.

"A certain Sultan of Araby cherished his only daughter as the apple of his eye—of course, Jack, nobody has apples in his eye; but in tales they do—and he lavished upon her pearls of great price, and the maiden was the richest dowered in Araby."

"What was the sultan's name?" T. Berkeley asked, trying to assume the part of the pampered overlord in this strange play wherein he found himself a mummer.

"Ali Beg, excellent one—a mighty man, and a terrible in anger. And he guarded his daughter in her harem with a great number of eunuchs and men at arms, allowing no man to approach near. But there came to those shores two desperate Englishmen, disguised as sellers of Christian Bibles, let us say. They had heard of the pearls of Ali Beg's daughter, and their hearts were covetous.

"And in the dark of the moon they slew three eunuchs who lay outside the door of the sultan's daughter, broke into her bedchamber, seized the pearls about her neck, and were outside the city before the alarm was given. The serene gems they hid in a shark-skin bag, which they took from the——"

"Shark-skin bag!" T. Berkeley shot out the interruption with the suddenness of a tire explosion.

"Why, yes, Jack—I mean, supreme excellency, lord of the faithful. Why do you start?"

"Oh, nothing—just a sort of funny bag, that's all. Go on." T. Berkeley felt that leg muscle twittering again just as it had while he was witnessing the battle between the tarantula and the scorpion earlier that night—or was it a week ago?

"Well, the pearls were in a shark-skin bag, and the two desperadoes escaped with their plunder to London. There they sold the pearls to a very wealthy American nabob, O son of the prophet. But the Sultan Ali Beg, beside himself with fury, was not to be robbed and left crying helplessly like a child. He set upon the trail of the thieves soft-footed men of the East—men with the eyes of serpents and the noses of hounds—who should bring back those plundered pearls at any cost, and from any corner of the universe. Does the effendi follow?"

T. Berkeley had been watching the sloe-black eyes of the kneeling girl during her recital; he had been held by the points of light in their depths—like sharp cones of radiance gleaming from a far corner of a darkened room. Gradually the altered timbre of her voice had been borne in on him; the first fresh note of abandon was gone, and though the form of the tale he was harkening to was the form of mummery he suddenly realized that the sense was becoming instinct with verity. Groping, floundering through all the bewilderment of recent happenings and present circumstances, his mind was striving to find a key to the riddle being laid around him.

"I hear," he stuttered. "Keep on."

"Now, the American nabob designed the pearls he purchased from the thieves as a gift for the Light of His Life," the low, vibrant voice at the writer's knee continued. "Little did he know whence came the treasure he had paid dearly for; nor did he reckon on the soft-footed ones from the East who turned from the trail of the two who had done murder in the sultan's harem to follow unerringly the scent of the pearls under new ownership. To America they trailed the nabob, and they traced the pearls straight to the hand of the fair one who was the object of the nabob's favor and adoration.

"Before ever they could be set in a chain, or even taken from the shark-skin bag, where they had reposed since the night murder was done in possessing them, the innocent one into whose hands they had finally fallen heard the call for their delivery. The call came secretly from the hounds of the Sultan Ali Beg; promise of sure death was the alternative to yielding them. Even now they——"

"Even now," T. Berkeley interrupt-

ed, gagging in his excitement, "you have them there in the bodice of your gown." He leveled his finger so that it almost touched the girl's breast as she shrank back. "No, no—don't deny—see how your hand covers the place where they lie hidden even as I speak.

"Oh, I know all about the shark-skin bag"—T. Berkeley's voice shrilled to a fife's squeak—"and the flight in the dhow on the Red Sea, and how Rough Mike Pidgin and that other fellow fought all over the boat. Why, not three hours ago I was sitting ten feet from one of the men who robbed the sultan's daughter."

The black eyes widened until the white showed above and below the pupils. The girl caught at her throat, and her shoulders lifted as if to brace themselves under a descending weight.

"You saw him—you saw Jim Rolfe? Where?"

"At Paquin's—at a dinner given by a lot of world wanderers and such."

A sob, the flashing of white arms—and T. Berkeley found a black head, lustrous and wonderful, on his knee.

"And I—and I—thought he would be at McGurke's gambling place!" came a smothered voice, tear-choked. White arms crept snakily up to T. Berkeley's waistcoat, and white hands seemed to be mutely beseeching strong, reassuring ones to grasp them.

"So—and so—I risked everything, and went there to meet Rolfe and give him back those dreadful pearls. You—you know—the raid—horrors!"

"But—but why give them back—these priceless things?" T. Berkeley managed to stammer.

The black head suddenly lifted, and those compelling eyes, tear-jeweled, sought his, and, finding, rested there steadily, unblinking.

"Listen, my very dear friend." She spoke with an intensity that was awesome. "Because death is right outside that door every added minute that I have them. The sultan's soft-footed men—those vipers who know how to sting in the dark—must have those pearls or my life. I won't give them up tamely. By the greatest good fortune, I learned that Jim Rolfe, who with Pidgin first stole the pearls, is in New York. He is willing to keep them for me until the men from the East are off the track. Now do you understand? Do you see in what a desperate strait I am?"

T. Berkeley was greatly agitated. The moving beauty of his strange hostess needed only the show of distress added to whisk away all of his few remaining intrenchments of reserve. He reached out bold arms, put a hand on each bare shoulder of the girl who crouched before him, and looked searchingly into her face.

"And so—and so you need me in your hour of peril," he said simply.

"Yes," she answered; "more than I can tell you."

"And when you began, as my slave, to tell me the story of the Sultan Ali Beg's pearls, you cloaked the story that way—in fun—because you did not yet know whether you could trust me?"

She slowly nodded.

"Do you think now that you can trust me—and you will, girl?" T. Berkeley's soul was on his lips now.

"Yes," she answered, her eyes light as stars.

"Tell me one thing first," T. Berkeley commanded. "You are not yet the wife of—of that tremendously wealthy nabob?"

She lowered her eyes as if in pain, and shook her head.

"All right. Now, command me," he said.

She sat for a full minute, her brows bent in thought; then she spoke:

"You must first make me a promise before I tell you how you can save me. Promise me that when you leave my door to-night you will not look at the number, and that you will not look for the name of the street until you have walked ten minutes by your watch."

"Does that mean I may never——"

"It means that you must never see me here. When I dare I will arrange a way to meet you elsewhere."

"But you don't even know my name—my address."

"I will arrange a way to meet you," she repeated, smiling. "And now——"

She rose and gently insinuated the way to the front door. T. Berkeley followed out into an entrance hall, where a giant in full armor menaced him with a halberd.

"But you have not told me how I can help you," he expostulated, as she held the door slightly off the catch as if in polite restraint against hurrying a parting guest.

"I tell you now, dear friend." Her voice thrilled as if with a passion that dared not loose itself, and she was so close to T. Berkeley that again the aura of androgyme and of acacia that seemed to wrap her being in a veil of the musky East intoxicated the senses of the story writer, and had his head reeling. "To-morrow night at ten o'clock go to number three hundred and twenty St. Mary's Place, in Hoboken. Knock twice at the door, and ask for Jim Rolfe.

"When he comes to you, say simply this: 'The girl with the pearls says White Mice, thirteen-thirteen.' He will say nothing; he will do nothing; but my life will be saved."

" 'White Mice, thirteen-thirteen,' " T. Berkeley repeated.

"Those little words tell all—and now, my friend of a night, it is farewell."

T. Berkeley, caught in a swirl of madness, looked into the dusky depths of two black eyes, started, stopped—then crushed her to him, and kissed her furiously on the lips. His own were boldly met.

The heavens fell; all the stars exploded like chestnuts; the skyscrapers were little wax tapers, burning blue—and T. Berkeley Manners had walked a mile before he came to a street he couldn't cross. It wasn't a street; it was the East River.

He had actually wavered on the edge of a stringpiece over the streaked black tide when, dumped from the chariot tail of dreams, he suddenly realized the presence of things terrestrial—and imminently wet. He thought of the promise he had made the fair enchantress back in Bagdad not to look at the street signs until he had walked ten minutes. T. Berkeley smiled foolishly as his hand went to his watch pocket. The smile was wiped from his face with the speed of light when his searching fingers found not a watch, but something—something!

Out came a stiff, crackling bag no longer than the palm of T. Berkeley's hand; at least, it felt like a bag, and in the dark he could trace with a wondering forefinger the outlines of an object that was like an elongated tobacco pouch. He thought he could feel many hard, round pellets, like buckshot, under the stiff texture of the envelope. In a daze, he patted himself down the expanse of coat and waistcoat, covering each pocket in turn.

Decidedly no watch; just the coarse, gritty, and altogether out-of-place bag.

The father of Honest Horace, of the Flying Flatiron, and all his merry crew of rollicking companions of the rope and branding iron felt a decided shock even though his reflexes had been sorely tried this night. Here he was on the edge of Manhattan Island at some time after two o'clock in the morning, suddenly bereft of his most intimate article of personal furniture; by black magic he carried instead a mummy's skin with bullets in it—or maybe antediluvian corn from a king's tomb. There was a single sputtering arc light back a ways from the wharf, slicing pie cuts out of the side of a lumber pile, black-shadowed. Thither T. Berkeley went, and as soon as the light was strong enough he examined the thing he held in his hand.

It was gray white and pearly—like a pouch of frosted glass—and the texture of it was ridged and lozenged in infinitely perfect geometry. Across one face of the bag sprawled some weird lettering, like a woman's aigret gone daft. T. Berkeley had a faint idea he had seen something like that on the face of a cigarette box. Somehow or other, he was reminded, looking at that pearly-gray object, of the hilt of a Japanese sword crisscrossed by metal. What was the binding of a Japanese sword hilt?

Shark skin, as there are stars above! T. Berkeley's teeth clicked a tattoo, and his fingers trembled so that he could hardly spread the drawstrings at the mouth of the sack. "Shark skin—shark skin!" He finally managed, by dint of using his teeth, to open the harsh vent of the pouch. Then he cupped a palm, and poured into it what the pouch contained.

With a suave, dry clicking and a rattle there piled up in his hand a wondrous mound of frozen tears—round as the frosted tips of icicles was each, white with the luster of light that filters through green fathoms of ocean, softly, seductively effulgent.

Pearls!

CHAPTER III.

Major General J. Cæsar never went through the country of the Helvetii with ears more erect than were those of T. Berkeley Manners as he stole away from the river and back through the haunts of the city's gunmen and gentlemanly knights of the blackjack with untold wealth of pearls in his possession. That journey was an agony. Every lumber pile concealed a thug, and each fire hydrant was a crouching footpad. T. Berkeley was certain that the precious jewels in the shark-skin bag, which he had slipped into one shoe, by the way, must be as aniseeds for the hounds of disorder; the scent must carry eke through the heaviest slumber of the most slothful highwayman. Even when he ducked like a spent hare into a subway kiosk and made a slow journey under the river and over to more lawful Brooklyn in a local train, he was sure the guard favored him with a most baleful survey, and the pink-cheeked young man on the poster glared at him knowingly over the top of a Korking Kollege Kollar.

Safe at last in his own room, T. Berkeley tried to bring his mind down to a dispassionate review of the night's kinemacolor events. Pajamas lent him a certain degree of intimacy with himself; so dight he sat on the bed, and, sixty-five wonderful pearls in his hand, he began at the first of the series of astounding events that had led to the altogether voluntary and unsought-for possession of these baubles.

First there was the red-necked adventurer at the dinner of the world wanderers; he had told the story of the theft of the pearls from the fair daughter of the Sultan Ali Beg—pearls in a shark-skin bag. Merely an incident—that—in a gentlemen's entertainment. Then had come the jaunt to the room of the Honduranian exile, and the horrid fight between the tarantula and the scorpion—another detached incident, bearing in no way upon the mystery of the pearls there in his hand. And then—the raid on the gambling house next door, and a goddess in pink, with a glittering diamond crescent in her raven hair, bursting through the window from the fire escape. A prodigy—not an incident.

What was it she had said in explanation of her astounding intrusion? "The get-away was blocked!" T. Berkeley, pondering that phrase out of his limited experience with the ways of crime, was inclined to believe there was a certain smack of sophistication about it: "The get-away." But no; had she not explained her presence in the gambling house beyond cavil? She had gone there in desperation, believing she would find Jim Rolfe there, and that he would relieve her of the deadly menace that dogged her possession of the Orient gems; Jim Rolfe was without doubt that same red-necked adventurer who had told the story of the rape of the sultana's pearls at the feast. Astounding impudence on his part when, as the radiant girl out of the Thousand and One Nights had fearfully admitted, desperate agents of the Sultan Ali Beg were already in New York, seeking vengeance and the recovery of the precious jewels.

Then that scene in the house of wonders whose address he could no more have guessed than he could the number of flakes in the Milky Way; did ever a plain salesman of sectional bookcases, or even an insurance agent, experience such an adventure? What wonderful

poise—what grace that girl had shown in a trying situation, in desperate fear of her life, yet weaving an allegory in a simulated spirit of fun to test his worthiness to assist her. How touching it——

T. Berkeley bounded to his feet, the reflex of a sudden illuminating thought galvanizing him.

Then it was she who had put that shark-skin bagful of pearls in his waistcoat pocket! Who else?

Had she not admitted she had them? Had she not confessed that it was their possession that jeopardized her very existence? That minute when she had let her head rest on his knees and her hands had gone searching blindly for some reassuring clasp from his—that minute she must have slipped the precious and dreadful treasure in his pocket. Poor, distraught, helpless girl! She dared not ask him outright to relieve her of her burden of fear; she had trusted him sufficiently to shift her weight of terror to his shoulders blindly, unconditionally. "When I dare," she had murmured, in that husky contralto, so vibrant with the *allure* of a sympathetic nature, "I will arrange a way to meet you elsewhere." That meant she would take back the pearls when the soft-footed men from the East were off the trail.

But had she taken T. Berkeley's watch at the same time she dropped the pearls in his pocket?

The author of desert epics flushed the color of his pajamas at such an unworthy thought. Annihilate the suggestion! Did not that—ah, did not that farewell kiss linger burningly on his lips? Was it the kiss of a pickpocket?

His brain fatigued by vain wanderings in this maze of circumstance, T. Berkeley opened the neck of the bag to slip back into it the ransom of a satrap. His prodding finger encountered a piece of metal. He inverted the stiff sack, and shook into his hand a most curiously wrought key of steel—flat, slender, with no notches to catch the secret grips of a lock, but with a mystifying cylindrical hole in the end. It was like a skate key.

Dully T. Berkeley wondered what part of the runic riddle this latest product of black art fitted; then he tucked the key back with the pearls, stowed the bag among the springs of his bed, and went to sleep over them. He dreamed of swart-faced men in red turned-up slippers, and redolent of attar of roses, carving the full name of the Sultan Ali Beg on his back with Damascus daggers.

A few hours later when his alarm clock had called to duty, and T. Berkeley Manners, now a salesman of sectional bookcases only, was riding, sleepy-eyed, on the Union Street car to his office, all of his nerve centers exploded simultaneously. The cause of the combustion was the black-faced italic heading on the front page of his newspaper and what stretched in portentous array of type under it.

$30,000 PEARL ROBBERY!

Sixty-five Matched Gems Are Stolen on "Icelandic."

That's the way the first two lines of the heading read. The story started thus:

Despite the sedulous efforts of headquarters detectives to bottle up the facts, the *Earth* has uncovered the details of the theft of sixty-five matched pearls, valued at more than thirty thousand dollars, from Tavshan Harooglian, the well-known Fifth Avenue jeweler and dealer in Oriental objects of art, while he was a passenger aboard the White Crescent line steamship *Icelandic*, in port last Wednesday from Alexandria and other ports of the Orient. The robbery, easily one of the most daring and greatest in the history of transatlantic travel, has absolutely baffled Deputy Commissioner O'Shaughnessy and his corps of sleuths, for the trail of the daring crooks ends at the white Crescent pier, on North River.

Mr. Harooglian, considered an expert in the characteristic gems of the Near East—pearls, round-cut rubies, et cetera—had made a special visit to a certain jewel mart abroad to bring back a much-prized string of perfectly matched pearls, designed to fill an order given by a Pittsburgh multimillionaire. He was successful in his quest, and it is whispered that he succeeded in obtaining the cherished collection of a petty potentate of some satrapy in Persia or Arabia. There were sixty-five wonderful pearls in the collection, each reputed to have a history of Oriental intrigue and mysterious death behind it.

What the price he paid for the collection, which he values at thirty thousand dollars and more, and from whom he bought the pearls Mr. Harooglian refuses to divulge. But he admits that when he boarded the *Icelandic* at Southampton the sixty-five objects of a petty sultan's one-time adoration were safely stowed away in a strangely fashioned shark-skin bag, the original receptacle designed by the first owner, and carried in an inside pocket of the Harooglian waistcoat. He was so cautious that he did not even trust his valuable burden to the ship's purser.

The night before the *Icelandic* entered the Ambrose Channel the Fifth Avenue dealer missed the shark-skin bag as he was disrobing in his stateroom. After an exhaustive search of his effects he quietly notified Captain Bulger of his loss, and a wireless was sent to police headquarters here, as well as to the Firestone Detective Agency. When the *Icelandic* docked detectives swarmed the White Crescent pier, on the lookout for the face of some known international crook. Detectives stood by while the customs men examined the baggage of the *Icelandic's* passengers on the frail chance that the stolen baubles might be uncovered in a trunk's false bottom. Not a trace of the jewels was found.

Both O'Shaughnessy's men and the sleuths of the private agency were utterly in the dark until a reporter of the *Earth* uncovered, by inquiry among the *Icelandic's* officers and some of the ship's passengers, who are residents of New York, a clew which the professional crime artists have seized with eagerness as the only one extant. This relates to a remarkably beautiful young woman who was a passenger on the *Icelandic*, and whose name, though known, is withheld for obvious reasons. Mr. Harooglian made her acquaintance the day the big liner left Southampton, and the casual promenade-deck friendship speedily ripened to most assiduous attention on the pearl buyer's part, according to the word of the ship's officers.

Mr. Harooglian admitted yesterday that he "had made the acquaintance of a very charming young lady," but he was inclined to wax wroth at the suggestion that she might have known something about the levitation of his pearls.

It was learned on good authority that O'Shaughnessy's hawkshaws have succeeded in getting a good description of this young woman, acting on the *Earth's* tip, and, after tracing her baggage, are quietly shadowing her. That she is not acting alone, but is one of a clever gang of transatlantic crooks, some of whom are probably in New York now, is the conviction of the detectives.

T. Berkeley read no more. In an ague fit, he suddenly rushed past the conductor of the car, leaped off the platform almost in the path of a pugnacious auto van, dodged to the sidewalk, and plunged through crystal swinging doors into the first available caravansary of deceitful beverages. There before the near mahogany he hurled into himself two hookers of rum, thereby skidding around the sharp corner of probity; he had never had an early-morning drink before.

The sting of the liquor still strong in his mouth, T. Berkeley called his office manager on the phone, and told him a sudden illness would prevent his appearance that day. T. Berkeley took no liberties with the star-eyed goddess, Truth, when he babbled this tale into the telephone; he was sick—sick with that sinking fear that clogs the gorge and unhinges the knees, curdles all the brain pan holds with horrid apprehension. His absence from his office once guaranteed by the sympathetic "take care of yourself" of his manager, the miserable young man went forth to wander through Brooklyn like a dog touched with the heat. His steps led him along the water front and the odorous reaches of the Gowanus Canal until suddenly, glancing at a group of shaggy stevedores, his blood congealed within him, and he almost ran into more respectable streets. What folly to chaperon thirty thousand dollars' worth of pearls in so questionable a neighborhood!

T. Berkeley found himself almost unconsciously dodging policemen; he crossed the street when he saw the heavy blue shoulders holding up some cigar-store front in his path. He recalled with a fresh pang having once read of a certain "Camera-eyed" Cassidy, of the headquarters staff, whose unerring optics could spot a crook in evening clothes, nail a yeggman even in the Vanosterbilt box at the opera. Without doubt this same Camera-eyed was now ranging Brooklyn on the track of the stolen pearls, and under the X ray of his orbs the thickness of the Manners coat and waistcoat covering the missing jewels would be as gossamer. The distressed young man hastily reviewed the possible clews he had left to mark his trail since he had quit

the house of the enchantress in the small hours of the morning—detectives of O'Shaughnessy's squad could send a man to the chair on a suspender button—give him "life" on a laundry mark.

As he passed under the shadow of the triumphant eagles guarding the entrance to the leafy wilderness of Prospect Park, T. Berkeley recalled again the loss of his watch. The inscription on the inner case of that nifty timepiece read boldly: "To T. Berkeley Manners from Mamma." Heavens! Whoever had that watch had T. Berkeley in his power. Beyond the shadow of a doubt, Camera-eyed Cassidy, wearing a square-crowned derby hat, square-toed shoes, and a square-cut coat—how perfectly T. Berkeley could get the picture!—was now sitting in his room back on the Park Slope, waiting for his return, and reading about Honest Horace, of the Flying Flatiron, as he waited. The watch from mamma ticked in the Cassidy pocket.

T. Berkeley found a secluded bench in the shade of a rhododendron thicket where the park lake sent plashing ripples almost to his feet. There, when he looked carefully about him, and saw that no camera eyes were spying on him, he pulled from the inner pocket of his waistcoat the fateful shark-skin bag, with its insane stamp of scrolled lettering, and poured into his hand a little mountain of softly glowing sun spawn. The plebeian key dropped last of all upon the top of the piled-up splendor, its dead, cold metal light marring the massed iridescence of the jewels. As the fascinated eyes of T. Berkeley feasted themselves upon the constellation of deep-sea stars, tinted with the coruscations of countless tempered sunbeams, a form of hypnotism seemed to seize him. He could not do what he had come there to do.

The distracted writer of romances had fully determined to cast the pearls in the lake, and rid himself for all time of complicity in a crime; a flick of the hand, a splash, and at once he would be a free man, out of the toils of those ruthless detectives the paper had mentioned. But, ah, the glory and the beauty of them, to be buried for eternity under three feet of municipal water—possibly to be dived for and pouched by municipal ducks and swans! No man easily salutes thirty thousand dollars with a parting kiss, especially when nobody compels him to do so. And then—and then——

T. Berkeley's moral sense began to push up through the panic in his soul. Were these pearls his to throw away? Who gave him the right so to dispose of the property of another? Had not that wonderful girl in the clinging pink—the girl with the raven hair and the compelling eyes—given them to him virtually in trust, saying that when she dared she would find a way to see him, which meant to recover the treasure from him? But she was a thief! No; by what warrant did he say that? Was he a thief because he happened to have stolen pearls in his possession? How could he know that this girl—this girl who had thrown herself upon him for protection, and in doing so had only partially revealed a dark story of terror—how could he know that she was any more a thief than he himself?

Then give the pearls to the police?

The writer laughed hollowly. A fine picture he would make in O'Shaughnessy's office when he was asked to give the name of the woman from whom he thought—thought, mind you—he had received the plunder, and to tell the address of the house where the transaction occurred!

T. Berkeley suddenly remembered the mission for that night he had promised the girl to fulfill. He was to go to number three hundred and twenty St. Mary's Place, in Hoboken, ask for Jim Rolfe, and deliver the cryptic message: "White Mice, thirteen-thirteen." Perhaps that would be the clearing point in the whole mystery; peradventure some understanding genius at number three hundred and twenty St. Mary's Place would relieve him of the pearls and the responsibility at once. At least there would be developments.

T. Berkeley put the pearls and the strange key back in the shark-skin bag, pocketed the dreadful weight securely,

and strode through the odorous valley of the rhododendrons to the park restaurant. As he was nibbling a sandwich, seated where he could see the door and the path to its approach, his eye suddenly fell on a telephone booth. He faded into the gloom of the little glass box when the waitress was out of the dining room, and called the office of the *Ripping Romance*. Harkins, the editor, the man who had inspired the dinner of adventurers at Paquin's, answered.

"Hello! This is T. Berkeley Manners. Yes; fine, thank you. Say, remember that fellow who told that story at the dinner last night about the pearls and the Red Sea stuff?"

"You mean Sanderson?" the question came back to T. Berkeley's ears.

"Why, no; I mean the fellow who robbed the Sultan Ali Beg's daughter. Name's Rolfe—Jim Rolfe, isn't it?"

"No," said Harkins. "That chap's name is Something-or-other Sanderson. I didn't pay much attention to his story because I'd heard it before. Fact is, I bought the story from him a month ago, and it's now in type to appear in the next number of the magazine. I didn't admire his taste in telling a story after he'd sold it to me and before it appeared in the magazine."

"Yes, but—Rolfe," T. Berkeley insisted. "Wasn't it a man named Jim Rolfe who really did that robbery business and escaped in a dhow to Somaliland?"

"Never heard of Rolfe. What's more, Sanderson wouldn't hurt a puppy. It wasn't he who committed high murder and piracy in Arabia. He told me he got that story from Tavshan Harooglian, the jeweler—and, by the way, it looks as if those same pearls have been stolen from Harooglian. Read the story in the *Earth* this morning?"

"Haroog—Haroog——" T. Berkeley stuttered, and hung up the phone receiver.

CHAPTER IV.

T. Berkeley paid his score, tipped the waitress a dollar in his utter confusion, and stumbled out of the restaurant like a man half blind. "Walking typhoid," the waitress murmured sympathetically as she folded the dollar bill to fit her apron pocket. "Walking paranoia" would have fitted T. Berkeley's case better. He felt himself to be slipping dangerously on the slippery shore of sanity; he saw a flood of mental oblivion, each wave tipped with glistening pearls, sweeping in on him like a tide rip. When he paused before the bears' cage he envied the fat gray Cadiac grizzily, who had nothing to do but eat and stretch himself in the sun. As he weighed the expediency of climbing over the bars and kicking that grizzly in the stomach—one way out of life was as good as another—he tried to rearrange the new pieces in the puzzle just dumped off the board by the telephone conversation with Harkins.

It was not Jim Rolfe who told that story of the levitation of the pearls from the bloody harem of the sultan's daughter; it was some ridiculous outsider named Sanderson, who hadn't even committed murder and larceny. Yet had not the girl of last night's enchantment instantly identified his picture of the tale teller as being that of Rolfe, the mysterious slayer whom he was to meet after dark in Hoboken? And Tavshan Harooglian, the jeweler from whom a fortune in precious gems had been stolen during the run across on the *Icelandic*—here he was revealed as the inspirer of a tale in *Ripping Romance;* he had told a writer of the sinister story of how the pride of Ali Beg's coffers had been plundered, and the story was standing in type a month before the robbery of Harooglian on the White Crescent liner.

A man who had never robbed boasted of a robbery; a man who was robbed prepared beforehand an advertisement of the goods to be snatched from him. Was there any sane solution of this rebus? T. Berkeley thought not, and he braved the hypothetical presence of Camera-eyed Cassidy in his room to seek his bed and there find sleep.

There was no Cassidy in a square-crowned derby hat awaiting him, but a bundle of dynamite in a smaller com-

pass was there, right under his door. "A letter for you, Mr. Manners," the shrill-voiced landlady greeted him as he entered the house. "Brung by a messenger boy, and I tucked it under your door, not knowing, of course, you was to be home early. An' I will say, Mr. Manners"—this with the playful giggle of the willing widow—"that it smells something wonderful of Mary Jardin cologne."

A single sheet dropped from the snipped envelope into T. Berkeley's palsied hand. In a round, bold script a message read:

JACK: A key—a strangely shaped key with a hole in the end of it—I am sure you have it by some fatal mischance. It was in the bag with the—the pills, I will say, when I gave it to you.

Yes, I admit I gave them to you without knowledge—to keep for me in your strong hands until such time as I can recover them with safety. But the key I must have. Everything—my comfort, even my safety, depends on my regaining that at all costs.

To-night when you go to carry that message I intrusted to you—and I know you will do this for me—take the key with you. Some one I can trust will receive it from you and return it to me. The other things—the pills—keep as you value my regard for you. And, whatever you hear, whatever you may read, try to be strong in the faith an innocent and helpless girl has placed in you.

JILL.

P. S.—You see, I do not find it hard to communicate with you, even though I, for a little time, must remain simply your Jill.

T. Berkeley would not have believed there was room left in his organs of mental perception for a new thrill; but a new thrill undeniably was what he experienced from the reading of the scented note. With the complete collapse of his analytical faculties, sorely tried by the events of twelve hours, he sought not an explanation of how the girl whose firm white wrist had crooked itself over these bold pot hooks and heavy shadings of the missive had been able to send him a letter in his name and true address; he merely accepted this as another marvel in the necromancy of Chance. What did bring a catch to T. Berkeley's throat and a stoppage in the blood flow through his aorta was that pitifully wistful appeal: "Whatever you hear, whatever you may read, try to be strong in the faith an innocent and helpless girl has placed in you."

Then she had read the story in the *Earth!* Then she did know that the pearls of which she had been possessor were stolen property! And she begged that he would not judge her a thief; she was strong in her reliance upon him to help.

"Nor is your trust in vain, O glorious girl with the eyes of a goddess!" T. Berkeley covertly cast a side glance into his mirror to see if his pose—hand upraised, and chin thrust pugnaciously forward—were not worthy of James K. Hackett himself. He felt thrilled with a remarkable exhilaration. He knew that he would stand between the beagle hounds of O'Shaughnessy and the clinging woman who needed his trust, come what might.

Then he went out for his dinner, and after that Hoboken and whatever the playful gods of mischance might lay on the boards for him.

The professional tale teller would not pick Hoboken, New Jersey, as the proper stage set for adventures—for romance; T. Berkeley himself, with his keenly developed sense of literary values, would have believed that Hoboken was but a place where Weber & Fields studied new wheezes for their dialect skits, and the well-known Gambrinus vine trailed over every solid Teutonic porch front. As a matter of fact, he had never been in this little sister city of straddling New York, which looks unperturbed over the busy Hudson to the amazing madhouse that is Manhattan. So it was with the undefined malaise of a strange dog among new kennels that he stepped from the ferryboat near ten o'clock that night and disentangled from a German policeman's speech directions to St. Mary's Place.

The thoroughly shaken young man approached the shaded street of his destination with a dread sense of the impending demonstration of more prodigies of ill fortune. Had a wooden Indian descended from his pedestal before a cigar store and offered him a

stogie from the painted bundle in his hand, T. Berkeley would have accepted the gift without question.

He reached the three-hundred block on St. Mary's Place; it was a superlatively quiet street of small shops with apartments built over them. He passed number three hundred and ten; it was a saloon; then came three hundred and twelve to three hundred and sixteen, vacant stores with dead, staring windows, splotched with ghostly theater posters. Then a vacant lot, and—T. Berkeley caught himself holding his breath—three hundred and twenty. The two show windows startled him at first; he was prepared for anything, and his eyes flashed the quick message that he had come upon a massacre.

Human limbs dangled in both windows like trophies hung there by some victorious Formosan aborigine; grisly, severed legs and arms, pink with the flush of life. Strange harnesses and hoops were interlaced between the severed members. A whitey-brown skeleton flaunted his nakedness behind the fringe of mournful relics. An unpleasant glass eyeball, magnified many times and articulated to show all its motive machinery, glared at him with basilisk intentness.

ERNESTUS KRUMP

MANUFACTURER OF ARTIFICIAL LIMBS

Agency of the Krump Interlock Sanitary Arm and Leg

That was the sign, in faded gilt lettering and illuminated by sickly gas flames, across the face of each window. The number three hundred and twenty was also emblazoned there; no doubt of that.

T. Berkeley walked on doubtfully to the corner beyond, and there hesitated. He heard a clock striking ten. Decision was crystallized in him; he wheeled, stalked back to the place of papier-mâché slaughter, and entered. A little, old-fashioned doorbell on a spring chirped above his head; somewhere a parrot exploded like a machine gun. A brown little man, wearing a smoking jacket that belled away in a sweeping skirt from his thin legs, and with a quaint, embroidered skullcap on his head, came out of a rear room, and advanced toward T. Berkeley, bowing and scraping like a dancing master.

"I am Ernestus Krump, at your service," he said, with an unctuous inflection.

"I would like to speak with Mr. Jim Rolfe," said T. Berkeley.

"Mr. Rolfe—Mr. Jim Rolfe? Is he a customer of mine, may I ask?"

"Well—ah—I'm sure I don't know," stammered the writer. "I do not know him myself, but I came here to—well, I was led to believe I would find a Jim Rolfe at number three hundred and twenty St. Mary's Place. I have a message to deliver—a message from a young woman."

The agent of the Krump Interlock smiled with all the enthusiasm permitted a connoisseur in sanitary limbs.

"Perhaps," he ventured, "if I knew the nature of the message I might throw some light on your difficulty."

Without thought, T. Berkeley blurted out the rigmarole he had balanced on the tip of his tongue:

"White Mice, thirteen-thirteen."

"Ah, ha!" quoth the garrulous Krump. "A light begins to shine, as it were. You are Mr. T. Berkeley Manners, then?"

The object of the artificial limb maker's osseous smile sensed a whirring of all the loosened cogs in his brain. He weakly nodded.

"Well, then, I have a package to deliver to you. You have quite properly identified yourself."

Krump trotted back into the room behind the shop, and quickly reappeared bearing a neat little box-shaped bundle, tied daintily with white ribbon. This he laid in T. Berkeley's nerveless hand. The young man began to stutter.

"No, no!" The artificer of necessary substitute accessories held up a warning hand. "She—ah—the person who brought this here to be delivered to you said a note in the package would explain all. And may I not ask if you have something in return to be delivered to—to the person who left this

package? I was told that you would leave in my care something very greatly desired by this—ah—party."

The insinuating words of the dealer in artificial legs recalled to T. Berkeley's mind the injunction in the message that had been slipped under his door a few hours before—he should leave that strange key in the pearl bag with "some one I can trust" at number three hundred and twenty St. Mary's Place. So the girl had commanded. Surely this Krump person must be——

He was already reaching for the precious shark skin when a horrid fear assailed him. To get the key he would have to open the bag in the presence of this stranger—this petrified Rameses of unholy papier-mâché subterfuges. He would have to reveal to the raisin eyes of this little gnome the glories of the pearls. Even if the man were not tempted to robbery, he might see enough to become a sharer in the secret which T. Berkeley had pledged life and honor to keep.

"I—I think you are mistaken," T. Berkeley mumbled. "I know of nothing I was supposed to leave here." He turned toward the door.

"Wait, wait!" professional eagerness was in the little brown man's voice. "Now that you are in my place of business, why not improve the shining hour? Though I take it you have no present need for artificial limbs, in these days of six-cylinder automobiles and aëroplanes, you 'know not the day nor the hour,' as Holy Writ puts it."

Krump had a death grip on the lapel of T. Berkeley's coat, and had dragged him to a long line of crooked limbs dangling from a wire over a counter. He waved his disengaged hand at the array with the air of a diamond merchant displaying his treasures to a Fifth Avenue dowager.

"I know, my dear sir, it will interest you not a little to be told that your 'White Mice, thirteen-thirteen,' is nothing more or less than a professional term—is, in fact, the trade name and number of this beautiful left limb"—here Krump disengaged a plump shell of composition, jointed with ball and socket at the knee, and tapering the length of a well-modeled calf to a hinged ankle. Fearsome harness, with buckles, topped the grisly counterfeit. Krump patted it tenderly.

"Yes, Krump Interlock Sanitary," he crooned—"a perfect female left. But to denominate for the trade anything so fine by the general term 'Interlock Sanitary' would be destructive. One may be a poet and still remain an inventor and manufacturer of one of the most useful commodities of the age. You will recall Sir John Suckling's 'Ballad Upon a Wedding':

> "Her feet beneath her petticoat
> Like little mice stole in and out."

The unhappy author smiled polite recognition of the couplet.

"Well, there you have it. 'White Mice' by poetic license; 'thirteen-thirteen' the dimensions of the limb. Could anything be neater in my trade? And here in the male line we find 'Hearts of Oak'—that's for a rather heavy man, I may say parenthetically—and this severely simple right is the Peter Stuyvesant model. To my mind——"

The smoke-dried Krump suddenly chopped his chatter short, and over his wrinkled face spread a gargoyle stamp of fear. An instant he stood paralyzed. T. Berkeley heard the screeching of an automobile brake in the street outside, and caught the flash of an acetylene headlight swinging in a turn. Krump leaped to the front door, peered out through the glass under a shading hand for the space of a breath, then violently threw a bolt. He wheeled, choking and clawing at his collar.

"They! They!" the man gurgled, and skittered past, making for the little back room. T. Berkeley leaped after him in the blind instinct of imitative action. He was vaguely conscious of taking the breadth of some cluttered bedroom in two bounds, of setting his feet to the lower tread of a dark stairway just as the thud of a heavy body against the door of the shop behind him started the little spring bell to jangling riotously. Up the stairs he plunged, hands outstretched to touch the guiding walls on

either side. A snap, a creak, and he saw above him a patch of star space open out of the blackness surrounding; the spidery figure of Krump was silhouetted for a second against the lesser dark.

He jumped up the last steps to follow, and the roof trap banged on his head.

"Go back! Go back!" Krump snarled; and he tried with all his might to jam the wooden hatch down on the other. T. Berkeley gave a heave with his shoulders, and won to the roof. Krump, thrown sprawling, spryly picked himself up, and went speeding like some banshee of ill favor over the crunching gravel of the flat housetop. T. Berkeley was on his heels, desperately, blindly following, he cared not where. The animal sense of danger, strong inheritance from anthropoid ancestors, had turned his feet to flight before ever his reason could know the cause.

Glass crashed somewhere down in the void below the roof parapet. A police whistle shrilled. The siren of an automobile screeched in a dreadful call to all the night that the law was pursuing his transgressors. The trill of the police alarm galvanized T. Berkeley's wildly questioning mind; it was the answer.

The police were on the track of the pearls, and Krump was privy to the theft of them.

Madly he jumped parapets between houses; desperately he clambered up a four-foot standpipe to a higher level; fear greater than fear of death carried him sailing over fathomless slices of blackness in his path. Every ounce of energy, every sentient fiber in his body, was bent on one end—to keep in sight of the dodging, scarecrow figure in the flapping smoking jacket. For Krump was running like a fox to his appointed hole of safety with the sureness of studied design.

An invisible telephone wire caught T. Berkeley squarely across the chest, and hurled him ten feet onto his back. As he fell he felt something leave his fingers; it was the ribbon-tied package which Krump had delivered to him not fifteen minutes before. It struck the roof somewhere beyond him, and when he quickly scrambled to his feet he spent a precious half minute groping for it. Baffled, he straightened, and his eyes strained for glimpse of Krump. The prancing flibbertigibbet in the outlandish coat had disappeared.

CHAPTER V.

Somewhere behind him in the night desert of chimney pots and clothes posts a revolver popped five times.

T. Berkeley leaped for the hump-shouldered braces of a fire escape that showed over the edge of the roof at his left hand. He swung his legs out into space, grasped the two rough perpendiculars of the iron ladder with his gloved hands, and slid down. Bungling through the apertures in fire balconies, groping with searching feet for the rungs of safety, somehow he descended. He recalled afterward having passed at an open window the white form of a woman, who mowed and sputtered at him, and having gasped a "Good evening" quite automatically. From the end of the ladder he dropped to a wooden store awning, thence to a street, mercifully deserted.

Until T. Berkeley Manners commands a quarter-column obituary in the papers he will be troubled frequently with bad dreams. The dreams inevitably will have to do with mad flight through the streets of a strange town, skulking in dark doorways, crawling through the rank weeds of a vacant lot; somewhere in the course of the dream enters a milk wagon—a kindly driver willing to cover a fugitive with his horse blanket—a ride through miles of dreary marsh—then the rear room of a saloon somewhere and a peg of burning stuff.

It must be recorded as sober fact that the heartening noggin of liquor was quaffed in the company of the milkman—as a thank offering to the milkman—in a Hackensack saloon. Hackensack is several miles from Hoboken. It was three o' the morning. T. Berke-

ley took a four-o'clock train for Newark, rode thence to the interesting city of Perth Amboy on an owl trolley, crossed the Kill von Kull to Tottenville on the Staten Island shore, and went to bed in Streeter's Hotel. Tottenville, so the fagged brain of the fugitive told him, was the last place in the world where the police would look for him. It is no slander on Tottenville to say that T. Berkeley was right. Most innocent, as well as most remote, outpost of Greater New York is Tottenville.

He slept the troubled sleep of a fagged murderer, and the pearls in the shark-skin bag were under his head.

It was a desperate, hunted criminal that went to sleep on Streeter's bed; a sober-minded salesman of sectional bookcases who knew his duty as a citizen awoke there. T. Berkeley made a simple breakfast in the hotel dining room at four o'clock in the afternoon, and took the train for Manhattan. He was going to give himself up at police headquarters. So resigned was he when he boarded the ferry to cross from Staten Island to the Battery that even the black letters strung across seven columns of an afternoon paper he picked up from a news stand in the St. George ferryhouse did not revive the old panic of a whirlwind yesterday.

PEARL THIEVES ELUDE FEDERAL DETECTIVES!

So the block type screeched the nubbin of last night's adventure. T. Berkeley even smiled, so unassailable was his composure. Then Krump, the sly fox, had made a good get-away as well as he, the writer mused. His eye began to slip over the "bank" of smaller head type at the top of the two right-hand columns.

T. BERKELEY MANNERS, POPULAR WRITER, BELIEVED TO BE INVOLVED IN ROBBERY.

HIS WATCH IS FOUND ON ROOF!

The old horror rose and smacked T. Berkeley in the face; the mad fantasy of two nights and a day swooped out from the closet of forgetfulness and engulfed him. Lines of type galloped under his eyes as he sped down the double-column measure, seeking the justification for this branding of him in the headlines.

"Secret-service men—conjunction with Hoboken police—posing under the name of Ernestus Krump, but believed to be in league with the crooks—and a companion believed to have been T. Berkeley Manners took to the roof." ("Yes, yes," whispered the reader, with dry lips; "but——") "Shots fired—panic——" ("Ah, here!")

After it was apparent to the secret-service men that the Hoboken detectives had failed to close all avenues of escape, and that the birds had flown, the Federal detectives made a careful examination of the roofs in the block. About one hundred feet away from the trapdoor above Krump's shop they found a small package, tied with white ribbon. Removal of the wrapper disclosed a jewel box bearing the name of a prominent Fifth Avenue jeweler.

This contained a gold watch and a note. The watch was inscribed on its inner case: "To T. Berkeley Manners from Mamma."

The detectives, at first unwilling to give the contents of the note to the press, finally permitted an *Evening Breeze* man to make exclusively a copy of the mysterious missive. It read thus:

JACK: In exchange for the key, which I know you will have given to our little friend of the patent limbs ere this, I am returning a little keepsake, which I took from your pocket when I put the bag of—pills there. I took it for a purpose, and, the purpose fulfilled, I am restoring it to its rightful owner.

You will remember I said I would find a way to communicate with you? Well, mamma's inscription and the city directory have shown the way, as you knew when you received my earlier note to-day. I took this way of learning your identity, for it would not have been fair to ask you directly who you were and still have kept my identity secret—which I must still do.

Be strong in your trust, Jack, dear, whatever may happen and deserve the love of your JILL.

P. S.—Jim Rolfe was a necessary fiction. Don't look for him further, for Jim does not exist. Will explain all to you some day.

The newspaper story continued to say that inquiry at the home of T. Berkeley Manners, number five-five-five Gouverneur Street, Brooklyn, had developed the fact that he had not been home all night. Mrs. Mary Jingles, his landlady, told the reporters he had returned to his room unexpectedly yesterday afternoon, and had found waiting him a note delivered earlier by a messenger boy. Mrs. Jingles surmised the note was from a woman, for the paper was strangely scented. Manners had left the house, she said, in manifest agitation shortly after receiving the missive.

Two stone lions couch on the steps of the handsome building on Center Street, New York, called police headquarters. Those lions maintain the imperious demeanor of guardians of a sacred institution. Stonily they glare upon the just and the unjust alike. Murderers pass their dread scrutiny; safe blowers and pickpockets shuffle within reach of their punishing paws; politicians pat them familiarly on the head on their way to important conferences within the hallowed portals. If the frozen jaws of those janissaries of justice were ever loosed in confidence, who knows but that they might confess that, taking a backward look into the secrets of the building, they consciously threw into their pose of stern and upright dignity a little extra "side" to cover the obliquity behind them? However, speculation on the mental attitude of stone lions is hardly profitable, and the only relevant fact in this context is that never had those lions spotted so palpable a criminal as the young man with the jaded eyes who set timorous foot on the steps between them this day—T. Berkeley Manners, novelist.

Vaguely he wondered, as he entered the echoing corridor within the door, if convicts in Sing Sing were allowed to press their trousers; whether their pajamas were striped or just plain gray. The harsh voice of the man in blue asking what he wanted there was assuredly that of the keeper of the black cells. T. Berkeley managed to gasp that he wanted an interview with O'Shaughnessy; and thereafter he was shunted, bandied from one bluecoat to another bluecoat, glared at and growled at, until finally he found himself pushed through a rosewood door onto a green plush carpet. A big man, tilted back in a spring chair and voraciously eating a big cigar as he would a sprig of endive, eyed him not unkindly over a cluttered desk.

"Well, sir, and what can we do for *you?*" O'Shaughnessy asked, in a voice like the drumming of a steam pipe.

"I—I am T. Berkeley Manners," was the story writer's halting introduction of himself. "I came to give myself—er——"

"Well, well—Mr. T. Berkeley Manners, is it! This *is* interesting, Mr. Manners. And you are the gentleman who gave the Hoboken detectives the slip over the roofs last night? Well, well!"

"——up," cackled T. Berkeley. "I came to give myself up."

"Give yourself up?" Geniality in O'Shaughnessy's voice was thick as cream in a jug. "And what do you want to give yourself up for? What have you been doing against the law?"

T. Berkeley had read of how the chief of detectives played with criminals like a cat with a mouse before he put them through the rigors of the "third degree." It was ghastly, this suavity.

"For the pearl robbery," he mumbled. "And I have the stolen pearls with me."

"Just wait a minute, Mr. Manners." O'Shaughnessy pushed a bell button on his desk. "There's a gentleman in talking to the c'missioner right now who is more interested in these pearls than I am. Tell Mr. Reilly I'd like to see him right away if he can come." This to the uniformed man who answered the summons.

"You know, Mr. Manners, this pearl case is a secret-service job entirely," O'Shaughnessy purred; "and, much as I've been itching to horn in on it, it's beyond my jurisdiction. Mr. Reilly's head of the New York branch of the

service, and—ah, Reilly, come in; here's something to interest you."

A tall, heavily built man with a mild blue eye strode in, and found a seat near O'Shaughnessy's desk. He carried no handcuffs. He shook hands with T. Berkeley, on the contrary, at O'Shaughnessy's introduction.

"Smoke up!" the head of the city's detectives roared, passing a cigar box to Reilly, then to the fiction spinner. T. Berkeley looked the cigar all over, guessed that it was drugged, but lit it in desperation.

"Now, Mr. Manners," was O'Shaughnessy's throaty bellow, "come through, and go as far as you like. Just you tell it to Reilly here; I'll listen. I bet it's hot stuff."

The unhappy young man who had found Somaliland within five miles of Manhattan's city hall made a strong mental effort to get himself in hand; then reached into his inner waistcoat pocket, and brought out the shark-skin bag. He spread the drawstrings, and spilled the whole precious heap of glimmering pearls on O'Shaughnessy's desk. The homely key dropped out last of all. Not unconscious of dramatic values, T. Berkeley sat back, and waited the effect of his dénouement. Not a murmur; not a whisper. Reilly only reached out and picked up the key from the top of the heap of white luster.

"Where did you get this, Mr. Manners?" he queried, paying no heed whatever to the pearls.

"Why, that—that was with the pearls when they were given to me."

"Um-m! A key, eh? Rather a strange-looking key. I don't know that I've ever seen anything quite like it."

"Yes; and I am led to think—that is, I believe it must be a very valuable key to a certain young lady who knows something about the stolen pearls." T. Berkeley, feeling no nickel-plated "nippers" clamped instantly on his wrists, began to recover a few shreds of his self-confidence.

"Nobody said anything about 'stolen' pearls but the newspapers," Reilly commented quietly. "What makes you think these pearls were stolen?"

"What makes me think—pearls not stolen!" The writer sat in open-mouthed astonishment. "You mean the pearls—the pearls there on that desk were not stolen!"

He was trembling; perspiration stood thickly on his forehead, and the suspected O'Shaughnessy cigar smoldered unnoticed on the floor. He had a feeling about his shoulders as if a heavy pack, like that Pilgrim carried through all the bewildering desert of woodcuts, was loosened and might slip off.

"So far as I know, Mr. Manners," came the steady monotone of the secret-service man, "there has been no pearl robbery. If there was, Mr. O'Shaughnessy here, and not I, would be handling the case; he takes care of the peace of New York, you know, not the Federal service. But still I think you may interest me in another way. Where did you get these things you just dumped out of a bag?"

"Yes, yes, Manners, tell Reilly and me your straightaway story just as you want to," O'Shaughnessy reassured him. "Bet it's going to be grand stuff."

Whereupon T. Berkeley, breathing easier in the glimmering hope that, after all, he might not be *particeps criminis*, but understanding not at all Reilly's summary sweeping away of the great pearl robbery, told his story from the beginning, about the table at Paquin's, down to the end of the early-morning flight at Tottenville. As he repeated the tumbled incidents of dynamic action his powers of a tale spinner asserted themselves; he carefully led up to his climaxes, polished the high spots. He noticed that as he dwelt upon his interview with Krump, the artificial-limb manufacturer, Reilly, though still listening, picked up the key from the midst of the pearls, and examined it carefully, perplexedly. He drew a sheaf of papers from his pocket, thumbed several pages of what appeared to be a folder, and seemed to be making comparisons between the flat piece of metal and the text of the booklet. Finally T. Berkeley brought his narration to a whirring close. O'Shaughnessy beamed appreciation.

Reilly smoked thoughtfully for a minute.

"Did she limp?" he suddenly asked.

"Who—the girl? Why, yes"—T. Berkeley strained his memory to snatch at details. "I think she did. Probably twisted her ankle when she was coming through the window from the gambling house. I hadn't remembered noticing it until you asked."

"And she said her comfort, maybe her safety, depended on her recovering this key from you?"

"Yes, indeed; she was very earnest about that."

"Lookahere, Manners," the secret-service man speared the story-teller with an abrupt glance. "You swear you never met this girl before the night you tell about—never saw her, or heard of her through a third party?"

"Why, certainly," T. Berkeley found himself answering rather warmly.

"Do you know Tavshan Harooglian, the Fifth Avenue jeweler?"

"The man who was robbed on the *Icelandic*, you mean?"

"I didn't say he was robbed," Reilly corrected.

"I did not even know of the man until I read the paper yesterday," T. Berkeley answered.

"What you think of this, O'Shaughnessy?" the government detective asked—and once more he lifted the thin steel key from the desk, laid it flat on the circular he had been turning about in his fingers, and put both objects under the eye of the chief.

O'Shaughnessy's lips moved as he read from the circular; he picked up the key, and held it close to one eye, examining the shank minutely.

"Uh-huh; that clinches it, I guess," he grunted.

Reilly turned, and addressed T. Berkeley crisply:

"Well, Mr. Manners, you have been skating pretty near a crime without knowing it; but you have helped us clinch one point that was missing. We're much obliged to you. You can go—and you can take these knickknacks with you as a souvenir if you'd like to."

He cupped his hand, and made a scoop sweep of the pearls on O'Shaughnessy's desk. T. Berkeley jumped from his chair.

"What! You're giving me thirty thousand dollars' worth of pearls?" he yammered.

"I'm offering you about three dollars and fifty cents' worth of fish-scale imitations—and poor ones, at that," Reilly said. "All I'll keep is the key."

"But—but I don't understand."

Reilly smiled. O'Shaughnessy took his cigar from his mouth.

"Aw, tell the poor boob the whole business," he rumbled.

The Federal agent seemed to hesitate, weighing something in his mind. Then he began:

"After all, I don't suppose there's any danger you will repeat what I say to the papers if I promise to give out to them enough to square you for having your name in the afternoon editions to-day."

T. Berkeley shook his head in a positive pledge of secrecy.

"Well, we'll put it this way: A prominent Oriental dealer in rugs and jewelry, with a place on Fifth Avenue, isn't making money fast enough; so he decides to go in for beating the customs a little on the side. He does it, and gets away with it in fine shape for a couple of years, and then he frames a grand clean-up. He takes a girl in with him—a very beautiful, very clever young girl she is, too."

"Not——" T. Berkeley began, a stab searching his heart.

"I'm naming no names, young man," Reilly rebuked. "So he takes a girl in with him, and he gets together—or has made to order—a bunch of sixty-five matched fish-scale pearls. That's the dummy to hang on the goat when the goat comes along. He leaves those phony pearls in his shop here, and goes over to Europe to buy the real pearls, the girl having preceded him by several weeks.

"Mr. Jeweler makes no bones about hiding his purchase of the real pearls from the treasury agents over there. He buys 'em right out in meeting, so to speak. Meanwhile, he's got a friend

—your fellow Sanderson—who's an innocent fiction writer like yourself; he feeds a fine press-agent story about the Sultan Ali Beg's pearls, and how they were stolen in Arabia, to Sanderson, knowing Sanderson will fall for it. He wants to build up a bloody mystery about his string of pearls like the stories of the Hope diamond, you see.

"So far, so good. Mr. Jeweler buys the pearls; we know about it on this side, and are ready to spot them for duty when he arrives. On the ship he meets a beautiful young girl, as the papers had it; and he courts her hard in the eyes of the passengers. Bluff! The girl's his lady friend, who's in with him on the scheme. She's got the real pearls all the time. But after Mr. Jeweler's made out his declaration all right and proper he's robbed the night before the ship gets into port. When he come to the customs pier he's got no pearls to pay duty on, for he's been frisked. The girl has made declaration of a few hundred dollars' worth of stuff—dresses and such—and she walks off the pier with the thirty thousand dollars matched pearls on her. Do you get me?"

T. Berkeley nodded dully.

"Now, the real pearls once in the country, what's their game? They want a little advertising on the side; that they get from the papers. But they want more than that to plant the phony pearls on some goat, hoping somehow they'll come to light and verify the robbery story. All right if some expert does say when the fish-scale pearls are discovered that they're not genuine; Mr. Jeweler will admit he was fooled, and he'll be getting away with the real stuff anyway."

"It looks—it looks," said T. Berkeley, "as if here is where I come in."

"You do," was Reilly's hearty assurance. "You fall in. You're the goat. You see, the secret service begins to tumble to the little game, and watch Mr. Jeweler a bit. He and the girl decide to give the third member of the gang the double cross. The third man is Krump, the manufacturer of handsome artificial legs. The girl discovers all of a sudden she's lost something she needs in her business; finds out she's slipped it to you by mistake. Hoping the secret-service men are already beginning to feel out Krump, she sends you—the goat—over to Krump to kill two birds with one stone; slip him this key here, which she very much needs because it is a number-one clew to her identity as long as it is kicking around loose, and incidentally attract the detectives to Krump."

"I guess I attracted the detectives, all right," murmured T. Berkeley, with a wan smile.

"Yes; and while the secret-service men were hopping after you and Krump over the roofs of Hoboken, Mr. Jeweler and Miss Girl make their quick get-away by different routes."

"What! Harooglian and—and She got away?" An eager flash came in T. Berkeley's eyes.

"She did—worse luck; but Harooglian didn't. Just got a wire this afternoon saying they caught Mr. Jeweler up at Malone, New York, on the boundary. We landed Krump, too, sneaking out of Hoboken in a coal car this morning."

"But the girl—she's really gone?" T. Berkeley grabbed the detective's sleeve in his excitement.

"For a while, son, for a while. Don't be too happy; she'll have to come back here some day; they all do; and then we'll——"

There was silence in O'Shaughnessy's office. It was broken by a faint, metallic ring. Reilly had dropped the mysterious key onto the arm extension of the chief's desk. He picked up the bit of metal, and looked at it quizzically.

"But she'll surely need this—yes, she will," he chuckled.

"Why?" from the mixer of red-blooded high balls innocently.

"Look here."

Reilly pushed the key close to T. Berkeley's eyes, and pointed out with a finger nail the tiny figures "1313" stamped in the flat shank near the top.

"Look here, too."

He held out a turned-back folder,

upon the uppermost page of which was a lithographed artificial leg. In bold-faced type above a paragraph of description were the words and figures "White Mice, 1313." Opposite was the cut of a key, identical with that Reilly held. "Key to Krump's Interlock Sanitary" was the legend under the cut.

"You said she limped, didn't you?" Reilly demanded, his eyes twinkling with grim humor.

"But you don't mean to say she has —you don't tell me——"

"Yes, I do mean she has one—and that's the reason why she was such a good pearl smuggler. Figure it out, son; figure it out," laughed the head of the secret-service branch.

THE SNOB IN BASEBALL

THE animosities of ball players are not as deadly and lasting as they have been pictured. Their profession is a sort of fraternal society, and a member of it is treated with consideration by all other players, even though of a personality generally disliked.

An example of this was given in Washington last summer. Once in a while an individual of snobbish tendencies breaks into the majors. None lasts long, for the baseballic axiom that "It takes a good fellow to be a star," is literally true. One of these exceptions, who had run his short, supercilious career, and retired, thoroughly disliked, became stranded in Walter Johnson's town, penniless and ill. He had played with New York and Pittsburgh, in the National League, and with Detroit in the American. He was a Tiger pitcher when George Mullin came up from the bushes in 1902. The day the recruit first appeared at the old Bennet Park, a Tiger who had become acquainted with him steered him up to a group of Jungaleers to introduce him.

"Mr. Blank, Mr. Mullin, our new pitcher," he said.

The veteran sneeringly turned his head, and resumed conversation with another player without a word of welcome, though he did hold out his hand and let Mullin clasp it.

That veteran was the star of the Detroit hurling corps for two seasons, but went back rapidly. He held his job for a while through the various modes of stalling known to experienced pitchers, including blaming his support and "lucky" for his losses, but finally was cut adrift and got into the National League. He lasted there only until the managers discovered his weaknesses and wiles, and then was turned back over the bitter road all ball players must travel who try to remain in the select circle after they have passed their prime.

This former pitcher was not supercilious when he met Mullin in Washington last July. He was a suppliant for favor. One dollar would look like opulence to him just then. Could Mullin help him out?

Big George asked him of his plight and where he was staying. At the ball yard that afternoon, when the Tigers had gathered, he told them of the matter, took off his hat, and chucked a dollar into it.

"I don't like the lobster, but he's a ball player," he said.

The others contributed similar amounts and similar remarks, after which Mullin took the hat to the Washington clubhouse, where the Nationals chipped in. Not a man on either team had a good word for the old player, for his disposition in his days of prosperity was well known to them, though very few of them had seen contemporaneous service with him.

But he was a ball player—and that evening Mullin hunted him up and handed him thirty-five dollars to pay his expenses to his old home.

The Indian in Bill Todd

By Charles E. Van Loan

Author of "Blacklisted," "The Chivalry of Carbon County," Etc.

The "millionaire kid" breaks into baseball, and, feeling that he has not been properly treated by his manager develops a grouch and takes his revenge like a Seneca or an Iroquois—for there was lots of Indian in Bill Todd

IT seems strange, with all the pages and pages of newspaper comment upon the Todd case, that nobody should have stumbled upon the logical explanation of that young man's conduct. One word would have told the whole story—heredity.

Bill Todd's great-great-grandmother was an Indian. Not a sloe-eyed Pocahontas, you understand. Just plain red Indian.

When a family happens to have a great deal of money, a dash of Indian blood is a thing to be proud of and cherished in tradition. The chances are that the dear old lady smoked a cob pipe and wore number-nine congress gaiters when she went into town, but the present-day Todds prefer to think of her as a lithe and lovely creature in buckskins—a sort of J. Fenimore Cooper princess in beads and moccasins.

But whatever the lady wore, she was Indian through and through, and there is Indian in Bill Todd—lots of Indian. You may give an Indian the worst of it, but you can never make him forget it. Bill nursed his grudge for a long time, fattening it by reflection and mellowing it with age, and when the chance came he took his revenge like a Seneca or an Iroquois.

Bill Todd is no longer a baseball player. He is now mentioned as a rising young capitalist, and his pretty wife blushes whenever the national game is mentioned. Not so Bill, however. His brief big-league career makes him a lion at his clubs, and along the cocktail route his opinions upon baseball are listened to with grave respect. Bill, they say, ought to know. In one city he is still mourned as a marvel gone wrong; a shining light hidden under a bushel of first mortgages, stocks, and bonds.

Very probably it was the Indian in Bill which made him a natural ball player. He pitched a "prep" school into national prominence, and performed brilliantly for his college until some of his other brilliant performances sent him out into the cold world, minus his sheepskin. Not that Bill minded it much, for college was beginning to pall upon him.

Then came "Bull" Kennedy, scout for the Panthers. On the face of it, it seemed an impossibility, but Bull was a cheery gentleman who never admitted that a prospect was hopeless. He knew that money was not the proper bait to dangle before this black-haired giant, so he spoke enthusiastically of the sport and thrill of a big-league pennant race.

"By Jiminy!" said Bill. "Why not? I've tried everything else!"

There was also a touch of Indian in Todd, senior.

"Go as far as you like!" said he. "Anything that will keep you busy suits me. You've got to get this baseball bug out of your system, I suppose, or you'll never be any good for other

Van Loan's new series of baseball stories began in the first May POPULAR. Back numbers can be obtained from news dealers.

things. When you're ready to settle down and be a regular man, come home. In the meantime, the allowance still goes."

So, when the Panther recruits started for Ashville, Bill Todd was with them, and Bill Todd's sixty-horse-power race-about and five trunks full of Bill Todd's clothes. It would have been better for Bill had he climbed on the train with one suit case and a humble spirit.

The other recruits, penniless striplings all, eyed him suspiciously, and said nasty things about his silk underwear and his collection of stickpins.

"Got an automobile, too!" said Harry Carr, an infielder from the Three I League. "What does the sucker think this is—a joy ride?"

The Big Chief himself, in whom there was no Indian, but who had been known to behave like one at times, was not visibly impressed with the manner of the distinguished recruit.

"Listen to me, young feller," said he, one evening on the train, "maybe you think professional baseball is a joke. It ain't. It's hard work. It means clean living and constant training. There's only one thing will get a man by—he must have the goods. Do you get me?"

"I got you the first time," said Bill.

"You've had your own way pretty much," said the Chief, "and I understand you painted things red until your college professors tied a can to you. None of that goes with me. From now on, I'm your boss. I tell you when to go to bed and when to get up. You ain't any college idol now; you're just a scrub pitcher, the same as the rest of 'em. Do you get me?"

"Unquestionably," said Bill Todd, looking out of the window. "What's the idea of this roast?"

"I want you to know your place," said the Big Chief, "and keep it."

"Ah!" said Bill Todd, and relapsed into thoughtful silence.

The first few days at the training camp opened Bill's eyes. Never before had he considered the possibility that he might not be able to "make the team," as he would have expressed it. He was accustomed to have the things upon which he set his heart. He had decided to pitch professional ball for the Panthers; it was quite a jolt to learn that his own decision did not settle the matter. Ashville was full of recruit pitchers, every one of whom was grimly determined to attach himself to the Panther pay roll.

Bill's roommate was a minor-league twirler named Ferguson—a tobacco-chewing yokel who snored disgustingly and had other habits which did not appeal to Bill's fastidious fancy. Ferguson was unquestionably "a mucker," but from him Bill Todd learned many things, one of them being that first attempts to break into fast company were not always successful.

"Yes, I was here last spring," said Ferguson. "I thought sure I'd go north with the team, but the Big Chief tied a string to me and dropped me off at Richmond. He said I needed more experience."

"He'll never drop me off at any whistling station," said Bill Todd. "I won't stand for it."

Ferguson eyed his roommate curiously.

"It's different with you," said he slowly. "You got dough. You don't have to play ball for a living. I do. I ain't got no say in the matter. I go where I'm told, or they blacklist me."

"Tough luck," said Bill.

At the end of ten days the real ball players put in an appearance, headed by the redoubtable J. Vivian Potts, whose name was a household word, and whose fame was nation wide. There was "Smiling" Kelly, the star pitcher; Mike Hallen, the right fielder; Dan Courtney, the famous first baseman; "Slats" Oliver, the first string catcher; Harry Halsey, the lightning little shortstop, and many others whom Todd was able to recognize at sight. They wore good clothes, diamond rings and pins, and seemed to know which forks to use. Bill Todd, at the table with the recruits, watched the big leaguers covertly, and decided that they were not "half bad."

If Bill expected a warm greeting from the regulars, he was disappointed. At his request, the Big Chief introduced

him to the members of the team, but the players, while polite, regarded the "millionaire kid" with more curiosity than kindliness, and did not offer to receive him into their select circle. He tried to talk automobile to Potts, and casually mentioned his sixty-horse-power French car in the hotel garage.

"I thought I might as well bring it along," said Bill.

"Humph!" said Potts. "What for?"

Later, J. Vivian passed the word that Todd was "swelled all out of shape," and the Panthers doctored that swelling with applications of the cold shoulder. Bill was not long on realizing that the Big Chief had spoken the truth when he said that only one thing would get a man by—the goods.

Bill had the goods. He showed his samples to the veterans the first time the Big Chief sent him into the box at batting practice. Bill's great assets were speed and control, and the Panthers, their batting eyes dimmed by five months of the simple life, blinked as the ball buzzed over the plate.

"Hey, *you!*" bawled the Big Chief. "What are you trying to do in there? We all know you've got smoke. We know you're a great pitcher, *but this is batting practice!* Do you get me? Batting practice!"

Todd grinned and dropped back on the second speed, but at least he had shown them what he could do. So far as he could see, the exhibition made no difference in his relations with the veterans. They spoke to him when spoken to, they nodded when he passed them on the street, but he was not invited to take a hand at auction bridge or poker, and he was conscious of a certain air of restraint when in their company.

"Chesty bunch of roughnecks!" thought Bill Todd. "I'll make 'em loosen up before long!"

That was the Indian in Bill coming to the surface.

"Socks" Mulligan, the old-time catcher, whose duty it was to develop the promising pitching timber, made favorable reports on Todd's progress.

"No use talking, Chief," said Socks. "the boy's *there*. He's got more speed than he knows what to do with, and a curve ball that's a jim dandy. Nice hook, Chief. He's worth a trial."

"I ain't stuck on him," said the Big Chief. "He changes his clothes twice a day."

"Too much money!" said Mulligan quickly. "That ain't the boy's fault. His old man is responsible. Take it from me, he's got the makings of a great pitcher, or I never saw one."

When the time came to separate the sheep from the goats, Bill Todd found himself assigned to the Pullman with the regulars—with them, but not yet of them. Evidently the final judgment was deferred. Poor Ferguson went back to the minors, and this time there was no string on him.

"Good-by, Todd," said he, trying to smile. "My old daddy used to say: 'Them as has, gits,' and I reckon it's true. I hope you have a good season, but I wish it was me that was going up there!"

Todd pitched in several exhibition games on the way north, acquitting himself creditably. Gradually the ball players warmed to him; the sacred circle opened and let him in. Bill began to feel himself a real big leaguer, and when J. Vivian Potts slapped him on the back and called him "old scout," it sent a thrill down his spine, the like of which he had never known.

The season opened with three of the veteran pitchers in first-class condition —Smiling Kelly, Joe Taylor, and Denny McDevitt. Ted Russell and Frank Petrie were hot-weather men. The Big Chief, his heart set upon a pennant, played his trump cards cautiously, and it was three weeks before Bill Todd had a chance to show what he could do against big leaguers. Old Mulligan reported him in fine condition.

"Well," said the Big Chief, "I've never felt sure of this feller. He's likely to develop a streak. We'll try him out against the Reds. He ought to be able to beat a tail-end club if he can't do anything else."

Some people would have us believe that baseball is ninety per cent science. Ball players know that luck enters

largely into the game. The team which "gets the breaks" is the team which wins, and on the day when Bill Todd made his initial bow to the home fans, the breaks were all against him. He pitched remarkable ball for five innings, but in the sixth Jerry Gilman missed an easy chance to get the third man; Bill walked the next batter; and "Slim" Anderson, the Reds' heaviest hitter, caught Todd's fast ball on the end of his bat and drove it over the right-field fence for a home run.

"This is the millionaire kid, is it?" roared the opposing coachers. "Better put the blanket on him, Chief, and send him back to pah-pah!"

Bill's ears burned, and he was conscious of the fact that the infielders were profanely exhorting him to "put something on the ball." He put so much on it that Slats Oliver was kept busy jumping after wide ones, and, after he walked one man and hit another one on the elbow, the Big Chief sent him to the bench in disgust.

Kelly, the star pitcher, took it upon himself to reprove the recruit.

"Didn't you know better than to stick that one right in the groove for Slim?" he asked. "That Swede is a sucker for a slow hook!"

"Well," said Todd, "the Chief said to make him hit."

"You *did,* all right," said Kelly shortly.

The final score was five to one, and the Panthers went to the clubhouse, snarling angrily.

"I called it!" said the Big Chief to Mulligan. "This guy ain't there in the pinch. He's got a heart about the size of a crab apple!"

"Aw, be fair," said Socks, who felt that his judgment was the point at issue. "Jerry Gilman blowed the game when he booted that easy grounder at second. Be fair!"

"Huh!" said the Chief. "A real pitcher doesn't mind a little thing like that. And look at the way he was heaving 'em—ten feet wide of the plate. The streak's there, I tell you!"

"Not necessarily," said Socks. "It's liable to happen to anybody the first time up."

"Huh!" grunted the Big Chief. "It better not happen again, I can tell you that!"

Bill needed sympathy, but found none, and the man who complained loudest and longest was Gilman. Jerry was engaged in the process known as "alibying himself."

It was a long, weary month before Bill Todd had another chance in the box, and the Indian in his make-up was all that sustained him during those trying weeks. The tip had gone broadcast through the league that the millionaire kid was a false alarm, a flivver, a pitcher with a streak.

His second opportunity came when the team was on the road, and again it was the Reds whom he was asked to beat. The Panthers developed a batting rally in the first inning, and it netted two runs.

"Now, then," said the Big Chief to Todd, "we've staked you to a commanding lead. See that you hold it."

Bill was the third man at bat in the second inning, Courtney and Oliver having gone out in order. He rapped a clean single through the infield, and was ordered to steal second. Away he went with the pitcher's arm, making a neat hook slide to the bag. There was no need of this, for the Red catcher had dropped the ball.

"Nice sliding, kid!" said "Breeze" Daly, the Red second baseman. "Too bad it was a foul."

"Was it?" asked Bill, and, scrambling to his feet, he started to walk back to first. The Red catcher could hardly believe his eyes, but he whipped the ball to the second baseman, and that rascal chased the luckless Todd up and down the line until he was ready to drop, the same being one of the best methods of preparing a pitcher for an early blow-up. A veteran would have stood still and tagged out, thus saving his breath; Todd twisted, and doubled, and dodged until he was almost exhausted, the entire Red infield entering into the spirit of the joke. When Bill was finally tagged, the Big Chief, who had been

coaching off first base, delivered himself of one of his characteristic bits of sarcasm.

"Todd," said he, "for Heaven's sake, who rooms with you?"

"Why—nobody this trip," said Bill, puzzled at the question.

"Just what I thought!" said the Big Chief. "Nothing in the room but the solid mahogany furniture! You had that base stole a mile. The catcher never even made a peg to get you. What made you start back to first?"

Bill hung his head and stammered:

"The second baseman—he said it was a foul tip."

"Oh, he *did,* did he?" roared the Chief. "Maybe you can tell me how long Daly has been running my ball club for me. You're taking orders from him, are you? I was playing baseball when a yard of cloth would have made you a suit of clothes, and I've seen that trick tried a million times, but you're the first man I ever saw that fell for it. You make me sick!"

Bill walked into the box, breathless, panting, aflame with indignation. At the moment he was conscious of nothing but a feeling of fierce resentment. The Indian in him was seeing red, which may have accounted for his inability to locate the plate for the first batter. He walked him on four very wild attempts, and the Big Chief trotted over from third base, yapping as he came.

"You're *yellow,* that's what ails you!" barked the manager. "I could scrape enough of it off you to paint a barn!"

"You're a liar!" said Bill Todd, and, dropping the ball, he made for the bench.

The Big Chief stared after him an instant as if stupefied. Then he found his tongue, and with it voice enough to reach to the last row in the grand stand.

"G'wan to the clubhouse!" he bawled. "There's some sand soap in the bathroom. See if you can scour some of the yellow off you! Get out of the park!"

Bill Todd marched the length of the field to the tune of the "Rogues' March," whistled shrill above the hoots and jeers of the heartless proletariat. The Indian in him wanted to climb over the bleacher rail and fight—wanted to rush back into the diamond and twist the Big Chief's nose; the white man in him knew that these things would only make matters worse. He plodded stolidly to the gate, where he turned and shook his fist in the general direction of the grand stand. This inglorious exit was Bill Todd's last appearance in a Panther uniform, and he was one of two men who knew it. The Big Chief was the other.

That night the manager found Todd in his room at the hotel, strapping his wardrobe trunk.

"Going, are you?" said the Big Chief. "Well, it's time!"

"Yes, I'm going," said Bill Todd, "but before I go, I've got a notion to show you how much yellow there is in me. I wish you was anything but an old man with one foot in the grave! I'd give you a beating that you'd remember the rest of your life!"

Now, the Panthers had won the game, and the Chief had made three long hits. He was, therefore, in a better mood than he might otherwise have been, beside which he read the danger signals in Bill Todd's eyes.

"Never pay any attention to anything that's said to you in a game," advised the Big Chief. "I was trying to get you back on the ground again. You took it the wrong way. Now here, let's talk business; you don't want to stay any more than I want to have you. Maybe some other club in the league will take a chance with you. I'm going to ask for waivers."

"Going to ask for what?" demanded Bill suspiciously.

"I notify the other managers that I'm ready to release you," explained the Big Chief. "If another club wants you, it pays me fifteen hundred dollars. If nobody wants you at that price—if they all waive—I can sell you out of the league; send you to the minors——"

"Nothing like it!" said Bill Todd. "Can't I buy my release from you?"

The Big Chief's blue eyes twinkled.

"I'll tell you what I'll do, kid," said he. "If they all waive—and I think it's

likely they will—I'll take your check for five dollars, and you're a free agent."

"You're on!" said Bill Todd.

Inside of ten days the whole baseball world was chuckling over the news that William Todd, son of old man Todd, had purchased his release from the Panthers for the magnificent sum of five dollars. It was the Big Chief's final touch of sarcasm.

"Well," rasped Todd, senior, when the prodigal returned, "have you had enough of this plain foolishness? Are you ready to quit?"

"Yes," said Bill, "I'm ready to quit the same way *you* quit when Bardwell and his friends double-crossed you in that wheat deal ten years ago. It took you a long time to get even, dad, but I notice you stayed with the game until you made tramps out of the whole bunch. That's the way I'm going to quit. I owe that red-necked mick a trimming, and I'll hand it to him if it takes me the rest of my natural life!"

Hezekiah Todd laid his hand on his son's arm.

"Did they job you, Bill?" he asked. "Tell me about it."

"Worse than that!" said Bill grimly. "The Chief said he could scrape enough yellow off me to paint a barn."

"You licked him, of course," said Hezekiah Todd, biting hard on the butt of his cigar.

"I outweigh him forty pounds, and he's fifteen years older than I am," said Bill simply. "It will take more than a licking to square this."

Todd, senior, drew his chair closer.

"How do you figure to get him, Bill?" he said. "Need any help?"

"No," said the son. "Money won't do it. This must be my own scrap, guv'nor. It has worked out fine so far. I'm what they call a 'free agent.' I can sign with any club."

"More baseball?" asked the father anxiously. "I thought——"

"Listen!" said Bill. "I *know* I'm a better pitcher than half of these fellows. I know I can beat most of 'em. I'm not going to be chased out of the game with a can tied to me. *Five dollars for my release!* Did you read what the papers said about that? It was a *joke!*"

Hezekiah Todd wriggled in his chair. A press-clipping bureau had done its duty mercilessly, and Bill would have been amazed had he known how closely his father had followed his brief big-league career.

"I've got a notion to *buy* that ball club and fire the whole kit and caboodle of 'em," said the capitalist. "It would be a good investment, anyway."

"There you go again," said Bill. "You think money can do everything, don't you, dad?"

"I haven't seen many things it can't do, Bill. But what I want to know is this: how are you going to get hunk with these fellows? What's your plan?"

Bill Todd talked steadily for fifteen minutes, and when he had made an end, his father brought in a verdict without leaving his seat.

"A fine scheme—if it works," said he. "In the meantime, perhaps you'd better come into the office with me and get acquainted with big business from the inside. It's almost as complicated as 'inside baseball,' and there's more money in it."

"You've got a new clerk!" said Bill.

That year the Panthers, with a club which should have won the pennant, were never better than third in the race, and in the rival major organization the Benedicts had a walk-over, easily outclassing the other teams. Bill Todd—a very quiet and sober Bill Todd—stuck close to his desk, and the members of the Father-has-money Club, of which he had once been a shining light, reported that Bill was losing all his ginger. To all kind invitations, he had but one answer:

"No, thanks; I'm in training."

"Training for what?" demanded the members of the F. H. M. Club.

But Bill did not see fit to enlighten them, and they finally decided that this talk about training must be one of Todd's jokes. If it was, the joke was certainly not on Bill's trainer, a fat, middle-aged man with a right hand like

a bunch of gnarled bananas. He was drawing fifty dollars a week on Hezekiah Todd's private pay roll. The clerk who audited the same never dreamed that "C. Sheehan" was the famous "Connie" Sheehan, in his day one of the greatest catchers that ever looked through a mask.

After the world's series was over, Sheehan called upon the manager of the Benedicts, Mason Henshaw.

"Might have a pitcher for you next year, Mace," said Sheehan.

"I sure could make use of a good one," said Henshaw. "Who is the bird, and where can I get a look at him?"

Sheehan leaned forward and whispered hoarsely.

"What?" shouted Henshaw. "Why, they say he's yellow as a canary!"

"That's what they say, Mace," admitted Sheehan. "Remember when they used to say that you had a streak yourself?"

Henshaw swore bitterly.

"There's just as much truth in their saying that this boy is yellow," said Sheehan. "Did I ever steer you wrong on a player?"

"Not that I know of," said Henshaw.

"I'm not beginning this late in the game," said Sheehan. "You take it from me, this fellow has got as much speed as Amos Rusie, and I've worked with him until he can put a ball anywhere he wants it to go."

"Bring him down to the training camp in the spring, and I'll look him over," said Henshaw.

"Not this bird, you won't," said Cornelius. "If you've got a winning club again next season—and you ought to have, Mace—and a certain other thing happens, then you'll hear from us. Suppose you get into another world's series next year; what team do you figure you'll have to beat?"

"The Panthers," said Mace promptly. "I don't know why they didn't win this year. They were the class."

"My dope exactly," said Sheehan.

A few weeks later the home papers carried a paragraph to the effect that William Todd, heir to the Todd bank roll, had gone to Bermuda for the winter. Nowhere was there mention that one C. Sheehan had sailed on the same boat.

Spring came, and, with it, the training season. The league races opened with the customary blare of brass and fiery enthusiasm, and from the first month of the pennant battles, two teams appeared as probable world's series contenders: the Benedicts and the Panthers.

In June Connie Sheehan announced that the time had come to "talk turkey."

"You can't always tell what will happen to a ball club," said the veteran, "but if the Big Chief doesn't win this year, they ought to get a rope and hang him. And Mace Henshaw has got a cinch in the other league. It's time to get busy, son. You can't make an omelet without breaking eggs, and you can't horn into the big show without showing something. Theory is bully, but an actual game is the best test. You've been under cover long enough. Beat some real ball clubs, or Henshaw won't touch you with a forty-foot pole."

"You're the doctor," said Bill Todd.

In July the baseball public smiled indulgently over the report that pitcher Todd, who failed so miserably with the Panthers, had joined the Weavers, in the American Association. Those who were interested enough to follow the box scores counted four winning games to his credit, in one of which he shut out the league leaders with three hits—and hitting was that club's specialty.

Connie Sheehan made a flying trip to Chicago, where the Benedicts were playing.

"Well, what did I tell you?" demanded the catcher. "How about him now, eh?"

"I see that he's been pitching some nice ball," said Henshaw.

"Nice ball!" said Sheehan. "He's another Rusie, I tell you. It's all fixed for you. Get him in the regular way, and whatever it costs will be refunded by the old man. You can't ask for anything softer than that, and all we want is a chance to work against the outfit that tied a can to him."

Mace Henshaw grunted skeptically.

"I don't promise anything like that,"

he said. "Work a green boy in the big series? I'm full of such tricks!"

In August Bill Todd appeared in another big-league uniform, the cream and maroon of the Benedicts. The Panthers, leading their league in a runaway race, received the news with hilarity.

"I thought that fellow had been shown up enough to hold him for a while," said J. Vivian Potts. "Maybe the poor rummy really thinks he's a ball player."

Mace Henshaw was a judge of a pitcher. He spent several mornings inspecting "the volunteer," as he called Todd.

"I never saw more speed in my life," he remarked to Connie Sheehan, who was never far away. "And he can make that fast ball hop, too. Where on earth did he get all that stuff?"

"You know who taught him," said Connie modestly. "Slip him into a game or two just so the boys will have confidence behind him. Try him out against a hitting club. He'll surprise you."

In September, with the pennant won, Bill Todd pitched three games for the Benedicts, and the Supreme Court of Baseball, sitting in bank upon the bleachers, reversed its former verdict.

"Who ever said this guy was a false alarm?" demanded the fans. "He's a wolf, that's what he is, a wolf! He must have got off on the wrong foot last season. The Big Chief certainly booted one when he let *him* get away."

The Big Chief would not indorse this last statement. He was a man who was "set in his way," as the saying goes; it was hard for him to relinquish a fixed idea. In the Big Chief's mind, there were two synonyms for Bill Todd—"yellow" and "ivory." His preconceived notions did not keep him from reading the reports of Bill's winning games, and he examined the box scores carefully.

"He ain't giving many bases on balls," said the Big Chief. "Must have picked up a little control somewhere. Well, Mace is welcome to him. I wouldn't have that guy on my ball club if his pitching arm was set with diamonds."

So far, Bill Todd had been depending upon a carefully planned campaign. Luck came to his assistance in September—Mace Henshaw's hard luck. Bert Lowrie, the Benedicts' big right hander, and the best pitcher in the string, succumbed to a severe attack of tonsilitis and went into the hospital. Davy Coons, another good pitcher, fell a victim to his old trouble—a sore shoulder which refused to yield to treatment.

"Can you beat it?" wailed Henshaw. "These men go fine all season, and just when I need 'em the most—bing! the hospital squad gets 'em. Lowrie would have been good for two games in the big series."

"Take it from me," said Connie Sheehan, "you've got a better pitcher than Lowrie ever was. All you've got to do is to think so."

"Yes, but how do I know what he'll do in a big game?" said Henshaw. "I want a man in there that I know something about. Todd might go a mile in the air."

"Listen to me a minute," said Sheehan. "Did you ever know a nervous guy that had any patience? This boy has worked hard for a year and a half, keeping himself in trim to do a certain thing. It ain't likely that a fellow who can wait that long is going to blow the chance when it comes. Bill has got just one idea in his head. He thinks he can beat the Panthers. He knows more about the batting weaknesses of those fellows than any pitcher you've got. Talk to him and see. He's made a study of that ball club, Mace, and I coached him. Time after time we've sat in the stand and watched 'em through a game just to get a line on one man. With absolute control, and the speed he's shown, he can make the Chief's bunch look silly. I'd bet my shirt on it."

"Well," said Henshaw stubbornly, "I may have to use him, but I hope not. A world's series is no time for experiments."

The blue-ribbon event of the baseball year opened on the Benedicts' home grounds. Fred Kilgore, one of Hen-

shaw's veterans, pitched against Smiling Kelly, and beat the Irish giant in ten innings by a margin of one run.

The next day, the Panthers, playing at home, returned the compliment, McDevitt beating Barry. On the third day Burchard, one of Henshaw's left handers, fought it out with Russell. The Panthers hit Burchard hard and often, but sensational fielding kept their runs down, and the Benedicts did some hitting themselves. Their hits came in bunches, and when the game was over Henshaw's men were on the long end of a nine-to-seven score.

Back in Pantherville for the fourth game, Henshaw sent Kilgore into the box after two days' rest.

"We've got one game the best of 'em now," said Mace, "and if we can win to-day, there won't be anything to it."

Smiling Kelly opposed Kilgore, and for seven innings it was a great pitching duel. The big Irishman was bent upon wiping out the defeat of the opening day, and Kilgore was fighting to give his club a commanding lead—and, incidentally, the long end of an unusually fat "split of the gate."

In the eighth inning, with two men on the bases and two out, J. Vivian Potts "got hold of one," and hammered the ball into the far wing of the bleachers for a home run. The final score was three to nothing, and the series was a tie.

"We'll get 'em at home to-morrow," said Henshaw hopefully.

On the train that night Bill Todd begged for a chance to work in the fifth game. Mace shook his head.

"I can't risk it, kid," said he. "If we win to-morrow, I may shoot you at 'em. Understand, I'm not promising anything."

Barry was Henshaw's choice on the fifth day. The little fellow worked his "spitter" as he had never worked it before, and on that slippery ball the Benedicts slid back into the lead again.

"I think he'll give me a chance to-morrow," said Bill Todd to Sheehan. "I wouldn't ask anything better than to beat 'em the deciding game on their own grounds."

"You want to rub it in, don't you, kid?" grinned Connie. "There must be some Indian in you."

"There is," said Bill Todd. "Regular Injun at that."

But when the time came, Henshaw wavered, and finally nominated Kilgore —Kilgore with but one day's rest.

"I'm sorry," said Mace to Todd. "I know how you feel about it, but these birds will be a tough bunch to beat to-day. And they've won both their games on the home grounds."

"That's exactly the reason I want to get at 'em," said Bill Todd stoutly.

Something in the boy's tone caused Henshaw to look at him.

"I'll tell you what I *will* do," said he, at length. "If Kil begins to go bad, I'll let you finish. I think they'll send Kelly after us again. That Irishman is a pig for work."

Bill Todd had never suffered such a heartbreaking disappointment in his life, but he was game enough to shake hands with Fred Kilgore and wish him luck.

"I'd give ten thousand dollars in real money to pitch this game, old man," said Bill, "but Mace won't let me."

"Huh!" grunted the veteran heaver. "If *I* had the say, you could buy the chance a lot cheaper than that!"

Sure enough, the Big Chief selected Smiling Kelly to fight in the last ditch. The Panthers, in a tight corner, faced the difference between sixty and forty per cent of the players' share, a matter of more than a thousand dollars to each individual, to say nothing of a world's championship, in itself a valuable consideration.

"Listen to 'em barking out there!" muttered Henshaw, as the first Benedict walked to the plate. "Make no mistake about it; they've got their fighting clothes on to-day!"

"Right at 'em, Kelly, old b-o-o-y!" bellowed the Big Chief from his position at third base. "Right at 'em!" The other Panthers added shrill yelps to the deep, heavy roar from the grand stand and the howls of the bleacherites, but high over every other noise rose the

clarion war cry of J. Vivian Potts, in left field. Mr. Potts thought as favorably of a thousand dollars as any man that ever played baseball.

The big Irishman opened the game as if fresh from a long rest. It was no new thing for him to pitch three times in six days; he had a record of three winning games in five days, and popular belief credited him with an arm of chilled steel. Duffy, Gallegher, and Howland fell before him in rapid succession, and forty thousand excited men and women gave Smiling Kelly an ovation as he swung lazily toward the bench.

Kilgore did not begin so impressively. Halsey, the Panther shortstop, waited for a count of three and two. Kilgore put the last one straight over, and Halsey cracked it over the infield for a single. Jerry Gilman, the second baseman, ordered to "make him pitch," also waited until he was forced to hit one, but he smashed the ball straight at Johnny Duffy, and the shortstop engineered a lightning double play which drew cheers from the nonpartisans, and caused the Panther rooters to groan dismally.

The Big Chief was next at bat. This wily old warrior felt certain that Kilgore would not be able to go the distance without weakening, consequently he had ordered the Panthers to "wait him out to the limit," thus forcing the Benedict pitcher to make great use of his tired arm in the early stages of the game.

"He ain't there with the old control to-day," said the Chief, while Kilgore was pitching to the first man. "All we've got to do is to wait for him, and he'll blow. Then we'll step in there and snatch him bald-headed."

The Chief was an exasperating "waiter" himself. He lingered about the plate until Kilgore walked him, and was so elated over the support thus given his theory that he attempted to steal second base. Sinclair, the Benedict catcher, rose from a squatting position and whipped the ball on a line to Eddie Eberle, who thumped the Big Chief with it when he arrived, feet first.

"They had luck that inning," remarked the Chief, as his men took the field. "All we got to do is to keep him a-working in there. He'll blow up any time now."

There was an anxious consultation on the visitors' bench, and four pitchers slipped through the gate with orders to warm up and hold themselves in readiness. Bill Todd was one of them.

"Why so many?" he asked.

Mace Henshaw opened the second inning with a single to right field, and "Dad" Hale sacrificed him to second, but Kelly struck out Sam Whiting, got Eddie Eberle in the hole on the first two balls pitched him, and forced him to go after a slow curve which resulted in an easy fly.

Potts, the idol of his league, was the first batter for the Panthers. If there was anything Potts hated to do it was to wait on a pitcher. Potts liked to feel the comfortable shock in the palms of his hands as ash met leather. He liked to see the ball fly on a line to the outfield. He was a natural hitter, and he liked to hit better than anything else in the world, but he had his orders, so he waited. With three balls and two strikes came his golden opportunity. Kilgore did not dare risk a curve; the best he could do was to shoot a straight one, knee high, and hope for the best. Potts stepped into that cripple joyously and whacked it to right field for a double.

Again luck favored the Benedicts. Mike Hallen was ordered to hit, but Dad Hale, at third base, made a pretty scoop at his humming grounder, put his toe on the bag, and whizzed the ball across to Henshaw on first. It was a close play, but the umpire called Mike safe.

"Aw, what are *you* roaring about?" growled Potts to Hale. "He beat it a stride!"

"Go right back to the bench and set down, sonny," chirped Dad. "I got you, anyway. That's something."

Pete Powers was thrown out at first base, and Dan Courtney flew out in center. It was a vastly relieved ball team which trotted to the visitors' bench.

"How do you feel?" asked Henshaw of Kilgore.

"I ain't got much," said the pitcher. "They're all hitting the ball, if you notice."

Once more Smiling Kelly mowed down three men in a row. The side was retired on ten pitched balls.

"It's about time we started," said the Big Chief. "They can't have all the breaks, you know."

Slats Oliver, the catcher, drew his full allotment of pitched balls, and then shot a nasty bounder at Duffy, the shortstop, who juggled the ball long enough to let Slats reach first base.

Kelly dropped a bunt down the infield, and was thrown out, but he was satisfied. He had advanced the runner. Halsey, at the head of the batting order, drew four balls in a row, and Henshaw began to fidget.

"Make 'em hit!" he ordered.

But Kilgore could not make them hit, for the good reason that he could not get the ball over the plate. With the stubbornness for which he was noted, Mace refused to call on the reserves until Jerry Gilman was also presented with a base on balls. The last attempt came near being a wild pitch, and Kilgore turned to Henshaw and shook his head slightly.

"Well! Well!" roared the Big Chief, coming up in his turn. "Where you going to put 'em now? No more room on the bases!"

Bill Todd, at work behind the stand, heard his name called, and a few seconds later he found himself walking out into the diamond. The Panthers were first to recognize him, and a crackling volley of baseball small talk burst around his ears.

"Here he is! Here's the canary bird!"

"Vot iss der name, please?"

"Oh, he's the yellow kid!"

The announcer shouted through the megaphone, and the grand stand took up the refrain.

"How many out?" asked Todd, as Henshaw came over from his position. "One, eh? And the bases full. No runs? That's good."

He sent his practice balls straight over the heart of the plate. The uproar died away, and in the hush after the Big Chief had taken his position at the plate, Bill Todd heard his former manager say:

"I didn't see any of that speed they've been talking about."

"No?" grinned Todd. "Well, you won't see any of that sixty per cent, either. *Take a look at this one!*"

Now the old Chief was a wicked hitter when he got a ball to his liking, but it was common scandal among pitchers that he relished nothing above the waistline, and prayed for slow curves over the outside corner. What Bill Todd gave him was a white streak, shoulder high and inside.

"Strike one!" said the umpire, raising his hand.

"You don't like 'em there, do you?" taunted the pitcher. "Never hit a ball off your ear in your life, did you?" And he proceeded to pour another white streak along the Chief's "letters."

"And that's two of 'em," said the umpire.

"I believe you peddled this guy his release—for five bucks," said the Benedict catcher to the Big Chief. "I always heard you was a bad judge of a pitcher, and now I know it. Look out! Here comes the big one!"

The Big Chief grunted and took a mighty wallop at the third ball.

"Batter's out!" said the umpire. Then to Sinclair: "For Heaven's sakes, don't let one of those fast ones through you. I'm a family man."

The Chief slammed his bat on the ground, and started back to the bench, endeavoring to show by pantomime that the last ball was at least a foot from the corner of the plate. Todd only laughed at him. The swiftness with which this cast-off had disposed of one of the most reliable hitters on the team rather dazed the crowd, but it recovered a portion of its spirits when J. Vivian Potts stepped up to the plate. The Benedict outfield moved toward the fences; the infielders shifted nervously.

Bill Todd cuddled the ball for a few seconds, and then whipped it with a pe-

culiar overhand jerk. Potts dodged, for it seemed to be coming straight at his head, but ten feet from the plate it broke downward, and cut the inside corner.

"Strike!" said the umpire. "Gee, that was a *bird!*"

"What do you think of him?" asked Sinclair in Potts' ear.

Potts refused to commit himself. He had been talked out of a few hits in his time.

"He'll give me another hook, sure," thought Potts.

Todd waited for Sinclair's sign, and when it came, he gave the Panthers' premier hitter exactly what he had given the Chief. Potts, expecting a hook, "crossed himself," and swung inches under the ball. There was dead silence for an instant; then the crowd roared its displeasure.

"Hey! Get a hit!"

"This feller ain't got anything!"

"Bust it up, Pottsey!"

Potts dug his spikes into the ground and set himself, tense as a coiled spring. If he got another fast one, he knew what he would do with it.

Again Bill Todd's long right arm flashed over his head, and Potts swung with all his strength—swung for honor and glory, and that which was better than all else beside, the difference between sixty and forty per cent. This time the ball did not swerve outward. It broke straight downward over the inside corner, and Potts caught it on the handle of his bat. A white speck rose over the diamond, and Eberle's shrill yell split the silence:

"I have it! I have it!"

The ball dropped in the infielder's glove, and the side was out. A portion of the crowd broke into hysterical applause, but for the most part the spectators sat dumfounded, dazed. The man who had pulled the Benedicts out of the hole walked to the bench, looking neither to the right or the left. He would not even lift his cap. The grudge which he bore the Big Chief and his men extended to every soul in the town. The Indian in Bill Todd was never more prominent than at that moment.

The Benedicts shook his hand and thumped him on the back; they told him how good he was, and they thought of the sixty per cent, now bigger and brighter and nearer than ever.

"Say, young feller," said Kilgore, "that's what *I* call pitching!"

Bill Todd did not smile; the Indian was still uppermost.

"I've waited a long time to get at these muckers," said he. "They're on the run now, and fighting among themselves like a lot of fishwives. We ought to break it up right here before they can take a brace. Let's have a few runs, boys!"

The Panthers went to their positions in a demoralized condition. The game had been in their hands, the runs which should have won it had been on the bases, and the opportunity had been whisked away from them by an inexperienced youth with an ivory head and a streak of yellow sufficient to paint a barn. Smiling Kelly had lost his smile—dropped it somewhere on the bench. He had not lost his tongue, however, but had been viciously criticizing his boss for "standing up there like a hunk of Stilton cheese and looking at a couple right in the groove." Left-handed compliments and reverse English had been flying along the Panther bench like hailstones in a blizzard.

"He's *yellow,* I say!" stormed the Big Chief. "Yellow as butter. He ain't got any heart!"

"Ye-ah," said Kelly sarcastically; "he looked like he didn't have a heart when he had you up there with the bases loaded."

In fiction the great games are always won in the ninth inning and by the pitcher, who puts the ball over the left-field fence with three men on the bases. On the diamond they are won when the "break" comes; won when one team suffers a brain storm or the other club begins to hit safely. Henshaw, realizing the nervous condition of the Panthers, sent his men in with orders to take a smash at the first ball if it came over.

The Panthers were still snarling among themselves when "Soapy" Gal-

legher, the Benedict left fielder, hit the first ball Kelly pitched down toward third base. It was not a hard chance, and the bound was a true one, but the Big Chief was still reflecting upon the extreme yellowness of Bill Todd, and he juggled that ball in and out of his glove, and then hurled it ten feet over Dan Courtney's head. Instantly every man on the Benedict bench was on his feet, yelling—even Bill Todd contributed an ear-splitting war whoop.

"There they go! There they go! Up in the air!"

Gallegher galloped to second base. Howland, the center fielder, drove the next ball to left for a single, and Gallegher scored, Howland going to second on Potts' try for Soapy at the plate. Mace Henshaw smacked a low, rakish drive against the right-field wall for a triple, and Howland scored. Reliable old Dad Hale bounced a ball over Kelly's head, Gilman whipped it to the plate, but Mace, sliding like a thunderbolt, swept Slats Oliver off his feet, and Slats dropped the ball.

"There goes your old ball game!" said Henshaw, as he brushed the dust from his uniform. "How do you like it?"

The Panthers did not like it at all. They rallied desperately, made a double play on the next batter, and Smiling Kelly, to whom a thousand dollars was not more precious than his right eye, fanned Eberle on three pitched balls, but the "break" had come and gone, and the figure 3 on the scoreboard looked almost as big as a house.

"The canary bird is still in there!" barked the Chief. "He ain't game. We'll get him."

Three very angry ball players faced Todd in the fourth—just faced him, and that was all. Hallen, and Powers, and Courtney went back to the bench, dragging their spikes and talking to themselves.

"Maybe it's only luck," grumbled Powers, "but he never let me so much as *look* at that fast ball. I'd like to get hold of it once."

But Bill Todd had not been studying the Panthers for nothing. He knew what they wanted, and he knew what they did not want—and served them accordingly.

As the game progressed, Todd began to talk to the Panthers as they came to the plate. He asked the Big Chief if he was still thinking of painting that barn, and advised him that yellow was becoming a very fashionable color; after which he pushed a few fast balls under the Chief's chin. Potts, up next, was reminded of the exact difference between sixty and forty per cent, carried out to four decimal places, also that his batting average for the day was .000. It remained a dot and three ciphers when that enraged youth lifted a towering fly to center field.

Sullen, disheartened, savage, the great crowd remained to the end. There are a few towns where the home fans put on their overcoats in the ninth inning and start for home—when their team is behind. Pantherville is not one of them. The Panther rooters sat with their hats drawn down over their eyes, listening to the heartless yapping of the scattered Benedict supporters, and hoping that they might choke. The cheerfulness of the visitors was almost as hard to bear as a glance at the scoreboard where the solitary figure 3 still loomed vast and forbidding in the midst of ciphers.

The last half of the ninth brought a momentary flurry. Few games are so irretrievably lost as to kill every vestige of hope in the breasts of the faithful. They stood up, stamping, and cheering, and trying by sheer noise to bring about a rally and put heart into their favorites.

The first man went out; still they cheered and fluttered their banners and pennons. The second man went out; there was no diminishing note in the volume of sound, but it rose to a sudden despairing shriek and died away utterly when the third man popped a weak fly into the air and Henshaw's flat mitt gathered it in.

Then it was that Bill Todd removed his cap and made a low bow to the grand stand. After a time the crowd began to cheer him.

The Big Chief trudged across the field, surrounded by a solid body of comforters. His lower lip was hanging like a red curtain. Over all the other noises, one clear yell sought him out:

"Oh, Chief! Who rooms with you?"

That, also, was the Indian in Bill Todd. An Indian, they say, never forgets.

When the world's series check arrived, Bill Todd showed it to his father. "That's a lot of money, son," said Hezekiah. "What are you going to do with it?"

Bill drew out his fountain pen, and, turning the check over, wrote these words upon the back:

Pay to C. Sheehan. WILLIAM TODD.

"And now," said Bill, "I'm ready to settle down to business."

Van Loan's next story is called "A Double Play." It will appear in the first September POPULAR, on sale August 7th.

THE SNAKE THAT DAHLEN SAW

ONCE in a while Matty, the big, good-humored star of the New York Giants, tries the patience of his pals a trifle, but he is so well liked that he is forgiven even while he is doing it. One afternoon, in a training camp in Memphis, Matty, instead of joining the others in the drill three times around the field when the practice was finished, went to the bus, waiting outside, and sat down to read. Pretty soon the other players piled in, and one ordered the driver to get under way.

"Hold on a minute," put in Manager McGraw. "Has everybody been around? Matty, have you been around?"

"No, and I'm not going around," replied Matty, in a tone of gentle defiance.

"Well, this bus don't stir until everybody has run around the field three times," was McGraw's ultimatum.

So the players settled down to await the outcome of a test of iron will and wits between McGraw and his star slabman. Matty read his paper and McGraw read another. Presently the other boys, perspiring after their run, began to get chilly, and urged Mathewson to get out and take his run.

"Well, if you're chilly, trot on downtown. It's only two miles," was Matty's answer.

The situation became somewhat tense after fifteen or twenty minutes. A lowly snake saved it. Dahlen, Gilbert, and McGann had climbed down from the bus, and were strolling about, when the first named found the reptile. It was a harmless garter. Dahlen picked it up by the tail.

Gilbert feared snakes more than he did anything else in the world. Dahlen knew this, and started for the second sacker with the avowed intention of coiling it around his neck. Gilbert broke for the ball field, with Dahlen and McGann in pursuit. The other Giants, eager for the diversion, joined in the chase. Mathewson was by no means the last one in.

They made the circuit of the field at a much hotter pace than that prescribed by McGraw for the workout running. But when Dahlen threw away the snake, and the Giants piled into the bus again, Matty was missing. A peek into the ball yard disclosed him drilling around the field. Three times he made it, then came out and waved his hand.

"Go on, you fellows," he called. "Don't wait for me." And he started for the city, running the entire two miles. He trained hard after that, and had the best season of his career. The incident illustrates an inexplicable phase of Matty's great disposition.

Reconsidered

By Clarence L. Cullen

Author of "A Congressman and His Hunch," "The Policeman and the Baby," Etc.

There have been some notable instances of men who have climbed aboard the water wagon—and stayed there. But the man in this story had only taken a five-years' vow. This has to do with what happened when the five years ended and his appetite leaped at the thought of the oil of the grape that huddles in the neck of a bottle of old cognac.

WHETHER Drink is a demon that degrades or a siren that seduces depends wholly upon the point of view—and upon the fluctuating poignancy of our memories of past performances.

If the liver is slightly nodulated, and the doctor wags a warning forefinger, a demon it is, hoofed, horned, and gloatful. To the blithe roysterer who can "take a drink or let it alone"—credulous spirit that he is!—it is a Lorelei coyly perched on a rock laved—we'll say—by sparkling Burgundy, lilting her invitations to libations.

Both points of view are more or less strabismic. But opinion as to the Flagon never has taken middle ground since the days—and nights—of amber-hued Falernian. It is a matter concerning which it seems our view must be either besotted or bigoted. The dispassionate judgment is impossible. We drink, or we abstain. And so we base our verdict, becoming heated and noisy as we render it one way or the other.

Cummings ripped the previous day's date slip from the calendar on his office desk. He stared at the red-ink ring which, months before, he had looped with his pen around the new date thus revealed—March the first.

Leaning back in his swivel chair, hands clasped back of his head, and gazing vacantly at the ceiling, Cummings felt the yoke of abstinence slipping from his shoulders. The roof of his mouth suddenly became dry, and his tongue clave to it hotly. He thought of—and for an instant imagined that he smelled—the rare bouquet of a just-opened bottle of peach brandy. Then he considered how superbly a properly played cello sounds to a man properly half drunk. Old embers in his brain broke into a delicious glow. Memory cells long ago filled in burst into tiny flames. His nostrils became pleasantly agitated by the pungent titillation of squeezed lemon peel at the top of a rimmed glass.

His pulse throbbed at his temples, as the pulse has a disregarded habit of doing after a man has rested his foot on a bar rail for an hour or so. He glanced again at the red-ink loop around the date. There was a swirly sensation, not disagreeable, but joyous, at the back of his head. The woozy refrain of a ballad of his unregenerate days—a song now long out of musical currency—filtered into his mind from out of the void of the past. He grinned at the ceiling with the foolish physiognomical vacuity of a man who has had about six high balls without sufficient intervals between. Cummings, in short, became momentarily drunk by autosuggestion

combined with the power of mental reversion. The red ring around the date whispered to him in a thousand delightfully maudlin old tongues.

"This is your day to dispel the grayness," it chattered sibilantly. "To-day the shackles of your vow drop off. A long wait, eh? All the better! You've made good. You've stuck for five years. You've shown that you can handle yourself. Now you'll be in shape to show that you can handle *it!* The grayness of life: that's what you are going to shake off to-night; the grayness!" Thus it chirruped on. Cummings thought he heard a faint cello obligato—its muted anguish eloquent of old memories—to the chattering.

He sat straight in his chair and, with an effort, shook off the languor superinduced by this long-prefigured drunkenness. He tore the red-ringed date from his calendar. Men entering his office might be asking what the red loop meant. It was none of their business. Cummings was not discursive about his affairs. He walked over to the water cooler and drank two glasses of iced water to assuage his sudden parching thirst. Then he attacked his mail, fighting himself to keep his mind on it.

It should have been told in the first five lines of this story that Cummings had quit drinking on March the first five years before we find him at his desk on the day of his liberation. But it was considered that if Cummings could wait for five years for a drink, the reader could wait for the turned page to be told about it. Drink had been a demon for Cummings. Item: his wife had died about six months after he had made his five-year vow. The six months had been happy ones; yet she had carried to the grave some of the lines of worry on her face; for this is a demon that expands with gayety as he creates the heartaches of women. If he had stopped before? Cummings had thought of that for many weeks after the funeral. But time has a merciful way of filling in such memory cells. The vow had been made to her. Cummings stuck to it in faithfulness to, and love for, her memory. During the five years he had thrived in business. But always the demon lurked in the back of his mind. And now the demon's day had come.

For the rest of the day Cummings weaved through his routine desk work in a state of subconsciousness. His real mind busied itself in the entertainment of flickering visions which came unbidden. Drinking glasses and goblets of old and beautiful fashioning, of sorts that he had seen in collections, passed in review before his mental eye; drinking glasses, thin-stemmed, amethyst-hued, engraved in arabesque, others milkily opaline and throwing off golden glints, like little sparks of subdued fire, as they revolved, unsupported by any hand, in the focus of his fevered fancy. Snatches of music, both majestic and ribald, thrust themselves upon him; a few bars from the prelude to "Lohengrin" grotesquely followed by the raffish refrain of "I Must Telegraph Ma Baby," and similar incongruities.

All through the day his throat and tongue remained acridly parched, like the mouth of a desert traveler overtaken by the simoon. When he talked with office visitors his voice was thick and husky. One of the visitors asked Cummings if he was ill. He replied that he was not, and cursed the man in his heart for an inquisitive busybody. He took no luncheon. He had no appetite for food. In imagination he inhaled the fragrance of old vintages, saw the harvesting of the grapes in sunny lands. It was an unconquerable waking delirium. But he did not attempt to conquer it. He threw down the bulwarks of his mind to give it full sway. He knew vaguely that it was madness; but, too, it was fulfillment! The demon was wearing the disguise of the siren.

At four o'clock in the afternoon he pulled down the lid of his desk, put on coat, hat, and gloves, descended in the elevator, and stepped into the wan wintry sunshine of Broadway. During the five years of his abstinence he had not abandoned his habit of dropping into the hotel cafés in the progress of his walk up Broadway to his apartment in

Sixty-fourth Street. He had not done this as a penance, but to keep in touch with his friends. But it had been both a penance and a test each afternoon to surcharge himself with bleak-looking and bleaker-tasting mineral water in company with old friends engaged in acquiring their habitual before-dinner wooziness.

At such foregatherings the abstainer must play the part of death's-head. The greasy jests of high-ball-spurred companions can draw from him only laughter that is forced. He is drearily conscious that he is hopelessly off their key. They, too, are conscious of it, and inwardly resent it. But Cummings had elected to keep in touch with his friends of the cafés. It was his only chance to meet them. Most of them were out of his business orbit. At night he remained at home. And the day would come when he would not have to sip the detestable mineral water, and when his laughter would not be forced!

The air was Marchily raw. Cummings, a robust man, felt the chill as he had not felt it before during the entire winter, which had been fecund with blizzards. This was because his fevered mind was reacting upon his body. He stepped out briskly.

Would he take the first few happy, numbing drinks with the first friends he came upon in one of the hotel cafés on his walk home?

He cogitated this carefully as he made his way through the home-hurrying Broadway crowds. He decided that he would not. He would be alone when he cast off his completed vow. He had waited long. He would make a solitary rite of it! Besides, now that he was so near the time, he experienced a sort of painful, but not unbearable, ecstasy, like that of the flagellant, in deferring the hour. He would be alone when he dropped the yoke, "dispelled the grayness." The occasion was too great to be intruded upon by undiscerning, unsympathetic company. Their foolish, raucous jokes would be inharmonious, discordant.

A bleared, bearded panhandler emerged from a doorway, approached Cummings from behind, and fell into shambling step with him. His husky appeal followed the usual formula.

"Boss," he whined, "I ain't et nothin' since——"

"That'll do," Cummings broke in upon the hobo brittlely. "I know what it means to want a drink. How long since you've had one?"

The panhandler's filthy beard crinkled with the imbecile laugh underneath it, and something that was intended for appreciation shone in the grotesquely hopeless man's bloodshot eyes.

"Boss," he gurgled, as he dragged his appallingly disreputable feet over the ground to keep up with this promising victim, "ye're all right. Ye're stric'ly all right. You guessed kee-rect. It's rum I'm needin'. Boss, I ain't had a reg'lar ball for so long that it makes me lonesome to think about it. A reg'-lar, human-bein' ball I'm talkin' about. It's been kag dregs f'r mine ever since——" He hesitated.

"Well, since when?" inquired Cummings, not looking at the man, but forging straight ahead.

"Since this mornin', boss, an' that's on the level," replied the derelict.

Cummings, smiling grimly, placed a five-dollar bill in the tramp's dirty, outstretched paw.

"Since this morning, eh?" he said. "I haven't had one in five years."

The panhandler stared at the bill with popping eyes.

"Boss!" he gasped. "Boss, is this piece o' change good?"

"Yes, it's good," said Cummings. "Now, beat it."

The wreck mumbled something that might have been a prayer, and placed a trembling hand of vileness on Cummings' arm. "Boss, I can't pull my reg'lar thankin' spiel on youse. Ye're too big! They ain't words in the——"

"Cut it out," said Cummings, roughly shaking off the man's dirty hand. "Beat it, I tell you."

It profoundly annoyed Cummings to think that the world held a human being who had permitted liquor to make of him a thing so obscene to the eye. The panhandler shambled zigzaggedly into a

side street, the very unsteadiness of his gait bespeaking the delirium of supreme happiness that consumed him.

Cummings, impatiently thrusting the image of the panhandler out of his mind, entered one of his accustomed hotel cafés. Three men whom he knew were ranged at the lower end of the bar. He joined them. The barkeeper directed the question at Cummings by a mere uplifting of the eyebrows. Cummings nodded. The barkeeper placed a glass of mineral water on the bar. His friends, who were working on high ball No. 2, and, therefore, not yet merry or loquacious, were discoursing owlishly of the spring training camps of the baseball players. Cummings surreptitiously emptied his glass of mineral water into a cuspidor, and, being the new man of the party, ordered a fresh round of drinks. Again he contrived, unnoticed, to pour his glass of mineral water into the cuspidor. His throat and mouth were so hot that he scarce could moisten his lips with his tongue. He wanted it so. The hour had not yet arrived. But how the siren crooned as he gazed fascinatedly at the glasses of the other men and caught the effluvia of their drinks!

With the fourth drink the faces of Cummings' three companions began to take on the expression of fixed silliness.

"Say, Cummings," said one of them, clutching his high-ball glass in his hand —Cummings bending slightly to catch the torturing aroma of the mingled liquor and lemon peel—"have you heard that Jim Boardman is dead? And the old scoundrel had the gall to bust up the traditions of our club by dying of pneumonia!"

Cummings joined forcedly in the harsh alcoholic laugh of the others at this sally. It was a grisly jest. Cummings had belonged, with the others—who still belonged—to a Cirrhosis-of-the-liver Club, the bounden duty of each member of which was to drink himself to a death caused by an alcoholized liver. The late Mr. Boardman, having departed by the pneumonia route, therefore was in mild disgrace with his cheerfully mourning fellow members. They commented with uncouth witlessness on the bad form, not to say the downright disloyalty, of the deceased in "cashing in" in such a way.

"Oh, well, the poor old duck was only a shell from booze fighting, anyhow, and I suggest that it be inscribed on the minutes of the club that it was the old cirrhosis that whisked him," said one of them. "Here's hoping he's brined up as usual to-day, wherever he is." There was another harsh laugh, and they all sipped the hideous toast.

"Talking about backsliders and things," said one of them to Cummings, "when's that five-year drought of yours going to be up, old hoss, and let you get back into the fold?"

Cummings parried the question. He was glad that he had decided to be alone when he should make his first libation to the fulfillment of his vow. He was tremulous from the day's long madness. He left them. As he walked out an orchestra in the grill adjoining the bar broke into the love duet from "Madame Butterfly." The melodic wailing of the violins sent a thrill as of positive drunkenness through Cummings' swirling brain. It was one of his favorite pieces. He had the phonograph record. He would put the record on the machine and have the entrancing, haunting piece as a sort of musical setting for his first drink at home. He hummed the air unmusically as he continued to walk up Broadway, so that men turned and looked at him. Drunk, no doubt, and lullabying to himself! It was not an unnatural conclusion. Cummings, firmly in the grip of his autointoxication, reeled slightly as he walked; his eyes were glazed and staring, and his features wore the frozen expression of incipient drunkenness.

The first drink—what was the first drink to be? Cummings pondered this point studiously, with a sort of grim meticulousness, as he walked. In the gone time he had been a dilettant in liquors. Now he passed the beverages in review, tasting each of them on his mental palate. It was delicious work. This choosing was a task that gave him the repressed exaltation, the quick tran-

quillity, and the comfort at the pit of the stomach experienced by the morphomaniac after the fresh injection has worked out of the lymphatics into the circulation.

Champagne? Ah, champagne! He saw the tricksy bubbles "winking at the brim," felt the tingling little bubbles pricking his upper lip. Again he saw, as with his veritable eye, the old, fragile, delicately wrought wineglasses floating in the air before him. A great draft of champagne! The thought of it caused his tongue to smart delightfully. He laughed foolishly when he suddenly recalled a remark he once had heard a girl make after taking her first glass of champagne. "It tastes like when your foot is asleep, doesn't it?" the girl had said.

But, no. Not champagne for the first drink. The glow of champagne was a slightly deferred one. It emancipated its drinker too slowly. Besides, he felt cold—and champagne was cold. He wanted warmth, the quick diffusion of the glow that gave one release from self. That was what he wanted—to get away from himself! For five years he had been living unbrokenly with his actual ego. It had been grim, gray, monotonous work, with many acute, nerve-torturing passages when his vow had compelled him to throttle temptation. But that was all over now. This evening—and often afterward—he could get away from himself as easily and as quickly as a sea-weary skipper, after a long cruise, gets away from his ship in the gig. Quickly! That was it. Therefore it could not be champagne wherewith to begin. He could have champagne later—magnums, magnums of champagne!

Whisky? No, not whisky. The taste and smell of whisky always had made him shudder, even when he was drinking it without limit. Always, to him, American rye and bourbon had smelt of the stables or the cow yard, and Scotch had the druggy redolence of the mixing room of a chemist's shop. They possessed the "action," of course. But there must be intrinsic charm in his first drink—the charm of bouquet, and of supreme potability.

Suddenly he came to a dead stop on the crowded pavement, and crashed a gloved fist into an open palm so that, again, men turned to look and to grin indulgently. He had it. Cognac! Old cognac, replete with mellow, time-ameliorated fires, diffusing the fragrance of autumnal vineyards, molten amber in hue, oilily grateful on tongue and palate—and then more and more and more cognac, and the quick release, and the whimsy, idle, drunken waking dreams!

He made his way over to Sixth Avenue. There was a little, dingy, cobwebby wholesale wine shop on that avenue that he knew well. He had bought things there in the other years. The keeper of the shop, an old, crabbed, sardonic man, was a bidder and buyer of the contents of cellars put up at auction or privately dispersed.

The old dealer in vintages, pottering at the rear of his dark shop, recognized Cummings when the latter entered. It was a point of pride with him to remember all old customers. He pushed his spectacles back on his forehead, and gazed at Cummings. There was a sinister inquiry in his gaze. He knew of Cummings' vow and of his long abstinence. Perhaps the old man imagined that his expression was bland. But it was simply saturnine.

"Well?" he said, rubbing his hands.

The significance of the word! He might just as well have said what he meant, which was, in essence: "You are back, then? Ha! I knew that you would be. They all come back to me!"

"A bottle of fine old cognac, eh?" he said, when Cummings, briefly and huskily—looking all over, to the old dealer's shrewd, experienced eyes, the abstinent wrought upon by the rekindled craze for drink—had stated what he wanted. "For yourself, Mr. Cummings?"

The question irritated Cummings so intensely that he did not trust himself to reply to it, but made a gesture of impatience. The old dealer in vintages averted his head and smiled grimly.

"There isn't much fine old cognac left in the world," the dealer went on. "The

cognoscenti in cognacs"—he grinned over his alliteration—"quickly wolf it up when it appears on the market. But I have a few cases of the famous seventy-four. Got it from the cellar of Trowbridge, the broken banker, who shot himself last year—remember? An alluring cognac, the seventy-four, Mr. Cummings. The heart that it fails to warm can have no cockles. Expensive, though. By the bottle? Let me see? Oh, I suppose I can let it go at fourteen dollars the bottle."

Cummings nodded. The old dealer took his keys and went into the cellar. After several minutes he returned. He carried caressingly in both wrinkled hands a bottle the label of which was corrugated with moldy dampness and yellowed with age. Cummings took the bottle from him with hands that trembled from mingled nervousness and desire. He gazed fascinatedly at the momentous label, and held the bottle up to the light. The old dealer grimly watched his customer's face.

"Don't forget to decant it," he suggested. "The oil of the grape huddles in the neck of a bottle of old cognac, as you know."

"The oil of the grape." Cummings gave a little gasp. It was a pretty, expressive phrase—"the oil of the grape." Again the pageant of the vineyards at harvest swooped upon his mind—the high-noon and twilight songs of the grape gatherers, the brightly kirtled peasant girls with the baskets upon their heads, the creak of the wine presses—the dim, storied dungeons where reposed through the long, waiting years the cognac bearing "the oil of the grape."

Cummings, putting the wrapped bottle under his arm and hugging it closely to his side, asked that a case of quarts of a vintage champagne be sent at once to his apartment. He tendered a bill of large denomination in payment for his purchases. The old dealer waved the bill aside.

"Never mind paying now," he said. "I have no change. Any time will do."

This time the suggestion that he was to be a regular customer did not offend Cummings. He was sensing the glow in heart and brain, the tingling even to the tips of his fingers, that the bottle of old cognac soon was to give him.

The thought accelerated his movements. He hurried out of the shop, the old dealer gazing sardonically after him. The dealer himself did not drink—but how well he knew every mental phase and external manifestation of the men who did—or who were going to!

Cummings' haste was now too great to permit of his finishing his walk home. The long-awaited hour was here. Speed, liberation! He stepped into a taxicab. Sheltered by the darkness of the taxicab, he experienced a new rapture in fondling the wrapped bottle, as a savage fondles a fetish. Holding it out in front of him in both hands, he was swept by the desire to babble to it. But the only words that his parched tongue and lips formed were: "Oh, *you!*" This he said over and over again, chanting it in a hoarse tone that rose above the rumble and clatter of the taxicab mechanism. "Oh, *you!*" It was his Invocation to Happiness. The siren was stretching out her arms to Cummings.

He all but staggered into his apartment. It was a handsome apartment—the same in which he had lived for ten years; nearly five of them alone, save for Rebecca, the old black woman servant, who had been with him—them—during all of their married life. She met him in the hall with her wide, wise old smile.

"Yo'-all is a li'l' late, suh," she said privilegedly. "Ah've got dinnuh all radey." She was a fat old black woman from Virginia, and she beamed upon him in the dimness of the hall. He was "mah boy" to her. Almost always she had known him. She had nursed him through dark days in the flown years.

"I don't care for any dinner this evening, Beckie," he said calmly, for the moment deliberately mastering his excitement. He was conscious of feeling disturbed and abashed in the old black woman's presence. "I had something to eat downtown. And I've a

headache. You may go home. Go now."

He stepped into the brightly lighted living room. She followed him wonderingly. Unthinkingly he unwrapped the bottle—his hands trembled strangely as he did so—and placed it on a table. The old black woman darted a swift glance at the bottle. The smile vanished from her face. From the bottle her gaze slowly traveled to Cummings' pale, drawn countenance. He did not look at her. He could not. She had often seen the same expression on his face in the gone time. She knew it well. She waddled over to the table and stretched out a hand to take the bottle.

"Ah reckon yo' done got this fo' comp'ny, suh," she said quietly. "Ah'll put it away fo' yo'-all."

"Leave it be, Beckie," hoarsely commanded Cummings. The tone was peremptory, even angry. "And do as I tell you. Go home. Now."

The work-calloused hand with which she had reached for the bottle dropped at her side. An expression of profound worry and pain appeared on her seamed face. But she gazed at him steadily.

"Mustuh George," she asked him wistfully, "yo' isn't, is yo'?"

Cummings flared into open wrath. The very sadness of the old black woman's face enraged him. He impaled her with a straight glance from eyes that glittered with the madness of desire.

"Do as I bid you!" he fairly shouted at her. "I want to be alone. Go home. Don't force me to tell you that again."

She recoiled from him, and waddled to the hall door. There she turned. Her usually clear old eyes were blurred with tears. She stretched out her fat old arms in a gesture of fine, involuntary dignity, and in a choked, awed voice she said to him:

"Mistuh George, fo' Gawd's sake, *don't!*"

Cummings snarled some unintelligible words at her. She turned and went down the hall to the kitchen. Cummings angrily thrust his hands into his trousers pockets and walked to a window. For a little while he heard her sobbing subduedly in the kitchen. Then she went out.

The instant Cummings heard the outside door close upon her, he fairly bounded from the window to the table, and picked up the bottle in hands that now shook as with palsy. He was panting audibly as a man does after a long run. Already he felt the flavor of the old cognac in his throat, felt its quickly radiated glow, almost felt the release, the "grayness dispelled!"

He broke several finger nails in tearing the old, dried-out foil from around the cork. The cork was deeply embedded. He would need a corkscrew, of course. Where was there a corkscrew? He had not used a corkscrew for five years. He remembered one with a mother-of-pearl handle that formerly he had used. But that had dropped out of sight years ago. A corkscrew, a corkscrew! He rapped out an oath. He should have got a corkscrew from Beckie before she went away.

He went unsteadily to the kitchen and began to ransack cupboard drawers and shelves for a corkscrew. None was to be found. Cummings cursed aloud —cursed horribly, with a hideous lack of mitigating unctuousness. He sped to his dressing room and, with a sort of blind ferocity, began to pull out chiffonier drawers, leaving them pulled out. No corkscrew.

Then he pushed open the door leading into the dressing room that had been *hers*. It was a room that he rarely had entered since her death. Everything there was very much as she had left it. He remembered that in the top tray of a small leather trunk of hers under the bed she had kept many trinkets, some useful, others mere souvenirs such as a woman likes to preserve. Perhaps in that litter he might find a corkscrew. He switched on the light and pulled out the trunk. It was the first time since her death that he had touched anything of hers. Even in his frenzy and fever of desire he was conscious of a tingling sensation of shame that he should find himself rummaging among her effects for such a thing as a corkscrew. He swept the thought out of his mind. A

corkscrew was what he wanted. What matter where it should be found?

The trunk was unlocked. Lifting the lid of the top tray, he found everything very neatly arranged. Shame beat upon him again as he looked at the assortment of articles that had been packed away so neatly by the hands of the woman he had loved—still loved. Gloves; handkerchiefs; manicure sets; brushes and combs; evening slippers; hand glasses; odds and ends of a dainty woman's adornment. Many of the things had been his gifts to her. But the tantalizing voice whispered: "Dispel the grayness!"

Nothing like a corkscrew was visible in the tray. But there were several closed boxes. Perhaps he might find a corkscrew in one of them. He lifted out and opened the first box his hand touched. It was a leather writing case he had given to her early in their married life.

He lifted out a thick packet of letters, carefully tied with ribbon. They were letters he had written to her during the courtship and while absent after their marriage. They were becoming yellowed, and the ink was faded. Underneath the place where the letters had been was an ornate little document, spread out. Cummings plucked it out and gazed stupidly at it. It was their marriage certificate. He placed these things back with shaking hands. Then he burrowed into the other side of the case. He lifted out an absurdly tiny shoe. Their baby's shoe. The baby had worn it for only a little while. Cummings had a swift, blurred view of a tiny headstone. But he dug deeper. Underneath were nail files, nail polishers; perhaps there would be a corkscrew. The blood pounded through his head with an impact as of billows at his temples when his groping fingers touched the chilly spiral of the thing he knew to be the corkscrew he searched for. He pulled it out. It came reluctantly. Something was attached to it. The something attached to it was a half sheet of her letter paper. A narrow piece of faded blue ribbon had been passed through a hole in the top of the sheet, and the ends of the ribbon had been tied to the corkscrew. It was the mother-of-pearl corkscrew that he had remembered a few moments before.

Cummings, kneeling in front of the trunk, read the writing on the half sheet of paper tied to the corkscrew—her writing. It was dated five years before to a day. Her words were these:

> My Dear: I am putting this corkscrew away—forever, I know! Last night you made your dear vow to me. I know you will keep it. I know, too, just as well, that after five years my blessed boy, my beloved husband, never will care to return to the blighting habit that has caused him so much misery and remorse. I know it, and my heart sings with the knowledge! You never can know how happy you have made me. Oh, may God forever bless you, my dearest, for making that vow. And He will—that I well know. Alice.

A great sob broke from Cummings' heart. He felt her clear, kind eyes upon him. He rose. The fever suddenly passed. His mind cleared. An unwonted quietude enwrapped him. He heard the voice of the clergyman standing beside her open grave intoning the words: "The peace of God that passeth all understanding." That, he thought, was, perhaps, what he was experiencing now—vicariously bestowed upon him from her grave; for he himself did not deserve it at first hand; he knew that.

Cummings rose slowly from his knees and walked with a firm step to the living room. He plucked the bottle of old cognac from the table upon which he had placed it and carried it to the kitchen. Here he knocked the neck from the bottle against one of the sink spigots and poured out the liquor to the last drop.

This was four years ago. Cummings has not yet taken his first drink. Nor is there a red ring around any date on his desk calendar.

The Gringos

By B. M. Bower

Author of "The Flying U Stories," "Lonesome Land," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF OPENING CHAPTERS

Fleeing to escape the Vigilantes who had arrested him for shooting a couple of robbers, Jack Allen with his friend Dade Hunter ride off to the rancho of Don Andres Picardo, who at the time of the story owned all the upper part of the valley of Santa Clara in California. There Allen and Hunter are befriended by the Don, Señora Picardo and their pretty daughter Teresita. But José Pacheco, who is very much in love with the señorita, resents their coming.

CHAPTER VIII.

DON ANDRES WANTS A MAJOR-DOMO.

SENOR, I have brought those things which you desired that I should bring. All is of the best. Also, I have brought a letter from the Señor Weelson, and what remains of the gold the señor will find laid carefully in the midst of his clothing. So I have done all as it would have been done for the patron himself." In the downward sweep of Manuel's sombrero one might read that peculiar quality of irony which dislike loves to inject into formal courtesy. Behind him waited a peon burdened with elegant riding gear and a bundle of clothing; and a gesture brought him forward to deposit his load upon the porch before the gringo guest, whose *"Muchos gracias,"* Manuel waved into nothingness, as did the quick shrug disdain the little bag of gold which Jack drew from his pocket and would have tossed to Manuel for reward.

"It was nothing," he smiled remotely, and went his way to find the patron and deliver to him a message from a friend.

Behind Jack came the click of slipper heels upon the hard wood, and he turned from staring, puzzled, after the stiff-necked Manuel, and gave the girl a smile such as a man reserves for the woman who has entered into his dreams.

"Santa Maria, what elegance! In splendor that will dazzle the eyes to look upon, the señor will now ride!" Teresita bantered, poking a slipper toe tentatively toward the saddle, and clasping her hands in mock rapture. "Silver crescents on every corner, silver stars bigger than Venus on the tapideros, a whole milky way riding behind the cantle—José will surely go mad with rage when he sees. José has stars, but no moon to bear him company when he rides. Surely the cattle will fall upon their knees when the señor draws near!"

"Shall we ride out and put them to the test?" he asked, shaking out the bridle to show the beautiful design of silver inlaid upon the leather cheek piece, and stooping to adjust a big-roweled, silver-incrusted spur upon his boot heel. "Manuel does exactly as he is told. I said he was to get the best he could find——"

"And so no vaquero in the valley will be so gorgeous——" She broke off suddenly to sing in lilting Spanish a fragment of some old song which mentioned the lilies of the field—that "toil not, neither do they spin."

"That is not kind. I may not spin, but I toil—I leave it to Dade if I don't."

This story began in the first August number of the POPULAR.

This last, because he caught sight of Dade coming across from the row of huts, which was a short cut up from the corrals. "And I can show you the remains of blisters——" He held out a very nice-appearing palm toward her, and looked his fill at her pretty face while she bent her brows and inspected the hand with the gravity that threatened to break at any instant into laughter.

That sickening grip in the chest which is a real, physical pain, though the hurt is given to the soul of a man, slowed Dade's steps to a lagging advance toward the tableau the two made on the steps. So had the señorita sent him dizzy with desire and with hope to brighten it in the two weeks and more that he had been the honored guest. So had she laughed and teased him and mocked him, and he had believed that to him alone would she show the sweet whimsies of her nature. But from the moment when he laid her gold thimble in her waiting hand and got no reward save an absent little nod of thanks, the dull ache had been growing in his heart.

He knew what it was that had sent José off in that headlong rage against all gringos, though two days before he would have said that José's jealousy was for him, and with good reason. There had been glances between those two—swift measuring of the weapons which sex uses against sex—with quick smiles when the glances chanced to meet.

José had also seen the byplay, and the fire had smoldered in his eyes until at last it kindled into flame, and drove him cursing from the place. In his heart Dade could not blame José.

Forgotten while Teresita held back with one hand a black lock which the wind was trying to fling across her eyes, and murmured mocking commiseration over the half-obliterated callouses on Jack's hand, he loitered across the patio, remembering many things whose very sweetness made the hurt more bitter. He might have known it would be like this, he told himself sternly; but life had been too sweet for forebodings or for precaution. He had wanted Jack to see and admire Teresita, with the same impulse which would have made him want to show Jack any other treasure which Chance held out to him, with Hope smiling over her shoulder and whispering that it was his.

Well, Jack had seen her, and Jack surely admired her; and the grim humor of Dade's plight struck through the ache and made him laugh, even though his jaws went together with a click of teeth and cut the laugh short. He might have known—but he was not the sort of man who stands guard against friend and foe alike. And, he owned to himself, Jack was unconscious of any hurt for Dade in his rather transparent wooing. If a little thought would have enlightened him, or a little observation, who can blame a man for not seeking for some obstacle in the path of his desires?

"She says I'm lazy, and got these callouses grabbing the soft snaps last summer in the mines," Jack called lightly, when finally it occurred to him that the world held more than two humans. "I'm always getting the worst of it when you and I are compared. But I believe I've got the best of you on riding outfit, old man. Take a look at that saddle, will you! And these spurs! And this bridle! The señorita says the cattle will fall on their knees when I ride past; we're going to take a gallop and find out. Want to come along?"

"Arrogant one! The señorita did not agree to that ride. The señorita has something better to do than bask in the glory of so gorgeous a señor while he indulges his vanity—and frightens the poor cattle so that, if they yield their hides at killing time, there will be little tallow for the ships to carry away!" The Señorita Teresita would surely never be guilty of a conscious lowering of one eyelid to point her raillery, but the little twist she gave to her lips when she looked at Dade offered a fair substitute; and the flirt of her silken skirts as she turned to run back into the house was sufficient excuse for any imbecility in a man.

Jack looked after her with some chagrin. "The little minx! A man might as well put up his hands when he hears her coming—huh? Unless he's ab-solutely womanproof, like you. How do you manage it, anyway?"

"By taking a squint at myself in the looking-glass every morning." Dade's face wrinkled humorously. "H'm! You *are* pretty gorgeous, for a fact. Where's the reata?"

Jack had forgotten that he had ever wanted one. He lifted the heavy, high-cantled saddle, flung it down upon the other side, and untied the new coil of braided rawhide from its place on the right fork.

"A six-strand, eh? I could tell Manuel a few things about reatas, if he calls that the best! Four strands are stronger than six, any time. I've seen too many stranded——"

"The señor is not pleased with the reata?" Manuel, following Don Andres across to the porch, had caught the gesture and tone; and while his knowledge of English was extremely sketchy, he knew six and four when he heard those numerals mentioned, and the rest was easy guessing. "The four strands are good, but the six are better—when Joaquin Murieta lays the strands. From the hide of a very old bull was this reata cut; perhaps the señor is aware that the hide is thus of the same thickness throughout, and strong as the bull that grew it. Not one strand is laid tighter than the other strand—the wildest bull in the valley could not break it—if the señor should please to catch him. Me, I could have bought three reatas for the gold I gave for this one. The señor told me to get the best." His shoulders went up an inch, though Don Andres was frowning at the tone of him. "The señor can return it to the mission—and get the three, or he can exchange it with any vaquero in the valley for one which has four strands. I am very sorry that the señor——"

"You needn't be sorry. It's a very pretty reata, and I have no doubt it will do all I ask of it. The saddle's a beauty, and the bridle and spurs—I'm a thousand times obliged."

"It is nothing, and less than nothing," disclaimed Manuel haughtily once more, and went in to ask the señora for a most palatable decoction, whose chief ingredient was blackberry wine, which the señora recommended to all and sundry for various ailments. Though Manuel, the deceitful one, had no ailment, he did have a keen appreciation of the flavor of the cordial, and his medicine bottle was never long empty—or full—if he could help it.

A moment later Jack, hearing a human, feminine twitter from the direction of the rose garden, left off examining pridefully his belongings, and bolted without apology after his usual headlong fashion.

Don Andres sat him down in an easy-chair in the sun, and sighed as he did so. "He is hot-tempered, that vaquero," he said regretfully, his mind upon Manuel. "Something has stirred his blood; surely your friend has done nothing to offend him?"

"Nothing except remark that he has always liked a four-strand reata better than six. At the hut he was friendly enough."

"He is not the only one whose anger is easily stirred against the gringos," remarked the don, reaching mechanically for his tobacco pouch, while he watched Dade absently examining the new reata. "Señor Hunter," Don Andres began suddenly, "have you decided what you will do? Your mine in the mountains—it will be foolish to return there while the hand of the Vigilantes is reaching out to clutch you. Do you not think so? I have heard more of the tale from Valencia, who returned with Manuel. Those men who died at the hand of your friend—and died justly, I am convinced—had friends who would give much for close sight of you both."

"I know; I told Jack we'd have to keep away from the mine for a while. He wanted to go right back and finish up the fight!" Dade grinned at the absurdity. "I sat down hard on that proposition." (Not that phrase exactly did he use. One may be pardoned a free translation, since, though he

spoke in Spanish, he was not averse to making use of certain idioms quite as striking in their way as our own Americanisms.)

Don Andres rolled a cigarette and smoked it thoughtfully. "You were wise. Also, I bear in mind your statement that you could not long be content to remain my guest. You Americanos are terribly independent and energetic." He smoked through another pause, while Dade's puzzled glance dwelt secretly upon his face, and tried to read what lay in his mind. It seemed to him that the don was working his way carefully up to a polite hint that the visit might be agreeably terminated, and his uneasy thoughts went to the girl. Did her father resent——

"My major-domo," the don continued, just in time to hold back Dade's hasty assurance that they would leave immediately—"my major-domo does not please me. Many faults might I name, sufficient to make plain my need for another." A longer wait, as if time were indeed infinite, and he owned it all. "Also might I name reasons for my choice of another, which is yourself, Señor Hunter. Perhaps in you I recognize simply the qualities which I desire my major-domo to possess. Perhaps also I desire that some prejudiced countrymen of mine shall be taught a lesson, and made to see that not all Americanos are unworthy. However that may be, I shall be truly glad if you will accept. The salary we will arrange as pleases you; and your friend will, I hope, remain in whatever capacity you may desire. Further, when your government has given some legal assurance that my land is mine"—he smiled wryly at the necessity for such assurance—"as much land as you Americanos call a 'section,' choose it where you will, except that it shall not take my house or my cultivated land—shall be yours for the taking."

"But——"

"I would not have you consider it so much the offer of a position," interrupted the other, with the first hint of haste he had shown, "as a favor that I would ask. Times are changing, and we natives are high-chested, and must learn to make room for others who are coming among us. It is not my habit to speak praises to the face of a friend, yet I will say that I would teach my people to respect good men, whatever the race, and especially Americanos, who will be our neighbors henceforth. I shall be greatly pleased when you tell me that you will be my major-domo; more than ever one needs a man of intelligence and tact——"

"And are none of our own people tactful or intelligent, Don Andres Picardo?" demanded Manuel, having overheard the last sentence or two from the doorway. He came out and stood before his beloved "patron," his whole fat body quivering with amazed indignation, so that the bottle which the señora had filled for him shook in his hand. "Must you go among the gringos to find one worthy? Truly it is as Don José tells me; these gringos have come but to make trouble where all was peace. To-day he told me all his thoughts, and me, I hardly believed it was as he said. The Señor Hunter have I called a friend, but now I see that of a truth José was right to warn me. Would the patron have a major-domo who knows nothing of rodeos, nothing of the cattle——"

"You're mistaken there, Manuel," Dade broke in calmly. "Whether I become major-domo or not, I know cattle. They have a few in Texas, where I came from. I can qualify in cowology any time. And," he added loyally, "so can Jack. You thought he didn't know what he was talking about, when he was looking at that reata, but I'll back him against any man in California when it comes to riding and roping. But that needn't make us bad friends, Manuel. I didn't come to make trouble, and I won't stay to make any. We've been friends—let's stay that way. I'm a gringo, all right, but I've lived more with your people than my own—and, if you want the truth, I don't know but what I feel more at home with them. And the same with Jack. We've eaten and slept with Spaniards, and worked and played with them, half our lives."

"Still, it is as José says," reiterated Manuel stubbornly. "Till the gringos came all was well; when they came, trouble came also. Till the gringos came, no watch was put over the cattle, for only those who hungered killed and ate. Now they steal the patron's cattle by hundreds; they steal his land—and, if José speaks truly, they would steal also"—he hesitated to speak what was on his tongue, and finished lamely, "what is more precious still. And the patron will have a gringo for major-domo?" He returned to the issue. "Then I, Manuel, must leave the patron's employ. I and half the vaqueros. The patron," he added, with what came close to a sneer, "had best seek gringo vaqueros—with the clay of the mines on their boots, and their red shirts to call the bulls!"

"I shall do what it pleases me to do," declared the don sternly. "I do not seek advice from my vaqueros. And you," he said haughtily, "have choice of two things: you may crave pardon for your insolence to my guest, who is also my friend, and who will henceforth have charge of my vaqueros and my cattle, or you may go whence you will; to Don José Pacheco, I doubt not."

He leaned his white-crowned head against the high chair back, and while he waited for Manuel's decision he gazed calmly at the border of red tiles which showed at the low eaves of the porch—calmly as to features only, for his eyes held the blaze of anger.

"Señores, I go." The brim of Manel's sombrero flicked the dust of the patio.

"Come, then, and I will reckon your wage," invited the don, coldly courteous, as to a stranger. "You will excuse me, señor? I shall not be long."

Dade's impulse was to protest, to intercede, to say that he and Jack would go immediately, rather than stir up strife. But he had served a stern apprenticeship in life, and he knew it was too late now to put out the fires of wrath burning hotly in the hearts of those two; however completely he might efface himself, the resentment was too keen, the quarrel too fresh. He was standing irresolutely on the steps when Jack came back from the rose garden, whistling softly an old love song, and smiling fatuously to himself.

"We're going to take that ride, after all," he announced gleefully. "Want to come along? She's going to ask her father to come, too—says it would be terribly improper for two to ride alone. What's the matter? Got the toothache?"

Dade straightened himself automatically after the slap on the back that was like a cuff from a she-bear, and grunted an uncivil sentence.

"Come over to the saddle house," he commanded afterward. "And take that truck off the señora's front steps before she sees it and has a fit. I want to talk to you."

"Oh, Lord!" wailed Jack under his breath, but he shouldered the heavy saddle obediently, leaving Dade to bring what remained. "Cut it short, then; she's gone to dress, and ask her dad, and I'm supposed to order the horses, and get you started. What's the trouble?"

Dade first went over to the steps before their sleeping room, and deposited Jack's personal belongings; and Jack seized the minute of grace to call a peon and order the horses saddled. He confronted Dade with a tinge of defiance in his manner.

"Well, what have I done now?" he challenged. "Anything particularly damnable about talking five minutes to a girl in plain sight of her——"

Dade threw out both hands in a gesture of impatience. "That isn't the only important thing in the world," he pointed out sarcastically, "you talking to a girl." If the inner hurt served to sharpen his voice, he did not know it. "Don Andres wants to make me his major-domo."

Jack's eyes bulged a little, and if Dade had not wisely side-stepped he would have delivered another one of his muscle-tingling taps on the shoulder. "Whee-ee! Say, you're getting appreciated at last, old man! Good for you! Give me a job?"

"I'm not going to take it," said Dade.

"I was going to ask you if you wanted to pull out with me to-morrow."

Jack's jaw went slack. "Not going to *take* it!" He leaned against the adobe wall behind him, and stuck both hands savagely into his pockets. "Why, you darned chump, how long ago was it that you talked yourself black in the face, trying to make me say I'd stay? Argued like a man trying to sell shaving soap; swore that nobody but a born idiot would think of passing up such a chance; badgered me into giving in—and now, when you've got a chance like this, you—— Say, you're *loco!*"

"Maybe." Dade's eyes went involuntarily toward the porch, where Teresita appeared for an instant, looking questioningly toward them. "Maybe I am *loco*. But Manuel's mad because the don offered me the place, and has quit; and he says half the vaqueros will leave; that they won't work under a gringo."

Jack's indignant eyes changed to a queer, curious stare. "Dade Hunter! If I didn't know you—if I hadn't seen you in more tight places than I've got fingers and toes, I'd say—— But you aren't scared; you never had sense enough to be afraid of anything in your life. You can't choke that down me, old man. What's the real reason why you want to leave?"

The real reason came again to the doorway sixty feet away, and looked out restively to where the señores were talking so earnestly and privately; but Dade would have died several different and unpleasant deaths before he would name that reason. Instead—— "It will be mighty disagreeable for Don Andres, trying to keep things smooth," he said. "And it isn't as if he were stuck for a major-domo. Manuel opened his heart one night when we were alone together, and told me that when Carlos Pacorra went—and Manuel said the patron would not keep him long, for his insolence—he, Manuel, would be major-domo. He's sore as the deuce, and I don't blame him. He's a good man for the place, and the vaqueros all like him."

"You say he's quit?"

"Yes. He got pretty nasty, and the don has gone to pay him off."

"Well, what good would it do for you to turn down the offer, then? Manuel wouldn't get it, would he?"

"No-o, he wouldn't."

"Well, then—— Oh, thunder! Something ought to be done for that ingrowing modesty of yours! Dade, if you pass up that place, I'll—I'll swear you're crazy. I know you like it here. You worked hard to convert me to that belief." A sudden thought made him draw a long breath; he reached out, and caught Dade by both shoulders.

"Say, you can't fool me a little bit! You're backing up because you're afraid I may be jealous or something. You're afraid you're standing in *my* light. Darn you, I've had enough of that blamed unselfishness of yours, old man." The endearing smile lighted his face then, and his eyes. "You go ahead and take the job, Dade—*I* don't want it. I'll be more than content to have you boss me around." He hesitated, looking at the other a bit wistfully. "Of course you know that if you go, old boy, I'll go with you. But——" The look he sent toward Teresita, who appeared definitely upon the porch, and stood waiting openly and impatiently, amply finished the sentence.

Dade's eyes followed Jack's understandingly, and the thing he had meant to do seemed all at once contemptible, selfish, and weak. He had meant to leave, and take Jack with him, because it hurt him mightily to see those two falling in love with each other. The trouble their staying might bring to Don Andres was nothing more nor less than a subterfuge. If Teresita's smiles had continued to be given to him as they had before Jack came, he told himself bitterly that he would never have thought of going. And Jack thought he hesitated from pure unselfishness! The fingers that groped mechanically for his tobacco, though he had no intention of smoking just then, trembled noticeably.

"All right," he said quietly. "I'll stay, then." And a moment after: "Go ask her if she wants to ride Surry. I

promised her she could, next time she rode."

CHAPTER IX.

JERRY SIMPSON, SQUATTER.

The señorita, it would seem, had lost interest in the white horse as well as his master. That was the construction which Dade pessimistically put upon her smiling assurance that she could never be so selfish as to take Señor Hunter's wonderful Surry and condemn him to some commonplace caballo; also she gave a better reason than that, which was that her own horse was already saddled—witness the peon leading the animal into the patio at that very moment—and that an exchange would mean delay. Dade took both reasons smilingly, and mentally made a vow with a fearsome penalty attached to the breaking of it. After which he felt a little more of a man, with his pride to bear him company.

Manuel came out from the room which Don Andres used for an office, saluted the señorita with the air of a permanent leave-taking, and passed the gringos with face averted. A moment later the don followed him with the look of one who would dismiss a distasteful business from his mind, and entered amiably into the pleasure-seeking spirit of the ride.

With the March sun warm upon them when they rode out from the wide shade of the oaks, they faced the cooling little breeze which blew out of the south.

"Valencia tells me that the prairie schooner which José spoke of has of a truth cast anchor upon my land," observed the don to Dade, reining in beside him where he rode a little in advance of the others. "Since we are riding that way, we may as well see the fellow, and make him aware of the fact that he is trespassing upon land which belongs to another; though if he has halted to but rest his cattle and himself, he is welcome. But Valencia tells me that the fellow is cutting down trees for a house, and that I do not like."

"Some emigrants seem to think, because they have traveled over so much wilderness, there is no land west of the Mississippi that they haven't a perfect right to take if it suits them. They are a little like Christopher Columbus, I suppose. Every man who crosses the desert feels as if he's out on a voyage of discovery to a new world, and when he does strike California it's hard for him to realize that he can't take what he wants of it."

"I think you are right," admitted Don Andres after a minute. "And your government also seems to believe it has come into possession of a wilderness, peopled only by savages who must give way to the march of civilization. Whereas we Spaniards were in possession of the land while yet your colonies paid tribute to their king in England; and we ourselves have brought the savages to the ways of Christian people, and have for our reward the homes which we have built with much toil and some hardships, like yourselves when your colonies were young. Twenty-one years have I looked upon this valley and called it mine, with the word of his majesty for my authority; and surely my right to it is as the right of your haciendas of Virginia or Vermont. Yet men will drive their prairie schooners to a spot which pleases them, and say: 'Here, I will have this place for my home.' That is not lawful, or right."

Ten steps in the rear of them Teresita was laughing her mocking little laugh that still had in it a maddening note of tenderness. Dade tried not to hear it, for so had she laughed at him, a week ago, and set his blood aleaping toward his heart. He was not skilled in the ways of women, yet he did not accuse her of deliberate coquetry, as a man is prone to do under the smart of a hurt like his; for he sensed dimly that it was but the seeking sex instinct of healthy youth that brightened her eyes and sent the laugh to her lips when she faced a man who pleased her; and if she were fickle, it was with the instinctive fickleness of one who has not made final choice of a mate. Hope lifted its head at that, but he crushed it sternly into the dust again—for the man who rode behind was his friend.

It is to be feared that the voice of the girl held more of his attention than the complaint of the don just then, and that the sting of injustice under which Don Andres squirmed seemed less poignant and vital than the hurt he himself was bearing. He answered him at random; and he might have betrayed his inattention if they had not at that moment caught sight of the interlopers.

Valencia had not borne false witness against them; the emigrants were indeed cutting down trees. More, they were industriously hauling the logs to the immediate vicinity of their camp, which was chosen with an eye to many advantages—shade, water, a broad view of the valley, and plenty of open grass land already fit for plow if to plow were their intention.

A loose-jointed giant of a man, seated upon the load of logs which two yoke of great, meek-eyed oxen had just drawn up beside a waiting pile of their fellows, waited phlegmatically their approach. A woman, all personality hidden beneath flapping calico and slat sunbonnet, climbed hastily down upon the farther side of the wagon, and disappeared into the little tent which was simply the wagon box with its canvas covering placed upon the ground.

"Valencia spoke truly. Señor Hunter, will you speak for me? Tell the hombre alto that the land is mine."

To do his bidding, Dade flicked the reins upon Surry's neck and rode ahead, the others closely following. Thirty feet from the wagon a great dog of the color called brindle disputed his advance with bristling hair and throaty grumble.

"Lay down, Tige! Wait till you're asked to take a holt," advised the man on the wagon, regarding the group with an air of perfect neutrality. Tige betraying no intention of lying down, his master rested his elbows on his great, bony knees, sucked at a short-stemmed clay pipe, and waited developments.

"How d'yuh do?" Dade, holding Surry as close to the belligerent Tige as was wise, tried to make his greeting as neutral as the attitude of the other.

"Tol'ble, thank yuh. How's y'self? Shet your trap, Tige! Tige thought you was all greasers, and he ain't made up his mind yet whether he likes 'em mixed—white and greasers. I dunno's I blame 'em, either. We ain't either of us had much call to hanker after the dark meat. T'other day a bunch come boilin' up outa the dim distance like they was sent fur, and didn't have much time to git here. Tied their tongues into hard knots tryin' to tell me somethin' I didn't have time to listen to, and looked like they wanted to see my hide hangin' on a fence. Tige, he didn't take to 'em much. He kept walkin' back and forth between me and them, talkin' as sensible as they did, I must say, and makin' his meanin' full as clear. I dunno how we'd all 'a' come out, if I hadn't brought Jemimy and the twins out, and let 'em into the argument. Them greasers didn't like the looks of old Jemimy, and they backed off. Tige, he follered 'em up, and soon's they got outa reach of Jemimy they took down their lariats an' tried to hitch onto him.

"They didn't know Tige. That thar dawg's the quickest dawg on earth. He hopped through their loops like they was playin' jump the rope with him. Fact is, he'd learned jump the rope when he was a purp. He wouldn't 'a' minded that, only they didn't do it friendly. But one feller whipped out his knife and throwed it at Tige—and he come mighty nigh makin' dawg meat outa him, too. Slit his ear—they come that close. Tige ain't got no likin' fer greasers sence then. He thought you was another bunch—and so did I. Mary, she put inside after Jemimy and the twins.

"Know anything about them greasers? I see yuh got a sample along. T'other bunch was headed by a slim feller all tricked up in velvet and silver braid and red sash; called himself Don José Pacheco, and claimed to own all Ameriky from the ocean over there to the Allegheny Mountains, near as I could make out. I don't talk that kinda talk much, but I been thinkin' mebby I better get m' tongue split, so I can.

Might come handy some time; only Tige, he hates the sound of it like he hates porkypines—or badgers.

"I've kinda got it studied out that greaser talk always calls to mind a little fracas with a badger him and me had in Los Angeles, a little doby town on the road from the States. I know he growls when he hears it talked, same kinda growl he gives when he sees er smells badger.

"Mary and me and Tige laid up in Los Angeles fer a spell, resting the cattle. All greasers down there—and fleas—and take the two t'gether, they jest about wore out the hull kit and b'ilin' of us. About this badger: A greaser had a whoppin' big ole feller in a barrel, and he was makin' money hand over fist, bettin' thar warn't a dawg in town could pull that badger outa the barrel. Had a crowd around him when me and Tige come moochin' along, and about a hundred dawgs. Every greaser, seems like, had a dawg, and every dawg had some sand, and every greaser carrambied his dawg had the most, and the feller with the badger was takin' in money like the ticket seller in Purdy & Welch's Circus that I seen oncet. I grabbed Tige by the collar and hung onto him to keep him off the dawgs—next to greasers, Tige hates greaser dogs—and watched how them greasers went through faith, hope, and charity of their folks when they'd lost all the money they had under their sashes.

"Yuh see, the way they done, a greaser would call up his dawg, show 'im the bunch of gray ha'r in the bottom of the barrel, and sick 'im into takin' the job. And when that dawg would stick his head into the barrel, the bunch uh gray fur would explode into teeth and claws, and grab that thar dawg by the nose—you know how tender a dawg's nose is, mister! That dawg couldn't pull loose, his nose is so tender, and when that thar badger set back against the end of the barrel he had the best of it. The dawg would holler fer help till his master poked the badger loose with a stick. And after that the feller and his dawg would carramby at each other as long as the dawg was in hearin' distance—and that 'most generally wasn't very long, and the feller that owned the badger would grin and keep the dollar.

"Then some other greaser would show 'is teeth and tangle his tongue all up tellin' how many seconds it would take *his* dawg to do the trick, and purty soon there'd be more yelpin' and namin' of Spanish saints, and more money fer the old feller with the green sash. And the crowd'd laugh like they was at a bullfight—ever seen a bullfight, mister? I did, down thar, and I must say I'd ruther pitch quoits any time. Purty bloody fun, seems to me—and the same with that badger pullin'. I got awful sorry fer them dawgs, even if they did answer to greaser callin'.

"Waal, purty soon I got a notion I'd turn Tige loose on that thar badger; he was spoilin' fer something to do by that time; all I could do to hold him. Waal, I give a dollar to the little, dried-up greaser behind the barrel, took holt of Tige back of the shoulders, and pushed him in tail first. He didn't holler—Tige never kiyied over nothin' in his life, and I raised him from a blind purp, so I know—but he jest popped outa that barrel like the cork outa Mary's yeast jug, and the badger come with him, hangin' to Tige's tail like grim death. Tige whirled like a spinnin' top to nab him, and that thar badger shot off into the crowd like the pebble David brained ole Goliath with. He stripped Tige's tail like peelin' a willer gad when he went, he was hangin' on that tight, and he landed under the red-and-yeller skirts of a girl that was lookin' on and gigglin'. She give a whoop like a wild Injun, and jumped stiff-legged straight up into the air, and before she come down Tige he landed on the badger like a duck on a grasshopper, and before I could git to him there warn't no more badger—leastways, not live badger.

"Waal, there was a toler'ble lot of excitement around thar, after that. Greasers don't like to have new idees interduced into their sports, I've found out. Little, dried-up feller danced and shook his fists and talked so fast he jest

nacherally buzzed. Seems like I'd ruined him in business; claimed that there never was a badger like that badger, and that I'd broke the rules, and interduced horse sense inter the game, which spoiled it. Now, he couldn't get rich off'n badgers in barrels no more, because they'd all take to shovin' their dawgs in hind side before, and most any yeller dawg would pull true when a badger's claws was sunk in his tail. We had quite an argyment, and fer the first and last time in m' life I made out to talk greaser talk. Tongue was so lame afterward Mary had to do it up in a rag, but I put up a good argyment, whether the greasers got the fine points or not.

"I claimed that the bet was that my dawg couldn't pull the badger out—which they admitted after a fashion. I also told 'em that Tige was my dawg—both ends of him; and that he sure did pull. They admitted that, too, but when I brung in the logical conclusion that I won the bet because my dawg got the badger outa the barrel, and it wasn't nobody's business but hisn and mine which end he done it with, the feller stuck right thar and named saints and carrambied. Thar ain't no logic in a greaser, mister. I made out that he was claimin' I not only lost the bet, but had to pay fer that badger. That's greaser justice every time."

He leaned and spat gravely into the trampled grass beside the wagon, and glanced over to where Don Andres waited with impatience ill-concealed beneath his dignity and his innate courtesy.

"I didn't pay fer no badger, mister, and I got my dollar and another one; and I spent one fer stuff to put on Tige's tail whar it was stripped clean uh hide and ha'r, and the other fer m'lasses, fer candy which he eat to help him fergit about the tail. So thar you've got a sample uh greaser justice and the justice uh Jerry Simpson. What's pesterin' the ole feller? 'Pears like he's gittin' his tongue twisted up ready to talk—if they call it talking."

"What is the hombre saying?" asked the don at that moment, seeing the glance, and sensing that at last his presence was noticed.

Dade grinned and winked at Jack, who, by the way, was neither looking nor listening; Teresita was once more tenderly ridiculing his star-incrusted saddle, and so claimed his whole attention.

"He says José Pacheco came and ordered him off. They were pretty ugly, but he called out a lady—the Señora Jemima—and the twins."

"Sa-ay, mister," interrupted the giant Jerry Simpson from the load of logs, "d'you say 'Señory' Jemimy?"

"Why, yes. 'Señora' means 'madame,' or——"

"Ya-as, I know what it means. Jemimy, mister, ain't no señory, nor no madame. Jemimy's my old Kentucky rifle, mister. And the twins is a brace uh pistols that can shoot fur as it's respectable fer a pistol to shoot, and hit all it's lawful to hit. You tell him who Jemimy is, mister; and tell 'im she's a derned good talker, and most convincin' in a argyment."

"He says Jemima is not a señora," translated Dade, his eyes twinkling, "but his rifle; and the twins are his pistols."

Don Andres hid a smile under his white mustache. "Very good! Yet I think your language must lack expression, Señor Hunter. It required much speech to say so little." There was a twinkle in his own eyes. "Also, José acts like a fool. You may tell the big señor that the land is mine, but that I do not desire to use harsh methods, nor have ill feeling between us. It is my wish to live in harmony with all men, and my choice of a major-domo should bear witness that I look upon Americanos with a friendly eye. I think the big hombre is honest and intelligent; his face rather pleases me. So you may tell him that José shall not trouble him again, and that I shall not dispute with him about his remaining here, if to remain should be his purpose when he knows that the land belongs to me. But I shall look upon him as a guest. As a guest he will be welcome until such

time as he may find some free land upon which to build his casa."

Because the speech was kindly and just, and because he was in the service of the don, Dade translated as nearly verbatim as the two languages would permit. And Jerry Simpson, while he listened, gave several hard pulls with his lips upon the short stem of his pipe, discovered that there was no fire there, straightened his long leg, and felt gropingly for a match in the depth of a great pocket in his trousers. His eyes, of that indeterminate color which may be either gray, hazel, or green, as the light and his mood might affect them, measured the don calmly, dispassionately, unawed, measured also Dade and the beautiful white horse he rode; and finally, went twinkling over Jack and the girl, standing a little apart, wholly absorbed in trivialities which could interest no one save themselves.

"How much land does he say belongs to him? And whar did he git his title to it?" he asked, when Dade was waiting for his answer.

Out of his own knowledge Dade told him.

Jerry Simpson brought two matches from his pocket, inspected them gravely, and returned one carefully; lighted the other with the same care, applied the flame to his tobacco, made sure that the pipe was going to "draw" well, blew out the match, and tucked the stub down out of sight in a crease in the bark of the log upon which he was sitting. After that he rested his elbows upon his great, bony knees, and smoked meditatively.

CHAPTER X.

THE FINEST LITTLE WOMAN IN THE WORLD.

"You tell Mr. Picardy that I ain't visitin' nobody, so he needn't consider me his comp'ny," announced Jerry, after a wait that was beginning to rasp the nerves of his visitors. "I come here to *live*. He's called this land hisn, by authority uh the King uh Spain, you say, for over twenty year. Waal, in twenty year he ain't set so much as a fence post fur as the eye can see. I been five mile from here on every side, and I don't see no signs of his ever usin' the land fer nothin'. Now, mebby the King uh Spain knew what he was talkin' about, and then ag'in mebby he didn't. 'T any rate, I don't know as I think much of a king that'll give away a hull great gob uh land he never seen, and give it to one feller—more'n that feller could use in a hull lifetime; more'n he would ever need fer his children, even s'posin' he had a couple uh dozen—which ain't skurcely respectable fer one man, nohow. How many's he got, mister?"

"One—his daughter, over there."

"Hum-mh! Waal, *she* ain't goin' to need so derned much. You tell Mr. Picardy I've come a long ways to find a home fer Mary an' me; a long road an' a hard road. I can't go no farther without I swim fer it, and that I don't calc'late on doin'. I ain't the kind to hog more land 'n what I can use—not mentionin' no names; but I calc'late on havin' what I need, if I can get it honest. My old mother used to read outa the Bible that the earth was the Lord's, and the fullness thereof, and I ain't never heard of Him handin' over two-thirds of it to any King uh Spain.

"What he's snoopin' around in Ameriky fer, givin' away great big patches uh country he never seen, I ain't askin'. Californy belongs to the United States of Ameriky, and the United States of Ameriky lets her citizens make homes fer theirselves an' their families on land that ain't already in use. If Mr. Picardy can show me a deed from Gawd Almighty, signed, sealed, and delivered along about the time Moses got hisn fer the Land uh Canaan, or if he can show a paper from Uncle Sam, sayin' this place belongs to him, I'll throw off these logs, h'ist the box back on the wagon, and look farther; but I ain't goin' to move on the say-so uh no furrin king, which I don't believe in, nohow."

He took the pipe from his mouth, and with it pointed to a spot twenty feet away, so that they all looked toward the place.

"Right thar," he stated slowly, "is whar I'm goin' to build my cabin, fer me and Mary. An' right over thar I'm goin' t' plow me up a truck patch. I'm a peaceable man, mister. I don't aim to have no fussin' with my neighbors. But you tell Mr. Picardy that thar'll be loopholes cut on all four sides uh that thar cabin, and Jemimy and the twins'll be ready to argy with anybody that comes moochin' around unfriendly. I'm the peaceablest man you ever seen, but when I make up my mind to a thing I'm *firm*. Pur-ty tol'able firm!" he added, with complacent emphasis.

He waited expectantly while Dade put a revised version of this speech into Spanish, and placidly smoked his little black pipe while the don made answer.

"I find already that I have done well to choose an Americano for my majordomo," he observed, a smile in his eyes. "With a few more such as this great hombre, who is firm and peaceful together, I should find my days full of trouble with a hot-blooded Manuel to deal with them. But with you, señor, I have no fear. Something there is in the face of this Señor Seem'son which pleases me; we shall be friends, and he shall stay and plant his garden and build his house where it pleases him to do. You may tell him that I say so, and that I shall rely upon his honor to pay me for the land a reasonable price when the American government places its seal beside the seal on our majesty's grant. For I am sure that it will be done. The land is mine, even though I have no tablet of stone to proclaim from the Creator my right to call it so. But he shall have his home, if he is honest, without swimming across the ocean to find it."

"Waal, now, that's fair enough fer anybody. Hey, Mary! Come on out, and git acquainted with yer neighbor's girl. Likely lookin' young woman," he passed judgment, nodding toward Teresita. "Skittish, mebby—young blood 'most gen'rally is when there's any ginger in it. What's yer name, mister? I want yuh-all to meet the finest little woman in the world—Mrs. Jerry Simpson. We've pulled in the harness together fer twelve year, now, so I guess I know!"

She came shyly from the makeshift tent, her dingy brown sunbonnet in her hand, and the redoubtable Tige walking close to her shapeless brown skirt. And although her face was tanned nearly as brown as her bonnet, with the desert sun and desert winds of that long, weary journey in search of a home, it was as delicately modeled as that of the girl who rode forward to greet her, and sweet, with the sweetness of soul which made that big man worship her. Her hair was a soft gold, such as one sees sometimes upon the head of a child or in the pictures of angels, and it was cut short and curled in distracting little rings about her head, and framed tenderly her smooth forehead. Her eyes were brown and soft and wistful, with a twinkle at the corners, nevertheless, which brightened them wonderfully; and while her mouth drooped slightly with the same wistfulness, a little smile lurked there, also, as if her life had been spent largely in longing for the unattainable, and in laughing at herself because she knew the futility of it all.

"I hope you've taken a good look at Jerry's face," she said, "and have seen that he ain't half as bad as he tries to make out. Jerry'll make a fine neighbor for any man if he's let be; and we *do* want a home of our own awful bad. We was ten years paying for a little farm back in Illinois, and then we lost it at the last minute because there was something wrong with the deed, and we didn't have any money to go to law about it. Jerry didn't tell you that—but it's that makes him talk kinda bitter, sometimes. He was terrible disappointed about losing the farm, and when we took what we had left, and struck out, he said he was going as far as he could get from lawyers and law, and make us a home on land that nobody but the Lord laid any claim to. So he picked out this place, and then along come that Spaniard and a lot of fellows with him and said we hadn't no right here. So I hope you won't blame Jerry for being a little mite up-

pish. That Spaniard got him kinda wrought up."

Her voice was as soft as her eyes, and winsome as her wistful little smile. She had those four smiling with her in sheer sympathy before she had spoken three sentences; and the two who did not understand her words smiled just as sympathetically as the two who knew what she was talking about.

"Tell the señora I am sorry, and she shall stay, and my mother will give her hens and a bottle of her very good medicine which Manuel drinks so greedily," Teresita cried, when Dade told her what the woman said, and leaned impulsively and held out her hand. "I would do as the Americanos do, and shake the hands for a new friendship," the señorita explained, blushing a little. "We shall be friends. Señor Hunter, tell the pretty señora that I say we shall be friends. I shall call her *amiga mia,* and I shall learn the Americano language, so that we may talk together."

She meant every word of it, Dade knew; and with a troublesome little squeezed feeling in his throat he interpreted her speech with painstaking exactness.

Mrs. Jerry squeezed the señorita's hand and smiled up at her with the brightness of tears in her eyes. "You've got lots of friends, honey," she said simply, "and I've left all of mine so far behind me they might as well be dead, as far as ever seeing 'em again is concerned; so it's like finding gold to find a woman friend 'way out here. I ain't casting no reflections on Jerry, mind," she hastened to warn them, blinking the tears away and leaving the twinkle in full possession, "but, good as he is, and satisfying as his company is, he ain't a woman. And, my dear, a woman does get awful hungry sometimes for woman talk."

"Santa Maria, that must be true! She shall come and let my mother be her friend, also. I will send a carriage, or if she can ride—— Ask the big señor if he has no horses."

Jack it was who took up right willingly the burden of translation, for the pure pleasure of repeating the señorita's words and doing her a service; and Dade dropped back beside the don, where he thought he belonged, and stayed there.

"Waal, I ain't got any horses, but I got two of the derndest mules you ever seen, mister. Moll and Poll's good as any mustang in this valley. Mary and me can ride 'em anywheres—that's why I brung 'em along, to ride in case we had to eat the cattle."

"Then they must surely ride Moll and Poll to visit my mother!" the señorita declared, with her customary decisiveness. "Father?"

Obediently the don accepted the responsibility laid upon him by his sole-born, who ruled him without question, and made official the invitation. It was not what he had expected to do; he was not quite sure that it was what he wanted to do; but he did it, and did it with the courtliness which would have flowered his invitation to the governor to honor his poor household by his presence, because his daughter had glanced at him and said "Father?" in a certain tone which he knew well.

Something else was done, which no one had expected to do when they galloped up to the trespassers. Jack and Dade dismounted and helped Jerry unload the logs from the wagon, for one thing, while Teresita inspected Mrs. Jerry's ingenious domestic makeshifts, and managed somehow, with Mrs. Jerry's help, to make the bond of mutual liking serve very well in the place of intelligible speech. For another, the don fairly committed himself to the promise of a peon or two to help in the further devastation of the trees upon his mountain slope behind the little, natural meadow which Jerry Simpson had so calmly appropriated to his own use.

"He is honest," he asserted more than once on the ride home, perhaps in self-justification for his soft dealing. "He is honest, and when he sees that the land is mine, he will pay; or, if he does not pay, he will go—and tilled acres and a cabin will not harm me. Valencia, if he marries the daughter of

Carlos, as the señora says will come to pass, will be glad to have a cabin to live in apart from the mother of his wife, who is disquieting in a man's household. Therefore, Señor Hunter, you may order the peons to assist the big hombre and his beautiful señora, that they may soon have a hut to shelter them from the rains. It is not good to see so gentle a woman endure hardship within my boundary. They will need much tules," he added, after a minute, "and it is unlikely that the Señor Seem'son understands the making of a thatch. Diego and Juan are skillful, and the tules they lay upon a roof will let no drop of rain fall within the room. Order them to assist."

"I shall tell Margarita to bake many little cakes," cried Teresita, riding up between her father and Dade, that she might assist in the planning, "and mother will give me coffee and sugar for the pretty señora. So soft is her voice, like one of my pigeons. And her hair is more beautiful than the golden hair of our blessed Lady at Dolores. Oh, if the Blessed Virgin would make me as beautiful as she, and as gentle, I should—I should finish the altar cloth immediately which I began two years ago."

"Thou art well enough as thou art," comforted her father, trying to hide his pride in her under frowning brows, and to sterilize the praise with a tone of belittlement.

"I love that pretty señora," sighed Teresita, turning in the saddle to glance wistfully back at the meager little camp. "I shall give her the black puppy Rosa gave me when last I was at the Mission San José. But I hope," she added plaintively, like the child she was at heart, "she will make the big, ugly beast they called Tige be kind to her—and the milk must be warm to the finger when Chico is fed. To-night, Señor Allen, you shall teach me Americano words that I may say to the señora what is necessary for the happiness of my black puppy. I must learn to say that her name is Chico, and that the milk must be warm to the finger, and that the big dog must be kind."

CHAPTER XI.

AN ILL WIND.

A cold wind rose one night, blowing straight out of the north; a wind so chill that the señora unpacked extra blankets and distributed them lavishly among the beds of her household; and the oldest peon at the hacienda, who was Gustavo, and a prophet more infallible than Elijah, stared into the heavens until his neck went lame, and predicted much cold, so that the frosts would surely kill the fruit blossoms on the slope behind the house; and after that much rain. Don Andres, believing him implicitly, repeated the warning to Dade; and Dade, because that was now his business, rode here and there, giving orders to the peons, and making sure that all would be snug when the storm broke.

The Señorita Teresita, bethinking her of the "pretty señora" who would have scant shelter in that canvas-topped wagon box, even though it had been set under the thickest shelter of a great live oak, called guardedly to Diego, who was passing, and ordered Tejon, her swiftest little mustang, saddled and held ready for her in the shelter of the last hut, where it could not be seen from the house. Tejon, so named by his mistress because he was gray, like a badger, hated wind, which the señorita knew well. Also, when the hatred grew into rebellion, it needed a strong hand indeed to control him if the mood seized him to run. But the señorita was in a perverse mood, and none but Tejon would she ride, even though—or perhaps because—she knew that his temper would be uncertain.

She wanted to beg the pretty Señora Simpson to come and stay with them until the weather cleared and the cabin was finished; but, more than that, she wanted to punish Señor Jack Allen for laughing when she tried to speak the Americano sentence he had taught her the night before, and got it all backward. Señor Jack would be frightened, perhaps, when he learned that she had ridden away alone upon Tejon; he would ride after her—perhaps. And

she would not talk to him when he found her, but would be absolutely implacable in her displeasure, so that he would be speedily reduced to the most abject humility.

Diego, when she ran stealthily across the patio, her riding habit flapping about her feet in the wind, looked at her uneasily, as if he would like to remonstrate; but, being a mere peon, he bent silently, and held his calloused brown palm for the señorita's foot, reverently straightened the flapping skirt when she was mounted, and sent a hasty prayer to whatever saint might be counted upon to watch most carefully over a foolish little Spanish girl.

"An evil spirit is in the caballo today," Diego finally ventured to inform his mistress gravely. "For a week he has not felt the weight of saddle, and he loves not the trees which sway and sing, or the wind whistling in his ears."

"And for that he pleases me much," retorted the señorita, and touched Tejon with her heel, so that he came near upsetting Diego with the lunge he gave. When the peon recovered his balance he stood braced against the wind, and with both hands held his hat upon his head while he watched her flying down the slope and out of sight among the trees. No girl in all the valley rode better than the Señorita Teresa Picardo, and Diego knew it well, and boasted of it to the peons of other hacendados. But for all that he was ill at ease, and when, ten minutes later, he came upon Valencia at the stable, he told him of the madness of the señorita.

"Tejon she would ride, and none other; and to-day he is a devil. Twice he would have bitten my shoulder while I was saddling, and that is the sign that his heart is full of wickedness. Me, I would have put the *freno Chilene* in his mouth, but that would start him bucking, for he hates it because then he cannot run."

Valencia, a little later, met the new major-domo and repeated what Diego had said; and Dade, catching a little of the uneasiness, and yet not wanting to frighten the girl's father with the tale, made it his immediate business to find Jack and tell him that Teresita had ridden away alone upon a horse that neither Diego nor Valencia considered safe, because his temper was uncertain, and he would run if the whim seized him. Jack, at first declaring that he wouldn't go where he plainly was not wanted, at the end of an uncomfortable half hour borrowed Surry because he was fleet as any mustang in the valley, and rode after her. In this wise did circumstances and Jack obey the piqued desire of the señorita.

After the first headlong half mile, Tejon became the perfect little saddle pony which fair weather found him, and Teresita, cheated of her battle of wills, and yet too honest to provoke him deliberately, began to think a little less of her own whims and more of the Señora Simpson, housed miserably beneath the canvas covering of the prairie schooner.

She found her sitting inside with a patchwork quilt over her shoulders, her eyes holding a shade more of wistfulness and less twinkle, perhaps, but with her lips quite ready to smile upon her visitor. Teresita sat down upon a box and curiously watched the pretty señora try to make a small, triangular piece of cloth cover a large, irregular hole in the elbow of the big señor's coat sleeve. Sometimes, when she turned it so, the hole was nearly covered—except that there was the frayed rent at the bottom still grinning maliciously up at the mender.

"Patch beside patch is neighborly, but patch upon patch is beggarly!" quoth Mrs. Jerry, at the moment forgetting that the girl would not understand.

Whereupon Teresita bethought her of her last night's lesson, and replied slowly and solemnly: "My dear Mrs. Seem'son, how—do—you—do?"

Mrs. Seem'son, realizing the underlying friendliness of the carefully enunciated greeting, flushed with pleasure, and forgot all about the patch problem for a minute.

"Why, my dear, you've been learnin' English jest so's t' you can talk to me!" She leaned and kissed the girl where

the red blood of youth dyed brightest the Latin duskiness of the cheek. "I wisht you could say some more. Can't you?"

Teresita could, but her further store of Americano words related chiefly to the diet and general well-being of one very small and very black pup which was at that moment sleeping luxuriously in the chimney corner at home; and without the pup the words would be no more than parrot chattering; so the señorita shook her head and smiled, and Mrs. Jerry went back to the problem of the small patch and the large hole.

Hampered thus by having no common language between them, Teresita failed absolutely to accomplish her mission. Mrs. Jerry, hazily guessing at the invitation without realizing any urgent need of immediate acceptance, shook her head, and pointed to her pitifully few household appurtenances, and tried to make it plain that she had duties which kept her there in the little camp which she pathetically called home. Teresita gathered that the pretty señora did not wish to leave that great, gaunt hombre who was her husband. So, when she could no longer conceal her shiverings, and having no hope that the big señor would understand her any better when he returned with the load of logs he and the peons were after, she rose and prepared to depart. Surely the Señor Jack, if he were going to follow, could be coming; and the hope rather hastened her adieu.

"Adios, amiga mia," she said, her eyes innocently turning from the Señora Simpson to scan stealthily the northern slope.

"Good-by, dearie. Come again and see me. Jerry knows a few Spanish words, and I'll make him learn 'em to me so I can talk a little of your kind next time. And tell your mother I'm obliged for the wine, and them dried peaches tasted fine, after being without so long. Shan't I hold your horse while you git on? Seems to me he's pretty frisky for a girl to be riding. But I guess you're equal to him!"

Teresita smiled vaguely. She had no idea of what the woman was saying, and she was beginning to wish that she had not tried in just this way to punish the Señor Jack; if he were here now, he could make the Señora Simpson understand that the storm would be a very dreadful one—else Gustavo was a liar, and whom should one believe?

Even while she was coaxing Tejon alongside a log, and persuading him to stand so until she was in the saddle, she was generously forswearing Señor Jack's punishment that she might serve the pretty señora who had Tejon by the bit, and was talking to him softly in words he had never heard before in his life. She resolved that if she met Señor Jack she would ask him to come back with her, and explain to the señora about the cold and the rain, and urge her to accept the hospitality of her neighbors.

For that reason she looked more anxiously than before for some sign of him riding toward her through the fields of flowering mustard that heaved in the wind like the waves on some strange, lemon-colored sea tossing between high, green islands of oak and willow. Surely that fool Diego would never keep the still tongue! He would tell, when some one missed her. If he didn't, or if Señor Allen was an obstinate pig of a man, and would not come, then she would tell Señor Hunter, who was always so kind—though not so handsome as the other, perhaps. Señor Hunter's eyes were brown—and she had looked into brown eyes all her life. But the blue! The blue eyes that could so quickly change lighter or darker that they bewildered one; and could smile or light flames which could wither the soul of one.

Even the best rider among the Spanish girls as far south as Paso Robles should not meditate so deeply upon the color of a señor's eyes that she forgets the horse she is riding, especially when the horse is Tejon, whose heart is full of wickedness because of the wind. A coyote, stalking the new-made nest of a quail, leaped out of the mustard, and gave Tejon the excuse he wanted; and the dreaming señorita was nearly unseated when he ducked and whirled in

his tracks. He ran, and she could not stop him, pull hard as she might. If he had only run toward home—but instead he ran down the valley because then he need not face the wind, and he tried to outstrip the wind as he went.

It was when they topped a low knoll and darted under the wide, writhing branches of a live oak that Jack glimpsed them and gave chase; and his heart forgot to beat until he saw them in the open beyond, and knew that she had not been swept from the saddle by a low branch. He leaned lower over Surry's neck, and felt gratefully the instant response of the horse; he had thought that Surry was running his best on such uneven ground, but even a horse may call up an unsuspected reserve of speed or endurance if his whole heart is given to the service of his master; there was a perceptible quickening and a lengthening of stride, and Jack knew then that Surry could do no more and keep his feet. Indeed, if he held that pace for long without stumbling he would prove himself a more remarkable horse than even Dade declared him to be.

He hoped to overtake the girl soon, for in the glimpses he got of her now and then as she flew across an open space he saw that she was putting her whole weight upon the reins, and that should make a sufficient handicap to the gray to wipe out the three-hundred-yard distance between them. It did not seem possible that Tejon could be running as fast as Surry—and yet, after a half mile or so of that killing pace, Jack could not see that he was gaining much. Perhaps it was his anxiety to overtake her which made the chase seem interminable, for presently they emerged upon the highway which led south to Santa Clara, and so on down the valley, and he saw, on a straight-open stretch, that he was much nearer; so near he could see that her hair was down and blowing about her face in a way that must have blinded her at times.

Tejon showed no disposition to stop, however, and Jack, bethinking him of the trick Dade had played upon the Vigilantes with his reata, threw off the loop which held it. If he could get close enough he meant to lasso the horse unless she managed by that time to get him under control. Now that they were in the road, Surry's stride was more even, and although his breathing was becoming audible, he held his pace wonderfully well—though, for that matter, Tejon also seemed to be running just as fast as at first, in spite of that steady pull; indeed, he knew the trick of curling his chin down close to his chest, so that the girl's strength upon the reins was as nothing.

Jack was almost close enough to make it seem worth while to call encouragement, when a horseman appeared suddenly from behind a willow clump, and pulled up in astonishment when he saw Teresita bearing down upon him like a small whirlwind. Whereupon Tejon, recognizing horse and rider, and knowing of old that they meant leisurely riding and much chatter, with little laughs for punctuation, slowed of his own accord, and so came up to the man at his usual easy lope, and stopped before him. And so quickly did it happen that a witness might easily have sworn in perfect good faith that the girl was fleeing from Jack Allen, and pulled up thankfully when she met José Pacheco. One could not blame José for so interpreting the race, or for the anger that blazed in his eyes for the man, even while his lips parted in a smile at the coming of the girl. He reined in between her and the approaching Jack with a protective air, and spoke soothingly because of her apparent need.

"Be not frightened, little one. Thou art safe with me—and the accursed gringo will get a lesson he will not soon forget, for daring——"

Teresita, looking back, discovered for the first time her "pursuer." He was pulling Surry in, now, and he held his reata in one hand as if he were ready to use it at a moment's notice, and blank astonishment was on his face. That, perhaps, was because of José and José's hostile attitude, stand-

ing crosswise of the trail, like that, and scowling while he waited, with the fingers of his right hand fumbling inside his sash—for his dagger, perchance! Teresita smiled wickedly, in appreciation of the joke on them both.

"Do not kill him, José," she begged caressingly. "Truly he did not harm me—I but ran from him because——" She sent a smile straight to the leaping heart of José, and fumbled with her tossing banner of hair, and turned eyes of innocent surprise on the Señor Allen, who needed some punishment—and was in fair way to get it.

"What is the pleasure of the señor?" José's voice was as smooth and as keen as the dagger blade under his silken sash. "Your message must be urgent to warrant such haste! You would do well to ride back as hastily as you came; for truly a blind man could see that the señorita has not the smallest desire for your presence. As for me ——" As for him, he smiled a sneer and a threat together.

Jack looked to the girl for a rebuke of the man's insult; but Teresita's head was drooped and tilted sidewise, while she made shift to braid her hair, and if she heard she surely did not seem to heed.

"As for you, it wouldn't be a bad idea for you to mind your own business," Jack retorted bluntly. "The señorita doesn't need any interpreter. The señorita is well qualified to speak for herself. She knows——"

"The señorita knows whom she can trust—and it is not a low dog of a gringo, who would be rotting now with a neck stretched by the hangman's rope if he had but received his deserts; murderer of five men in one day, men of his own race at that. Gambler——"

At the press of silver rowels against his sides, Surry lunged forward. But Teresita's horse sidled suddenly, and came between the two men.

"Señor Jack, we will go now, if this wicked caballo of mine will consent to do his running toward home. Thank you, José, for stopping him for me; truly, I think he was minded to carry me to San Juan, whether I wished to go or not! But doubtless Señor Jack would have overtaken him soon. Adios, José. *Muchas gracias, amigo mia.*" Having put her hair into some sort of confinement, she picked up her reins, and smiled at José, and then at Jack in a way to tie the tongues of them both, though their brows were black with the hatred which must, if they met again, bear fruit of violence.

Fifty yards away Teresita looked back and smiled again at the gay horseman who still stood fair across the highway and stared blankly after them. "Poor José!" she murmured mischievously. "He looks very puzzled and unhappy. I wonder if the privilege of tearing you in pieces would not bring the smile to his lips? Señor Jack, if so be you should ever desire death, let José do the killing! It will give him great pleasure to serve you thus, I am sure."

Jack, usually so headlong in his speech and actions, rode a moody three minutes without replying. He was not a fool, even if he were rather deeply in love; he felt the feline instinct to torment which wise men believe they can detect in all women; and, angry as he was at José's deliberate insults, he knew in his heart that Teresita had misled José purposely, and so provoked them.

"I've heard," he said at last, looking at her with the hard glint in his eyes that thrilled her pleasurably, "that all women are either angels or devils. I believe you're both—and the Lord help the rest of us!"

Teresita laughed, and pouted her lips at him. "Such injustice! Am I to be blamed because José has a bad temper, and speech hotter than the enchiladas of Margarita? I could love him for his rages! When the saints send me a lover——" She looked over her shoulder and sighed romantically, hiding the laughter in her eyes and the telltale twist of her lips as best she could, with lashes down and face averted.

Even a kitten the size of your two fists knows how to paw a mouse, even if it lacks the appetite for devouring it after the torture. We can't logically blame Teresita. She merely used the

weapons which nature put into her pink palms.

CHAPTER XII.

POTENTIAL MOODS.

So engrossed was the señorita in her truly feminine game of cat and mouse, that she quite forgot her worry over Mrs. Jerry until she was in her own room and smiling impishly at herself in the mirror while she brushed the wind tangles from her hair, and planned fresh torment for the Señor Jack. The señorita liked to see his eyes darken and then light the flames that thrilled her, and it was exceedingly pleasant to know that she could produce that effect almost whenever she chose. Also, her lips would curve of themselves whenever she thought of José's rage and subsequent bafflement when she rode off with Señor Jack, and of Señor Jack's black looks when she praised José afterward. Truly they hated each other very much—those two caballeros! She was woman enough to know the reason why, and to find pleasure in the knowledge.

Still smiling, she lifted a heavy lock of hair to the light, and speculated upon the mystery of coloring. Black it was, except when the sun lighted it and brought a sheen that was almost blue; and Señor Jack's was neither red, as was the hair of the big Señor Simpson, nor brown nor gold, but a fascinating mixture of all; and where it waved it had many different shades, just as the light gold and the dark of the pretty señora's. It was then that remembrance came to the señorita, and made her glance a self-accusing one when she looked at her reflected face.

"Selfish, thoughtless one that thou art to forget that sweet señora!" And for punishment she pulled the lock of hair so that it hurt—a little. "I shall ask Señor Hunter if he will not send the carriage for her—and perhaps I shall go with him to bring her—though truly she will never leave the big hombre who speaks so many words over such slight matters. I am glad I did not yet carry Chico to live there in that small camp. Till the house is finished he shall stay with me. Truly the storm would kill him if he were there. But perhaps the storm will not be so great, after all—not so great as is the storm in the hearts of those two who met and would have fought, had I not so skillfully prevented it. Santa Maria! I truly must have been inspired to act so like the dove with the branch of the olive, when I flew between them—and the eyes of José were blazing; and Señor Jack——" There came the smile again, and the dawdling of the brush while she thought of those two. So the pretty señora was forgotten, after all, and left to shiver over her mending in the prairie schooner, because Teresita was a spoiled child with more hearts than is good for a girl to play with.

As a matter of fact, however, the pretty señora was quite accustomed to discomfort in varying degrees, and gave less thought to the weather than did the more tenderly sheltered women of the valley, so that no harm came of the forgetfulness; especially since the storm fell far short of Gustavo's expectations, and caused that particular prophet the inconvenience of searching his soul and the heavens for an explanation of the sunshine which reprehensibly bathed the valley next day in its soft glow.

Also, no immediate harm resulted from the rage of the two caballeros—although not even the most partial judge could give the credit to Teresita's "olive branch." Chance herself stepped in, and sent a heavy limb crashing down from a swaying oak upon the head and right shoulder of José while he was riding into his own patio. Whereupon José, thrown violently to the hard-packed earth, gave over promising himself vengefully that he would send Manuel immediately with a challenge to the gringo who had dared lift eyes to the Señorita Teresita Picardo, and instantly forgot both his love and his hate in the oblivion which held him until nightfall.

After that his stiffened muscles and the gash in his scalp gave him time for meditation, and meditation counseled

patience. The gringo would doubtless go to the rodeo, and he would meet him there without the spectacular flavor of a formal challenge; for José was a decent sort of fellow, and had no desire to cheapen his passion or cause the señorita the pain of public gossip. It was that same quality of dignity in his love which had restrained him from seeking a deliberate quarrel with Jack before now; and though he fumed inwardly while his outer hurts healed, he resolved to wait. The rodeo would give him his chance.

Because it is not in the nature of the normal human to keep his soul always under the lock and key of utter silence, a little of his hate and a little of his hope seeped into the ears of Manuel, whose poultices of herbs were doing their work upon the bruised muscles of José's shoulder, and whose epithets against the two gringos who were responsible for his exile from the Picardo hacienda had the peculiar flavor of absolute sincerity. Frequently he cursed them while he changed the poultices; and Don José, listening approvingly, added now and then a curse of his own, and a vague prediction of how he meant to teach the blue-eyed one a lesson which he would weep at remembering—if he lived to remember anything.

Manuel did not mean to tattle; he merely let fall a word or two to Valencia, whom he met occasionally in the open, and accused bitterly of having a treacherous friendship for the gringos, and particularly for the blue-eyed one.

"Because that dog whose hair is neither red nor yellow nor black speaks praise to you of your skill, perchance, and because he makes you laugh with the foolish tales he tells, you would turn against your own kind, Valencia. No honest Californian can be a friend of the gringos. Of the patron," he added rather sorrowfully, "I do not speak, for truly he is in his dotage, and therefore not to be judged too harshly. But you, Valencia—you should think twice before you choose a gringo for your friend; a gringo who speaks fair to the father that he may cover his love-making to the daughter, who is easily fooled, like all younglings. The young Don José will deal with that blue-eyed one, Valencia. Every day he swears it by all the saints. He but waits for the rodeo, and until I have healed his shoulder—and then you shall see! There will be no love-making then for the gringo. José will have the señorita yet for his bride, just as the saints have desired since they played together in the patio, and I watched them that they did not run into the corrals to be kicked in the head, perchance, by the mustangs we had there. José, I tell you, has loved her too long to stand now with the sombrero in hand while that arrogant hombre steals her away. When the shoulder is well—and truly, it was near broken—and when they meet at the rodeo—then you shall see what will happen to your new gringo friend!"

Valencia did not quarrel with Manuel. He merely listened and smiled his startlingly sunny smile, and afterward repeated Manuel's words almost verbatim to Jack. Later, he recounted as much as he considered politic to Don Andres himself, just to show how bitter Manuel had become, and how unjust. Valencia, it must be admitted, was not in any sense working in the interests of peace. He looked forward with a good deal of eagerness to that meeting of which Manuel prated; he had all the faith of your true hero worshiper in his new friend, and with the story of that last eventful day which Jack had spent in San Francisco to build his faith upon, he confidently expected to see José learn a much-needed lesson in humility—aye, and Manuel also.

Since even the best-natured gossip is like a breeze to fan the flames of dissension, Don Andres spent an anxious hour in devising a plan which would preserve the peace he loved better even than prosperity. While he smoked behind the passion vines on the porch, he thought his way slowly from frowns to a smile of satisfaction, and finally called a peon scurrying across the patio to stand humbly before him while he gave a calm order. His major-domo he would see, as speedily as was con-

venient to a man as full of ranch business as Dade Hunter found himself.

Dade, tired and hot from a forenoon in the saddle, inspecting the horses which were to bear the burden of rodeo work, presently came clanking up to the porch, and lifted the sombrero off his sweat-dampened forehead thankfully when the shade of the vines enveloped him.

The eyes of the don dwelt pleasedly upon the tanned face of his foreman. More and more Don Andres was coming to value the keen common sense which is so rare, and which distinguished Dade's character almost as much as did the kindliness which made nearly every man his friend. The don had already fallen into the habit of presenting his orders under the guise of ideas which needed the confirmation of the major-domo before they became definite plans—and it speaks much for those two that neither of them suspected that it was so. Thus, Don Andres' solution of the problem of preserving peace became the subject for a conference which lasted more than an hour. The don was absolutely candid; so candid that he spoke upon a delicate subject—and one that carried a sting which he little dreamed.

"One factor I cannot help recognizing," he said slowly. "I am not blind, nor is the señora blind, to the—the—friendship that is growing between Señor Jack and our daughter. We had hoped—but we have long been resolved that in matters of the heart our daughter shall choose for herself, so long as she does not choose one altogether unworthy, which we do not fear; for to that extent we can protect her by admitting to our friendship only those in whose characters we have some confidence. Now that we understand each other so well, amigo, I will say that I have had some correspondence with friends in San Francisco, who have been so good as to make some investigations in my behalf. Their Vigilance Committee," he said, smiling, "was not the only tribunal which weighed evidence for and against your friend, nor was it the only vindication he has received. I am assured that in the trouble which brought him to my house he played the part of an honest gentleman fighting to uphold the principles which all honest men espouse; and while he is hot-tempered at times, and perhaps more thoughtless than we could wish, I hear no ill of him save the natural follies of high-stomached youth.

"Therefore I am willing to abide by the choice of my daughter, whose happiness is more dear to her parents than any hope they may have cherished of the welding of two families who have long been friends. I myself," he added softly, "fled to the priest with my sweetheart as if all the fiends of hell pursued us, because her parents had chosen for her a husband whom she could not love. Because we know the pain of choosing between a parent's wishes and the call of the heart, we are resolved that our child shall be spared such pain. I think our plan is a wise one, and the result must be as the saints decree."

Dade, engrossed with stifling the ache he had begun to think was dead because it had grown numb, bowed his head without speaking his assent, and rose to his feet. "I'll tell Jack," he said, as he started for the stables. "I guess he'll do it, all right."

CHAPTER XIII.

BILL WILSON GOES VISITING.

"I don't know what you've been doing to José Pacheco lately," was Dade's way of broaching the subject to Jack, "but Don Andres asked me to 'persuade' you not to go on rodeo, on account of some trouble between you and José."

"He wants my scalp, is all," Jack explained easily, picking burs from the fringe of his sash—burs he had gotten when he ran a race with Teresita from the farther side of the orchard to the spring a short time before. "Valencia told me—and he got it from Manuel—that José is right on the warpath. If it wasn't for him being laid up——"

"Oh, I know. You'd like to go over and have it out with him. But you

can't. The Pachecos and the Picardos are almost like one family. I don't suppose José ever stayed away from here so long since he was a baby as he has since we came. It's bad enough to keep old friends away, without mixing up a quarrel. Have you seen José lately? Don Andres seemed to think so, but I told him you'd have said something about it to me if you had."

"I met him in the trail, a week or so ago," Jack admitted, with manifest reluctance. "He wasn't overly friendly, but there wasn't any real trouble, if that's what you're afraid of." He looked sidelong at the other, saw the hurt in Dade's eyes at this evidence of the constraint growing intangibly between them, and laughed defiantly.

"Upon my soul!" he exclaimed suddenly. "One would think I was simple-minded, the way you act! D'you think a man never scowled my way before? D'you think I'm afraid of José? D'you think I don't know enough to take care of myself? What the devil *do* you think? Can't go on rodeo—you're afraid I might get hurt! I ain't crazy to go, for that matter, but I don't know as I relish this guardian-angel stunt you're playing. You've got your hands full without that. You needn't worry about me; I've managed to squeak along so far without getting my light put out——"

"By being a tolerably fair shot, yes," Dade assented, his face hardening a little under the injustice. "But since I'm hired to look after Don Andres' interests, you're going to do what I tell you. You'll stay here and boss the peons while I'm gone. A friendship between two families that has lasted as many years as you are old ain't going to be busted up if I can help it. It's strained to the snapping point right now, just because the don is friendly with us gringos, but we can't help that. He had his ideas on the subject before he ever saw me or you. Just the same, it's up to us not to do the snapping—and I know one gringo that's going to behave himself if I have to take him down and set on him!"

"Whee—ee! Somebody else is hitting the war post, if I know the signs!" Dade stirred to anger always tickled Jack immensely—perhaps because of its very novelty—and restored him to good humor. "Have it your own way, then, darn you! I don't want to go on rodeo, nohow."

"I know that, all right," snapped Dade, and started off with his hat tilted over his eyes. No one, he reminded himself bitterly, *would* want to spend a month or so riding the range when he could stay and philander with as pretty a Spanish girl as ever played with a man. And Jack never had been the kind to go looking for trouble; truth to tell, he had never found it necessary, for trouble flew to meet him as a needle flies to the magnet.

A wound is not necessarily a deadly one because it sends excruciating pain signals to a man's heart and brain, and love seldom is fatal, however painful it may be. Dade was slowly recovering, under the rather heroic treatment of watching his successor writhe and exult by turns, as the mood of the maiden might decree. Strong medicine, that, to be swallowed with a wry face, if you will—but it is guaranteed to cure if the sufferer is not a mental and moral weakling. Dade was quite ready to go out to rodeo work; indeed, he was anxious to go. But, not being a morbid young man, he did not contemplate carrying a broken heart with him. Teresita was sweet and winsome and maddeningly alluring; he knew it. He felt it still. He was made to realize it every time the whim seized her to punish Jack by smiling upon Dade.

But she was as capricious as beauty usually is, and he knew that also; and, from being used several times as a club with which to beat Jack into proper humility, and always seeing very clearly that he was merely the club and nothing more, had almost reached the point where he could shrug shoulders philosophically at her coquetry, and, what is better, do it without bitterness. At least he could do it when he had not seen her for several hours—which made rodeo time a relief for which he was grateful.

What hurt him most just now was the constraint between him and Jack. Time was when Jack would have told him immediately of any unpleasant meeting with José. It never occurred to Dade that he himself had fostered the constraint by his moody aloofness when he was fighting the first jealous resentment he had ever felt against the other in the years of their constant companionship.

An unexpected slap on the shoulder almost sent him headlong.

"Say, old man, I didn't mean it," Jack began contritely, referring perhaps to his petulant speech rather than to his mode of making his presence known. "But—come over here in the shade, and let's have it out once for all. I know you aren't stuck up over being major-domo, but all the same you're not the old Dade, whether you know it or not. You go around as if —well—*you* know how you've been. What I wanted to say is, what's the matter? Is it anything I've said or done?" He sat down on the stone steps of a hut used for a storehouse, and reached moodily for his smoking material. "I know I didn't say anything about running up against José—but it wasn't anything beyond a few words, and, Dade, you've been almighty hard to talk to lately. If you've got anything against me——"

"Oh, quit it!" Dade's face glowed darkly with the blood which shame brought there. He opened his lips to say more, took a long breath instead, closed them, and looked at Jack queerly. For one reckless moment he meditated a plunge into that perfect candor which may be either the wisest or the most foolish thing a man may do in all his life—which depends upon the person with whom you are frank.

"I didn't think you noticed it," he said, his voice lowered instinctively because of the temptation to tell the truth, and his glance wandering absently over to the corral opposite, where Surry stood waiting placidly until his master should have need of him. "There has been a regular brick wall between us lately. I—I blamed you for it. I——"

"It wasn't my building," Jack cut in eagerly. "It's you, you old pirate! Why, you'd hardly talk when we happened to be alone, and when I tried to act as if nothing was wrong, you'd look so sour I just had to close my sweet lips like the petals of a——"

"Cabbage," supplied Dade dryly, and placed his cigarette between lips that twitched.

Former relations having thus been established after their own fashion, Dade began to wonder how he had ever been fool enough to think of confessing his hurt. It would have built that wall higher and thicker; he saw it now, and with the lighting of his cigarette he swung back to a more normal state of mind than he had been in for a month. "I'm going up toward Manuel's camp pretty soon," he observed lazily, eying Jack meditatively through a thin haze of smoke. "Want to take a ride up that way and let the sun shine on your nice, new saddle?" Though he called it Manuel's camp from force of habit, that hot-blooded gentleman had not set foot over its unhewn doorsill for three weeks and more.

Jack hesitated, having in mind the possibility of persuading Teresita that she ought to pay a visit to the Simpson cabin that day, and display her further hardly learned accomplishments by asking, in real, understandable English, how the pup was getting along, and to show the pretty señora the proper way to pat tortillas out thin and smooth, as Margarita had been bribed to teach Teresita herself to do it.

"Sure, I'll go," he responded before the hesitation had become pronounced, and managed to inject a good deal of his old heartiness into the words.

"I'm going to have the cattle pushed down this way," Dade explained, "so you can keep an eye on them from here, and we won't have to keep up that camp. Since they made Bill Wilson captain of the Vigilantes there isn't quite so much wholesale stealing as there was, and enough vaqueros went with Manuel, so I'll need every one that's left. I'll leave you Pedro, because he can't do any hard riding, after

that fall he got the other day. The two of you can keep the cattle pretty well down this way."

"All right. Say, what was it made you act so glum since we came down here?" Jack, as occasionally happens with a friend, was not content to forget a grievance while the cause of it remained clouded with mystery. "Are you sore over that trouble I had in town? I know how you feel about—well, about killings—but, Dade, I had to. I hate it myself. You needn't think I like the idea, just because I haven't talked about it. A fellow feels different," he added slowly, "when it's white men. When we fought Injuns, I don't believe it worried either one of us to think we'd killed some. We were glad of it. But these others—they were mean enough, and ornery enough, but they were humans. I was glad at the time, but that wore off. And I've caught you looking at me kinda queer, lately, as if you hated me, almost. You ought to know——"

"I know you're always going off halfcocked," chuckled Dade, quite himself again. "No, now you mention it, I don't like the idea of shooting first and finding out afterward what it was all about, the way so many fellows have got in the habit of doing. Guns are all right in their place, and when you get away out where the law doesn't reach, and you have to look out for yourself, they come in mighty handy. But, like every other kind of power, most men don't know when and how to use the gun argument, and they make more trouble than they settle, half the time. You had a right to shoot, that day, and shoot to kill. Why, didn't the committee investigate you, first thing after Bill was elected, and find that you were justified? Didn't they wipe your reputation clean with their official document, that Bill sent you a copy of? No, that never bothered me at all, old man. You want to forget about it. You only saved the committee the trouble of hanging 'em, according to Bill. Say, Valencia told me that——"

"Well, what the dickens *did* ail you, then?"

Dade threw out both hands helplessly, and gave a rueful laugh. "You're harder to head off than an old cow when you've got her calf on the saddle in front of you," he complained. "The trouble was," he explained gravely, "that these last boots of mine pinched like the devil, and I've been mad for a month because my feet are half a size bigger than yours. I wanted to stump you for a trade, only I knew yours would cripple me up worse than these did. But I've got 'em broke in now, so I can walk without tying my face into a hard knot. There's nothing on earth," he declared earnestly, "will put me on the fight as quick as a pair of boots that don't fit."

Jack paid tribute to his mendaciousness by looking at him doubtfully, not quite sure whether to believe him; and Dade chuckled again, well pleased with himself. Even when Jack told him quite frankly that he was a liar, he only laughed, and went over to where Surry stood rolling the wheel in his bit, and would not answer Jack's chagrined vilifications, except with an occasional amused invitation to go to the devil.

So the wall of constraint crumbled to the nothingness out of which it was built, and the two came close together again in that perfect companionship which may choose whatever medium the mood of man may direct, and still hold taut the bond of their friendship.

While they rode together up the valley Jack told the details of the encounter with José, and declared that he was doing all that even Dade could demand of him by resisting the desire to ride down to Santa Clara and make José swallow his words.

"I'd have done it, anyway, as soon as I brought Teresita home," he added, with a hint of apology for his seeming weakness; "but, darn it, I knew all the time that she made him think she was running away from me, just to devil us both. It did look that way, when she stopped as soon as she met him; I can't swear right now whether Tejon was running away, or whether he was just simply running." He laughed ruefully. "She's an awful little tease—just plumb

full of the Old Nick, even if she does look innocent and meek. She had us both guessing, let me tell you! He was pretty blamed insulting, though, and I'd have licked the stuffing out of him right then and there if she hadn't swung in and played the joker the way she did. Made José look as if he'd been doused with cold water—and him breathing fire and brimstone the minute before.

"It was funny, I reckon—to Teresita. *We* didn't see the joke. Every time I bring up the subject of that runaway, she laughs; but she won't say whether it was a runaway, no matter how I sneak the question in. So I just let it go, seeing José is laid up now; only, next time I bump into José Pacheco, he's going to act pretty, or there's liable to be a little excitement. I wish I had my pistols. I wrote to Bill Wilson about them again the other day; if he doesn't send them down pretty soon I'm going after them." He stopped, his attention arrested by the peculiar behavior of a herd of a hundred or more cattle, a little distance from the road. "Now, what do you suppose is the excitement over there?" he asked, and for answer Dade turned from the trail to investigate.

"Maybe they've run across the carcass of a critter that's been killed," he hazarded, "though this is pretty close home for beef thieves to get in their work. Most of the stock is killed north and east of Manuel's camp."

The cattle, moving restlessly about, and jabbing their long, wicked horns at any animal that got in the way, lifted heads to stare at them suspiciously before they turned tail and scampered off through the mustard. From the live oak under which they had been gathered came a welcoming shout, and the two, riding under the tentlike branches, craned necks in astonishment.

"Hello, Jack," spoke the voice again. "I'm almighty glad to see yuh. Hello, Dade, how are yuh?"

"Bill Wilson, by thunder!" Jack's tone was incredulous, as though he quite expected to be contradicted.

Bill, roosting a good ten feet from the ground on a great, horizontal limb, flicked the ashes from the cigar he was smoking, and grinned down at them unabashed.

"You sure took your time about getting here," he remarked, hitching himself into a more comfortable posture on the rough bark. "I've been praying for you two hours and more. Say, don't ever talk to me about 'hungry wolf packs,' boys. I'll take 'em in preference to the meek-eyed cow bossies, any old time."

They besought him for details, and got them in Bill's own fashion of telling. Briefly, he had long had in mind a trip down to the Picardo Rancho, just to see the boys and the country, and have a talk over the stirring events of the past month; and, he added, he wanted to bring Jack his pistols himself, because it was not reasonable to expect any greaser to withstand the temptation of keeping them, once he got them in his hands.

Therefore, having plenty of excuses for venturing so far from his Place, and having "tied the dove of peace to the ridgepole" of town by means of some thorough work on the part of the new committee, he had boldly set forth that morning, soon after sunrise, upon a horse which somebody had sworn that a lady could ride.

Bill confessed frankly that he wasn't any lady, however, and so, when the horse ducked unexpectedly to one side of the trail because of something he saw in the long grass, Bill surprised himself very much by getting his next clear impression of the situation from the ground.

"I dunno how I got there, but I was there, all right, and it 'didn't feel good,' either. I'd been making up my mind to get off and try walking, though, so I done it. Say, I don't see nothing so darned attractive about riding horseback, anyway!"

He yelled at the horse to stop, and his "whoas" were so terrifying that the horse ran for its life. So Bill started to walk, beguiling the time by soliloquizing upon the—well, Bill put it this way: "I walked and I cussed, and I

cussed and I walked, for about four hours and a half. Say, how in the devil do you make out it's only twenty miles?"

"Nearer thirty," corrected Dade, and Bill grunted and went on with the story of his misfortunes. Walking became monotonous, and he wearied of soliloquy before the cattle discovered him.

"Met quite a band, all of a sudden," said Bill. "They throwed up their heads and looked at me like I was wild Injuns, and I shooed 'em off—or tried to. They did run a little piece, and then they all turned and looked a minute, and commenced coming again, heads up and tails a-rising. And," he added naïvely, "I commenced *going*." He said he thought he could go faster than they could come, but the faster he departed the more eager was their arrival. "Till we was all on the gallop and tongues a-hanging."

Bill was big, and he was inclined to flesh because of no exercise more strenuous than quelling incipient riots in his Place, or weighing the dust that passed into his hands and ownership. He must have run for some distance, since he swore by several forbidden things that the chase lasted for five miles. "And if you don't believe it you can ride back up the trail till you come to the dent I made with my toes when I started in."

Other cattle came up, and joined in the race until Bill had quite a following, and when he was gasping for breath, and losing hope of seeing another day, he came upon a live oak, whose branches started almost from the roots, and inclined upward so gently that even a fat man who has lost his breath need not hesitate over the climbing.

"Thank the good Lord he don't cut all his trees after the same pattern," finished Bill fervently, "and live oaks ain't built like redwoods. If they was, you'd be wiping off my coat buttons right now, trying to identify the remains."

Being polite young men, and having a sincere liking for Bill, they hid certain exchanges of grins and glances under their hat brims—Bill being above them, and the brims being wide—and did not, by a single word, belittle the escape he had had from man-eating cows. Instead, Dade coaxed him down from the tree and onto Surry, swearing solemnly that the horse was quite as safe as the limb to which Bill showed a disposition to cling. Bill was hard to persuade, but since Dade was a man who inspires faith instinctively, the exchange was finally accomplished—Bill still showing that strange, clinging impulse which made him grip the saddle horn as a drowning man is said to grasp at a straw.

So they got him to the house, the two riding Jack's peppery palimeno with some difficulty, while Surry stepped softly, that he might not dislodge that burden in the saddle, whose body lurched insecurely, and made the horse feel at every step the ignorance of the man. They got him and themselves to the house. And his presence there did its part toward strengthening Don Andres' liking for gringos, while Bill himself gained a broader outlook, a keener perception of the rights of the native-born Californians.

Up in San Francisco there was a tendency to make light of those rights. It was commonly accepted that the old land grants were outrageous, and that the dons who prated of their rights were but land pirates who would be justly compelled by the government to disgorge their holdings. Bill had been in the habit of calling all Spaniards "greasers," just as the average Spaniard spoke of all Americans as "gringos," or heathenish foreigners. But on the porch of Don Andres, his saddle-galled person reclining at ease in a great armchair behind the passion vines, with the fragile stem of a wineglass twirling between his white, sensitive, gambler fingers while he listened to the don's courtly utterances as translated faithfully by Dade—Jack being absent on some "philandering" mission of his own—big Bill Wilson opened his eyes to the other side of the question, and frankly owned himself puzzled to choose.

"Seems like the men that come here when there wasn't anything but Injuns and animals, and built up the country outa raw material, ought to have some say now about who's going to reap the harvest," he admitted to Dade. "Don't look so much like gobbling, when you get right down to cases, does it? But at the same time, all these men that leave the East and come out here to make homes—seems like they've got a right to settle down and plow up a garden patch if they want to. They're going to do it, anyway. Looks like these grandees'll have to cash in their chips and quit—but it's a darned shame!"

As to the town, Bill told them much that had happened. Politics were still turbulent, but Perkins' gang of hoodlums was fairly wiped out, and the committee was working systematically and openly for the best interests of the town. There had been a hanging—a public hanging in the square, after a trial as fair as any court properly authorized could give. "Not much like that farce they pulled off that day with Jack," asserted Bill. "Real lawyers we had, and real evidence for and against the fellow, and tried him for real murder. Things are cooling down fast up there, and you can walk the streets now without hanging onto your money with one hand and your gun with the other. Jack and you can come back any time. And say, Jack!" Having heard his voice beyond the vines, Bill made bold to call him somewhat peremptorily.

"There's some gold left, you know, that belongs to you. I didn't send it all down—didn't like the looks of that—eh——" He checked himself on the point of saying "greaser." "And seeing you're located down here for the summer, and don't need it, why don't you put it into lots? You two can pick up a couple of lots that will grow into good money one of these days. Fact is, I've got a couple in mind. I'd like to see you fellows get some money to workin' for you. This horseback riding is too blamed risky."

"That looks reasonable to me," said Dade. "We've got the mine, of course, but the town ought to go on growing, and lots should be a good place to sink a thousand or two. I've got a little that ain't working." Then, seeing the inquiring look in the eyes of Don Andres, he explained to him what Bill had suggested.

Don Andres nodded his white head approvingly. "The Señor Weelson is right," he said. "You would do well, amigos, to heed his advice."

"Just as Jack says," Dade concluded, and Jack amended that statement by saying it was just as Bill said. If Bill knew of a lot or two, and thought it would be a good investment, he could buy them in their names. And Bill snorted at their absolute lack of business instinct, and let the subject drop into the background with the remark that, for men that had come West with the gold fever, they surely did seem to care very little about the gold they came after.

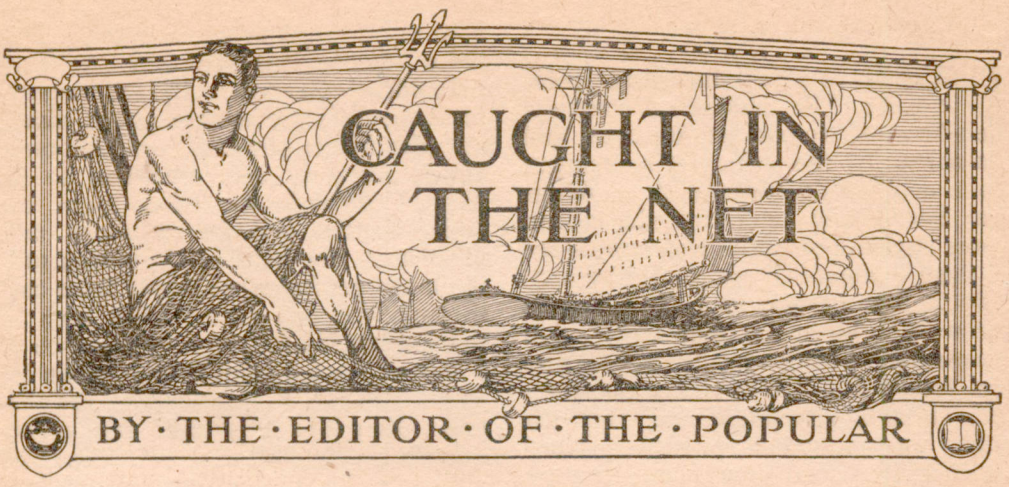
"The fun of finding it is good enough," declared Jack, unashamed, "so long as we have all we need. And when we need more than we've got, there's the mine; we can always find more. Just now——" He waved his cigarette toward the darkening hills, and in the little silence that followed they heard the sweet, high tenor of a vaquero somewhere, singing plaintively a Spanish love song. And when the voice trailed into a mournful, minor "Adios, adios," a robin down in the orchard added a brief, throaty note of his own.

Bill sighed and eased his stiffened muscles in the big chair. "Well, I don't blame either one of you," he drawled rather wistfully. "If I was fifteen years slimmer and limberer, I dunno but what I'd set into this ranch game myself. It's sure peaceful."

Foolishly they agreed that it was.

TO BE CONTINUED.

The third part of this serial will appear in the first September POPULAR, on sale two weeks hence, August 7th.



The publishers of THE POPULAR have indulged the editor to the extent of the pages which this new department fills. It is an overflow or rather outgrowth of the department called "A Chat With You" which you have long known and which will be continued as before, in addition to this. These pages will allow us to express our opinions on various things that interest us at greater length and with more variety. We hope you will like them.

A Trial Without Lawyers

IT is easier to get into court than to get out of it. Once litigation is started, expense and trouble develop fast. The law's delays are notorious, and every delay adds to the cost.

Delays in the administration of justice amount to a denial of justice. Out in Cleveland, Ohio, a modest little man —Manuel Levine, judge of the municipal court—has inaugurated a reform that is likely to spread throughout the republic. He believes in common sense rather than in law. So, after years of effort, he has succeeded in establishing a court of conciliation as a branch of the municipal court. No legal action for fifty dollars or less, and no case of replevin, garnishment, or attachment can be started in that city until it has gone before the court of conciliation. The judge sits as one of the arbitrators, and the plaintiff and defendant each selects a man to sit with him. No lawyer is permitted to appear in the court. The disputants tell their stories in their own way, without prompting or restraint. Then the arbitrators talk the case over, and decide what is fair and just. If the decision is not satisfactory, either party may refuse to accept it. Then the judge explains the costs, delays, and worries of litigation, and gives the best and most friendly advice he can to bring about a compromise. In three cases out of four the people who enter the court of conciliation in strife depart in concord.

It is compulsory that all minor cases go to the court of conciliation first, for no litigation can be initiated in a regular law court without a certificate from the judge and the arbitrators that their efforts have proved fruitless.

And what an example this court of conciliation sets in the matter of fees! The summonses are sent by mail—sometimes by registered letter—and that is all the expense entailed. For a few dimes a man can have his case tried in this court of common sense. Queer, isn't it, that courts cling to the methods of the stagecoach days of sending an officer to serve a summons when the United States mail, the safest and most efficient business organization in the world, can perform the service by registered letter much better, and many, many times cheaper?

Adjustment

THESE three things have been coincident: The decline of courtesy, the advent of woman into business, and the spread of the suffragist movement. To a decided degree, the three things are interrelated and interdependent. Some students of ethics and morals see in them evidence of an unhealthy condition. Men do not marry so young as formerly. Through competition with woman, the young man of to-day gets less return for his service proportionately than a generation ago; and the young woman, as a wage earner, is less dependent on matrimony, and demands more in the way of a home establishment than she formerly did. The average age of marriage used to be twenty-two for the male. Now it approximates twenty-five, and seems destined to go higher. As regards women, the figures are twenty and twenty-four. Some earnest people are crying out that if this tendency is not checked the human race is not going to increase. But there is no occasion for despair. Such movements as these are merely phases of an evolutionary period. The span of life is lengthening, and matters readjust themselves in this old world of ours somehow or other. The readjustment may come through one form or another, but it is certain to come.

The Vanishing Locomotive Fireman

A REVOLUTION has been wrought in the American locomotive without the knowledge of the general public. Its efficiency has been increased twenty-five per cent without the use of an additional pound of coal. But for the economies brought about through the greater power generated, the transportation companies would have had a hard time meeting the restrictions placed upon them by the Interstate Commerce Commission, the higher cost of material, and the rise in the scale of pay of trainmen, without increasing freight rates.

One hundred American railroads now are using the superheater. This is a device invented by William Schmidt, a German. By its employment the moisture is taken out of steam, and the fifteen-per-cent loss of power which formerly was attendant to its passage through the tubes from the boiler to the cylinder is wiped out. More than one hundred American railroads are getting more power from coal through the use of the brick arch in the locomotive fire box. This arch is a sort of slanted hurdle, and forces the gaseous flames to travel twice the distance they formerly did, and consequently produce greater heat. The third appliance is the mechanical stoker. This crushes the coal in the tender, carries the crumbled bits by means of a conveyer to three openings in the fire box, and then injectors spray the coal over the fire. Only a dozen railroads are using the mechanical stoker now, but it is proving so successful, trip after trip being made without it being found necessary to open the fire-box door, that the day of the locomotive fireman seems drawing to a close.

Humanness

THERE is a quality whose presence partly redeems the worst of men, and whose absence damns the best of men. We may call in humanness. It is rather hard to define, but easy to perceive. If a man possesses it people instantly know it. It shows in his handshake, in his voice, in his talk, in his writings, in all his relations. It wins him the liking of people. If he has ability it makes him a man of power. If he has character it makes him a man of great usefulness. Even when he has not much else, it makes him friends. He can borrow money when he has no credit, and there is somebody around to help him when he is sick. People give him a lift because they intuitively feel that he would do the same without question for any man if he could.

This quality cannot be simulated successfully, for it is something that does not appeal to the eye; nor can it be

conveyed by cunning words, nor patent, machine-made methods of good will. It is a subtle fellow feeling for all classes and conditions of men. It is a real interest in people. Not a speculative, scientific interest in the human family, nor a vague, philanthropic desire to uplift the race. But a real, live, everyday interest in John Smith's job, in Tom Jones' sick child, in Henry Wilson's good fortune. It is an instinctive desire for fair play among men, an unfeigned regret for those who suffer, and spontaneous pleasure in the happiness of those who succeed. This humanness in neighbor, or worker, or manager, or leader, or painter, or singer, or writer is the touchstone that opens all hearts to him; and, although he takes therefrom the richest part, he returns it fourfold from his own heart.

When Freedom Smiles the Serf Grows Bold

MANY of us are vaguely aware of the much-discussed "immigration problem." Perhaps few of us know aught of it save that incredible thousands pour in at our gateways; or perchance we have seen droves of immigrants in our railway terminals, ticketed like cattle for various destinations. But let us have a closer glimpse.

Take the case of Sammy. By some miracle, he managed to get from the heart of Europe to this land of opportunity. He was eighteen years old. Sammy worked at anything until he scraped enough together to set up a little news stand on our corner. Trade gradually grew, and during spare hours between morning and evening editions he studied English. His sole dissipation was night school. Before two years had passed Sammy had saved sufficient to bring on a younger brother —John, aged seventeen—who became chief assistant to Sammy, and also worked in a cheap restaurant from eight p. m. to midnight. Between them the brothers had an income of sixteen dollars a week, and out of this they put by eight. In twelve months the family was sent for—mother, father, uncle, aunt, and three children. When they arrived, four rooms were rented in the tenement district, and fifty dollars' worth of secondhand furniture furnished the home. It was a veritable paradise to Sammy's family after their hut and husks in the old country.

Lookout for employment was immediate. First to land a job was Bertha, the fifteen-year-old daughter, in a button factory, at four dollars a week. Aunt and uncle found no difficulty in getting places in a sweatshop. At the end of two weeks the father found work in a tailoring establishment. Sewing was brought home to the mother to do at odd times. The two youngest children were sent to school, though the little girl helped with the housework, and the boy delivered bread and rolls for a neighborhood baker between six and eight a. m. For this service the family received all the bread and pastry needed, and in addition the boy made fifty cents weekly.

Comparatively this busy family experienced a period of great prosperity. Never had they known such affluence and ease. Sammy estimated their combined weekly salaries at about sixty dollars. This represented the labors of seven. Of the two hundred and forty odd dollars a month coming in, sixty approximately went for food and housing. Broken up into seven unequal parts, they had almost two hundred dollars to save and to spend on clothes. To itemize:

	Weekly wages.	Weekly board.	Residue.
Sammy	$13	$3	$10
John	10	3	7
Uncle	12	3	9
Aunt	7	3	4
Bertha	4	2	2
Father and Mother	15	—	—

The fourteen dollars pooled weekly by Sammy, John, uncle, aunt, and Bertha paid all household expenses—i. e., food, thirty-five dollars a month; rent, light, and heat, eighteen dollars.

Now comes the extraordinary result of this success, though perhaps it is a natural sequence when freedom intoxi-

cates the downtrodden. Five years pass, and, if anything, the wages increase. For instance, Bertha's earnings have doubled. Each worker has a bank account. Mother and father have taken a mortgage on a modest house they plan to own. Great has been their rise. Happy? you ask. Why, no! Father and uncle have developed into rabid, street-corner-spouting socialists. Auntie and Bertha are first-class strikers for higher wages and fewer hours. Sammy is part owner of an inflammatory periodical, and dips his pen in wormwood and vitriol. John spends his leisure distributing red circulars declaring their wrongs. Down with the existing order!

Yet they are well fed, well clothed, and well to do as things go.

They deserve the success of industry and coöperation, but do we deserve the bile it has produced as a concomitant?

Business Management

CONSIDER the dealings between the city of New York and the Interborough, Metropolitan, and Brooklyn Rapid Transit Companies for the building and operation of new subways and the extension of elevated lines. This whole work approximates in cost and magnitude the Panama Canal.

No one seriously questions the benefits that would come to the people by having one system and general transfers. But a desperate fight has been made against awarding the contracts to the Interborough or the B. R. T. because the impression has been spread abroad their attitude always has been one of opposition to the public and unwillingness to do what was decent, honest, and proper. Their reputation has cost them millions of dollars in this one instance, for every paragraph of the contracts has been fought, and every item scrutinized and modified, if possible. What they will get will be far short of what they would get if the people had reason to trust them.

On the other hand, the McAdoo Company, which operates the Hudson River tunnels, has the full confidence of the people. It has been managed on the basis of "The public be pleased." Nothing the McAdoo Company ever asked from the public has been refused. When it raised its fare from five to seven cents because it was not earning dividends, there was not a word of complaint. If the Interborough or the B. R. T. raised its fare, there would be a riot.

The big bankers who dominate public-utility companies might profit by making their presidents and general managers study the methods by which successful grocers, dry-goods men, and shopkeepers win and hold trade.

How Long!

NINETEEN hundred years ago He gave His peace to a woman who had sinned, His censure to the men who hounded her saddened life. But still the broken women are as aliens in our streets, and still the men who gain their pleasure and their profit of them go proudly, lifting high their head of power.

MISCHANCE

WHEN life advances with a supreme gift of love, we know that it will never be granted for long. We know that something will intercept that perfect offering, that somehow the gift will be changed into a sacrifice, that loss and a keener loneliness are in store for the heart that reaches out too anxiously. Some bitterness out of the sky will visit that felicity. We are hungered all too much, so the bread of life is soon withholden. We thirst, but the waters are not released for us. Our eagerness, born of our need and longing, will never dwell with the all-sufficing. Slow death or sudden death, it comes at last, robbing us of what is more precious than the sunlight and the day, till the end of it all is that we are bereft indeed, storm-tossed and desolate.

The Marine Chemist

By Mayn Clew Garnett

Author of "The White Ghost of Disaster," "In the Slatch," Etc.

There is a fortune awaiting the man who can invent a ship's paint that will not foul. Herr Best, the marine chemist, claimed that he had solved the problem, and he made money out of his claim, though not in the way you would expect

I SEE that Herr von Best has arrived in the Cunard to-day," said Mr. Wilson, manager of the Transatlantic line of passenger ships, to the senior vice president. Mr. Wilson was sitting reading the morning papers as Mr. Furst came into the office.

"Yes—well, isn't he the great German chemist, who found how to dope out a green antifouling compound?" asked Furst.

"Yes, he's the man. He was employed by the largest European manufacturers in making a ship's paint that will not foul. He claims that he has found one. At least so the paper says. He's staying at the New York, has a suite of rooms big enough for a prince —and leaves for the West and Pacific coast to-morrow or the next day."

"Well, don't believe everything you see in the paper. If it's in there it is probably not so. However, I'd like to see the paint that would do the right thing for us. We've spent nearly a hundred thousand dollars on this red stuff, and it don't last a season. Besides, green would look so much better on our crack ships. Take the *Nord Light,* with her high, black, shining sides, and imagine a dark, permanent green beneath—— It's worth a million to any big company."

The manager put his paper away and went to work upon a large pile of papers his stenographer had placed upon his desk.

The second day after that a man presented his card at the office. It bore the name: "Herr von Best, Berlin."

Mr. Furst took the card, and instantly sent the boy out with orders to show the stranger in. Then he rang the bell and sent for Mr. Wilson. A tall man with heavy Teutonic features came haltingly into the room. The boy pointed to Mr. Furst and withdrew. Furst stood a moment gazing at a man past middle age, whose heavy, bushy beard showed red streaked with gray. A high, white forehead, with hair thinning at the temples, a beaked nose between two small, gray eyes that seemed to Mr. Furst to have just a bit of furtiveness in their cold gaze.

"I am Herr Best, the marine chemist —I would be obliged to see the manager who has charge of the ship's repairs— or dat is it, da head of the office," said he, with just a touch here and there of the German accent.

"I am in charge at present. What can I do for you, Herr Best? I am most glad to meet you. Sit down," said Mr. Furst, drawing up a chair. "Here is Mr. Wilson—Wilson, this is Herr Best, the marine expert we noticed had arrived yesterday."

Mr. Wilson shook hands, and the three sat a moment in silence.

"I haf a compound which vill interest you," said Herr Best. "I come to introduce it over here, and vill be obliged to have you try as much of it as you like. It is a green copper bronze of da highest quality. Der kaiser has it

on the yacht—der Krupp company haf used it, und if you vill haf it analyzed you vill haf seen what it is—a great paint." He produced a small vial of a greenish fluid as he spoke. Then he drew forth several letters, one of which bore the royal arms of Germany.

"I haf many testimonials—but da thing is the paint—dat's the thing." He smiled broadly and sat back, waiting for questions. They came thick and fast from both men.

"Will that paint stand?" asked Wilson.

"Try it und see for yourself," said Herr Best.

"Will it stand the steady run of the big ships?" asked Furst.

"And will it always stay clean—not foul under ordinary conditions?" asked Wilson again.

There had been so much trouble and expense to get a nonfouling paint that both men were very much interested in it. At that time copper paints were new, and there were few if any of any color that would stand upon a steel bottom. It had been the worst foe of the repair department. Ships could not drag tons and tons of barnacles, grass, and marine growths, and make the schedule.

"We took off ten tons from the bottom of the *Nord Light* last month," said Wilson, "and the cost of docking was six thousand dollars. You know we'll give a good price if the thing is right."

"I haf no more to say—just try it, haf your chemist analyze it, und den write me what you wish. I ship it in your own ships, vun, two, or many tons any time," said Best.

"It will take several months for the test," said Wilson. "We'll have to give it the underwater trial, also. If it stands a season in this harbor, we'll guarantee to take as much as you can furnish us."

The three talked for some minutes longer, branching out upon other subjects, and finally the German left, leaving his vial upon the desk of the vice president. They were, indeed, glad to have seen him, they told him so, and shook hands cordially. Would he do them the honor to dine with them? No? It was too bad he was going away that day—too bad. Why not stay a few days and see the shipping, the great city? But Herr Best had important business out West and on the Pacific coast. He must leave at once. He shook hands for the last time, and went away in a taxicab, his piercing little eyes shifting uneasily behind his gold-rimmed glasses, yet his manner was of one who had accomplished an object. He appeared well satisfied. He would await the experiment and hoped to hear from the firm before the cold weather of the fall. He had no time for other firms just then, but would see what the great Transatlantic line would do first in the matter. One great firm was enough at first.

"Well, what do you think of him?" asked Furst, as the two went back into the office.

"Strange fellow all right, but these German students are funny folk any way you take them. He don't look unintelligent, but hardly looks like a chemist. Anyhow, we don't care as long as the paint turns out right. We can afford to spend a few thousand dollars on him if it is good."

II.

The report of the chemist acting for the directors of the Transatlantic Steamship Company was very favorable. The stuff was of the highest possible value. It would not foul, it would not come off a bit of steel submerged in sea water for months. In fact, it was what shipmen had been hunting for, spending thousands for—and here it was. The only thing about it, according to the chemist, was that it was a solution of gold, a most expensive chloride of gold mixture that was worth something like forty dollars a gallon wholesale.

"Great snakes! Where do we get away with this thing?" asked Furst, when he had read the analysis, and had paid the bill. "This is a joke. We might build gold steamers, but never paint them with a green paint built of

gold. No, no, that lets us out. The paint is absolutely perfect, as he said, but the price is entirely out of question. There's nothing more to it. It would cost a fortune to paint our largest ship just once."

"Yes, we'll have to let it go if the analysis is correct," assented Wilson, "but I'm awfully disappointed. I had hoped to get something out of that paint. It is a perfect paint, that is certain. But gold has been known for years—it's out of the question. This Herr Best is either a fool, or he has some way of making gold that is not known to any one living."

"No one ever made gold yet—out of anything but—people," said Furst.

The matter was therefore dropped, and the office set about to find new products.

It was two months later, when Furst, picking up a paper, saw the picture of Herr Best in a column article telling how he had at last solved the question of green bottom paint for ships. The vice president called Wilson.

"Must have a lot of money to spend, those Western fellows. Here's an article telling how the Pacific ships are using Herr Best's green, and how that gentleman has made a half-million-dollar contract with the Nippon Maru line for the Japanese. I tell you, those Western men have got it on us certainly when they can place gold on their vessels, and make it pay."

"Well, he never put a price on the stuff—you must admit that. I think I will write him a letter, telling him his stuff is all right, and ask him to make a bid. I have the address he gave us. Some street in San Francisco."

He called a typist and dictated the letter. The girl, Miss Jackson, had observed much that had occurred in the main office, and she ventured to remark:

"Herr Best seems to be in two places at once, sir. I saw a paper dated three days back, where he was in Hongkong. Isn't it a quick passage to get to San Francisco in three days?"

"Oh, you probably made a mistake in the date, Miss Jackson. Write the letter and bring it to me to sign."

Miss Jackson did so. She was wondering about it all the afternoon, and at night she spoke to William Jones, a clerk in the shipping department.

"I don't understand it, dear," she said. "I don't want to get into any trouble, because we want to get married next month if you get your raise, but there is something strange in a man who can be in two places at once."

Jones was affectionate. He gave ships and their ways little thought when in the lady's company.

"Never mind, girlie; we'll keep a watch on Herr Best if he comes back, but don't you worry about him now. Let it go, and say nothing. That's my advice."

A week or ten days later a letter came, saying that Herr Best's agent would call upon the firm with bids for their ships. He came in a few days afterward, and presented himself with a letter from Herr Best, who gave him full powers to make any contracts the firm wished. He was a short, stocky man, with a nervous energy that showed vitality, and he lost no time in explaining that the product he handled was gold chloride, and that it could be purchased at a very reasonable figure. He produced samples of the paint, and it was identical with what Herr Best had left.

"We will sign for the largest ship for a trial, and get it at once," said Furst.

"Yes," said Wilson, after the affair had been settled, and Mr. James had signed the papers to produce the paint within a few days, and have it put upon the *Nord Light*. "Yes, we have it all right at last—only we will have to see that it is really the paint he says it is, real gold base, and not some spurious stuff he is trying to palm off on us."

"Well, we have a trusted man we can put on to watch," said Furst; "we will have Jones, of the shipping department, detailed to watch the work carefully, and test every sample of paint that is forthcoming. Jones is expecting a raise, and will be careful enough. He wants to get married shortly."

III.

Mr. James, vigorous and energetic, sat in the Vienna Café and waited for a tall, thin gentleman, Mr. Jones, of the shipping office. Jones was red-haired and freckled, and not strong on good looks. The agent watched him approach and smiled. Jones' slack mouth curled into a grin as he took the agent's hand, and his eyes held a look of suspicious superiority. He was acting for a large concern, and the responsibility was enormous.

"Of course, you understand, Jones, that we have no intention of putting an antifouling paint upon ships with a gold base—we are not crazy," said the agent, after they had eaten a very good meal, paid for by Mr. James. Champagne had been plentiful, and Jones had drunk it without stint. He had seldom tasted it before. After all, this agent with the stout, vigorous frame and shifty eyes was not so bad.

"No, that's what I'm put on for—to see that you fulfil the contract, and don't four-flush," said Jones weakly.

"Of course, I know all that—I'm not blind—but you fellows don't suppose we can copper-paint a twenty-thousand-ton ship like the *Nord Light* with paint at three dollars a gallon, and have it a gold base—that's preposterous. Now, you wish to get married——"

"How do you know that?" asked Jones, interrupting.

"Oh, well, don't deny it—you know it—Miss Jackson told me all about it some time back," said the agent.

"I don't believe it, but let it go at that," said Jones, with some show of temper. The conversation was getting too personal. "Now stick to business—what did you bring me here for?"

"If you think you came here to get a bribe, you lose out, partner," said the agent. "I don't know what it is about me that looks like I was insane, or makes me appear a fool—perhaps I am, after all. I asked you here because I like you—just like you for a straight guy that's getting along, and is bound to succeed."

Jones grinned in secret delight. Was this man intelligent? What kind of a fellow was he to tell such a yarn? He looked over the agent, and the strong face of James was set as a mask. Only the eyes shone brilliantly, and shifted a little, ever so little, with the restless energy of his being.

"Really," said Jones, blinking at him. "Well, old pal, I sure feel we're going to be great friends, and—perhaps you'll send me a wedding present?" This last was with such sarcasm that he felt the agent's eyes glow. He was a little amazed at the reply.

"Yes, Jones, I'll do it. I'll send you a wedding present if this thing comes off all right."

"Thanks," said Jones icily; "I'm a bit thirsty yet."

They had another bottle, but James excused himself from further drinking. He sat back in his chair, with a satisfied look upon his strong features. Jones watched him for a short time, and then, thinking he had, perhaps, better not go further, arose and shook his host's hand, thanking him for his generosity. Under the politeness still lurked the devil of distrust, and it was so plain to the agent that he almost relaxed enough to smile. They passed out together, the agent paying the bill, and tipping lavishly. It had cost him twenty-five dollars, and he had nothing, apparently, to show for it. At the corner Jones took a car to his home.

James walked slowly back. At the café he met a man with bushy beard and glasses. a man who was remarkably like Herr Best in appearance, but whose Teutonic acent was absent.

"Well?" said the stranger.

"It's all right," said the agent of Herr Best. "He's as suspicious as a fox, and about as trustful as a rattlesnake—he's all O. K."

"How about the girl?"

"Well, she was a hard proposition. Sampson saw her, and told her what a fine thing it would be for her to spot these paint sharps in their game. She'll tell, sure. He'll fall for it, or I'm not a —by the way, I promised him a wedding present——"

"Well, how would a bunch of those

fifteen-dollar plumes do? Real ostrich from Africa, don't you understand! There are a dozen or more good ones on top. Had to open them, you know, to pass the inspectors, and get the insurance. They won't insure a marked package nowadays. It has to be opened, and some of the contents seen and sampled——"

"Well, say, by the time we've bought stuff for samples, paid for the crating, and paid up the premiums, where do we get off?" asked the stout one.

"Well, it's about like this: There's the feathers, those out of Goldberg's fire, and all ruined—have to get something perishable, you know—they stand me only one hundred dollars. Then there's the carbides that'll wet up and stink them out—they stand twenty-five, and insure for one thousand—one thousand on them, ten thousand on the feathers—eleven thousand dollars, not counting the other stuff, which makes the total come to nearly fifteen thousand. The bond is——"

"Oh, well, you are the figurer—let it go at that. We must get on hand day after to-morrow, when the *Nord Light* hauls out."

IV.

The second day after the affair in the café, the stout agent, Mr. James, strolled down to the great dry dock where the huge liner *Nord Light* was being cleaned for painting with his expensive product. Two wagonloads of a paint that smelled suspiciously like that ordinary creosote and copper-oxide mixture had already arrived. Mr. Jones was on hand bright and early to watch it, and sample the contents of the kegs and tins.

James watched the shipping clerk from a short distance, and saw that he was ever near the wagons, ever watchful of what was coming out of them. Mr. Wilson had so distrusted the chloride-of-gold-base paint that, in order to lose no time, he had ordered the common iron paint used on ships' bottoms, and he had ordered enough to finish the entire ship if the expensive and excellent paint failed to materialize. A chemist was waiting for the samples, and Jones was instructed to send them by a trusted messenger to that man at once, to have the analysis made quickly. Any deviation from the contract annulled it, and the bond of two thousand dollars would be forfeited. It amused Jones to think of James when he found that the game would not work. That bond would surely worry him. It was a good bond furnished by one of the surety companies which he knew. It had to be secured also.

"Good morning, Jones," said James affably, as they met near the wagons. "Are you all ready to begin?"

"Well, there's a lot of scraping aft to be finished yet; but that need not detain us. My! What a head I have yet! Say, old chap, do you drink that stuff often?"

"Oh, you can have some more to-night, if you like. I'll be up there about eight. What do you say?"

"Well, we'll see. Have you a bit to bore these cases, or a can opener to cut those tins with? Have to have samples, you know, of each tin used. Orders, you know."

"Well, say, of all the nerve! What in thunder do you take me for, anyhow?" snarled the agent, with evident anger. "It's bad enough to be taken for a thief, but to have you ask me for a can opener! Well, say, Jones, you are a petty rascal at the best."

"Oh, you needn't get your back up, you old skin," said Jones, grinning. "I haven't forgotten what you told me."

Mr. James seemed to be hurt, very much hurt. His anger was such that he walked away and refused to have anything further to say to Mr. Jones, who, after a short wait, sent for and procured the necessary tools to open the case of paint. The smell of the contents of the packages was so pronounced, so evidently creosote and copper oxide, that he was amazed. It was now absurd to pretend friendship. He would watch the paint, and he ordered the wagons to discharge their loads at a shed within the dock grounds, pending the analysis.

Samples of the paint were sent at

once to both Mr. Wilson and the chemist; also, Jones got Wilson on the phone and informed him that as long as there seemed to be no doubt of the fake, he had better send to the men who furnished the regular paint—the ship would be ready for it in the morning, and the dock boss would be furious at a delay. Also, it would cost—well, Mr. Wilson needed no information on these subjects.

Mr. Wilson did as requested, and grinned at the thought of the bond that would be canceled. They would make two thousand dollars easily enough. He was sorry about the paint. He had hoped there would really be a good paint some day that would stand, but, of course, this chloride-of-gold thing was no use. It had been tried out, and found too expensive.

All day Jones watched the shed with the paint. He was suspicious of every one, feeling that James, who still loitered about, would try to bribe some one.

Once James was seen to be in close conversation with two or more cleaners, who, with steel brooms and scrapers, worked upon the ship's bottom, and scaled off the barnacles. He was apparently interested in the growths, the immense quantity of shellfish that had formed upon the steel plates of the huge ship. More than three tons of stuff had already been scraped off, and there was a thousand feet or more of underwater surface to clean. One hundred men worked and scraped at this spot, and James watched them intently. Then he came up to the shed where Jones was stationed, and demanded in angry tones how long he would be expected to remain about there, awaiting that fool chemist's report about the paint. They were almost ready to begin, and he wished them to go ahead.

Jones stalled for time. He argued and smiled. He insinuated all kinds of things, and almost began to get offensive.

"What would you think if some one brought you into court for false pretenses?" he finally asked.

James grew furious. He spoke in fierce terms of the company, the vice president, and all of those who were so crooked as to suspect Herr Best of fraud. He had a notion to show Jones personally just what he thought of him, and rolled up his cuffs while he spoke. After a short time he cooled down somewhat, and began to placate Jones, feeling that individual out, and flattering him for his watchfulness. This altercation took up a full hour, and kept Jones interested to some extent. Finally, James gave up the talk and withdrew sullenly to the dry dock, where a couple of cleaners stood apart and scraped the steel plates near the starboard midship bends.

Jones felt that the affair was now about over, and that the report on the samples would be forthcoming shortly, and he drew forth a cigar and smoked, sitting down upon a bench.

V.

James strolled up casually to the two cleaners, and began criticizing the ship's lines in a loud voice. The men seemed diffident. They were only workmen, and had no right to indulge in conversation of this description.

Suddenly James lowered his voice. "Did you locate the spot quite right?" he asked the taller one of the two.

"Yes, we've hit it right," was the muffled answer. "It's between the eighty-sixth and eighty-seventh frames, and comes just at the third deck. The plates are thin enough—absurdly thin for such a ship. Couldn't get lower, for she has a double bottom——"

"That'll be the middle freight compartment to starboard?" asked James softly.

"Right," whispered the cleaner, who now turned his face toward the shed, and peered at Jones through glasses. "Hope that gink don't come down here. He might spot this black on my whiskers—then good night for Herr Best!"

"No fear," said James. "He's the satisfied guy for you—got as much

sense as a worm! We should worry about that fool!"

The cleaners laughed. James asked a few more questions.

"How did the current work?"

"It cut all right. We ran it from the electric wiring to light the dry dock. There it is down there in the muck. No one'll see it. The rivets cut like cheese under the hot point. We lashed it in the brush and sheared off fifteen rivets at the joint of the plate. A slight blow will loosen her up all right. Now to get the machine out of the dock without being seen and spotted."

"A barrel will hold it, all right, won't it?" asked James.

"Sure, but to get the barrel out without any one watching—the men are all forward now, and we could get it away easy if we had a chance."

"Put it in that empty barrel there while I talk to Jones," said the agent. "I'll be back shortly, when you have dumped barnacles over it. How much does it weigh?"

"About three hundred," said Herr Best's double.

"That's about my limit," said the agent, whistling softly.

Jones was again edified by the fluency of the agent's oaths on shipowners, and was so taken up during this last conversation that he was surprised when James suddenly informed him that he would wait no longer for their infamous chemist, who would probably bring in a false and paid-for report.

"I shall take a barrel of this refuse home with me myself to see just what effect our mixture has upon it. I know we are right. I have no doubts of the affair at all. We are good paint mixers, and if the stuff doesn't turn out right, there's been some mistake—not our fault."

"Take anything you please, but leave your paint," said Jones, smiling.

James went to the dock, seized the barrel in his hands, and, with an effort that would have shamed any workman in the basin, carried the apparently full receptable to the gate. Then he hailed a passing cart and gave instructions where to carry the samples of marine growths. When he was through, he came back and shook hands with Jones. Then he went to the dock boss and, as the whistle for noon was blowing, he offered to "blow" that excellent workman to as many drinks as he wished.

Mills, the boss, was thirsty, and accepted the invitation.

The workmen filed out for lunch hour, and the silence of the noonday rest fell upon the dry dock. Jones smoked complacently. He had seen the thing through, and arose to greet the messenger with the report from Mr. Wilson:

> Paint is a fake all through—one can of chloride gold, but all the rest have not enough chloride to paint a picture. They simply beat the law by furnishing chloride as they claim, but it is not enough to use. Their bond will be canceled, forfeited. You may turn over the matter to Mills with the instructions he will receive from me to-day. He will use the regular paint.
>
> (Signed) WILSON.

Jones drew a long breath. Then it was settled. The agent had attempted to bribe him in some manner he could not quite understand—that he was sure of. Now for the reward, the expected promotion. Why not let James make him a present, after all? The thing was finished, and to take something now would be to simply skin a crook. He laughed.

James came back from the neighboring café.

"Got the report yet?" he asked.

"Sure, you old skin; I have it, all right. Say, you are a cheap guy——"

James' face fell. Jones stopped at the sight, he seemed so hurt.

"You don't mean to tell me that the stuff is not right?" he whispered.

"Aw, come off, old chap; you know all about it. You got enough chloride to keep you out of prison for false pretenses, but you lose your contract and forfeit the bond," said Jones.

The agent sat down. He seemed all in. The thing appeared to crush him.

"That Herr Best is a skin, then," he finally said.

"Sure thing," said Jones.

"Well, I don't blame you for your kindness and suspicions, then," said

James. "Yet I would like you to go with me to the firm and let me tell them in my own words that I have nothing to do with a swindle. I met Herr Best when he was East here, and I went with him to the West coast, where he appointed me his agent. I believed sincerely that what he was putting out was proper and good. I solemnly swear to this."

His manner was vigorous, his tone convincing. Jones watched him in amazement, and wondered at him. Perhaps he had done the man an injustice, after all. Perhaps he was honest. Why should he be responsible for a man? He thought it over for some minutes, and then consented.

Mr. Wilson received them coldly. He was not much impressed with the protestations of Mr. James. Mr. Furst listened and said nothing. James had a way of impressing one with his sincerity.

"Of course, the bond we furnished is forfeited. The whole thing falls to the ground with this exposure. I only wish that my name had never been connected with the affair," said James, as he concluded the interview.

"I am sorry, but we must collect the two thousand dollars—we must protect ourselves against such affairs," said Wilson.

"I shall make no attempt to stop you," said James. "I only wish that the amount was twice as much, and I shall take pains to tell Herr Best what I think of him at the earliest opportunity."

Jones accompanied the agent out. "I'm really sorry, old man, but you see just what has happened. If it were not for the precautions we took in getting the old-fashioned paint ready, we would have a dry-dock bill that would shake the directors."

"It is all right, Jones," said the agent sadly. "But I should like to get that Herr Best and shake his lights out—and I think I'll do it when he comes East again. I have some regard for my reputation, and I have a right to protect it. Good-by."

They shook hands and parted.

VI.

That night, at the Vienna Café, the gentleman with the whiskers—now their natural color—sat and waited for James at a table near the door.

James came in and sat down. "Where is Sampson?" he asked.

"Well, he has beat it. It won't do, you know, to have him seen with us. Might create suspicion. Besides, his hands show marks of labor, and that is not natural for them. That cleaning yesterday was the limit for him."

"Has he attended to everything?"

"Sure, everything is all right."

"Then we might as well take the first ship for the other side. There's no use waiting around here any longer. The sooner we get out the better," said the agent.

"We will sail to-morrow on the Cunard. The *Nord Light* sails next week, and the stuff has been boxed, insured, and consigned to certain parties whom we might know if any one asked us—but of all things, of all folk, we know Sampson, the West Side importer of ostrich feathers, the least."

They had a good dinner, and then parted to meet again upon the deck of the liner which sailed next day. That was the last the New York firm ever saw or heard of Mr. William James, agent for Herr Best, the great German chemist. Also, the gentleman who sailed with James wore no whiskers, had no use for glasses, and his accent was typical of the Bowery. The only thing which might have made the most suspicious think he and Herr Best might be related was his walk and general figure. All else was different. Which shows he was an artist of no mean ability, for he never attempted hiding.

The *Nord Light* loaded and sailed. Among her cargo lay the cases of feathers consigned to one Herr Amos Horowitz, of Havre, France. By some peculiar coincidence they were shipped in the compartment for general cargo, and lay about the middle of it, against the starboard side, near what the constructors of the vessel would designate frames eighty-six and seven.

It was a very dark night. The ship had been running through broken ice all day, and the haze which nearly always hangs over the ice-covered sea, shut down after dark until the lookout could not see two fathoms beyond the stem. Often the man saw, or thought he saw, small, floating floes, but the daylight had shown no bergs of size, and the ship maintained a fair speed.

It was just seventy-five hours since leaving port, and the beginning of the first watch that night, that the ship *apparently* struck some floating object. There was a slight jar felt about the middle of the forward cargo compartment. The lookout reported that the ship had struck a "growler"—a small floating mass of ice—and then turned back to his lookout from the catheads. The officer on watch thought little of the incident, and did not even slow the ship until that compartment was found to be leaking badly.

Before it could be cleared it had almost filled, and had to be shut off for hours until the leak was found and repaired. The ship was slowed down, and several hours were lost, but no mention was made of the accident in the official log. The private log of Captain Jameson held the details, which he gave to the company upon the arrival of the vessel. There was not much to it all. The compartment was flooded, the cargo at that point completely submerged, and that of a perishable nature pretty well destroyed by the sea water.

"There has been so much made of several accidents of a less serious nature, we will say nothing about it," said Mr. Furst, when discussing the affair with Wilson and several other members of prominence.

"There happens to be only a lot of ostrich feathers consigned to some unknown Dutchman in Havre. Better pay the insurance, settle, and drop the matter. The whole affair will stick us up twenty thousand dollars, but to make a noise will probably cost us half a million at this time of year. There is nothing peculiar about it, anyhow. The plate gave way, owing to faulty riveting——"

"I beg to differ with you; that ship was properly riveted," said Mr. Morgan, of the board of directors.

"Well, I do not know what it could have been, then. The plate seemed to give from a smart impact, not a very heavy blow, and it was only noticed by those close to it. Even Captain Jameson here did not feel anything like a collision. The compartment flooded. The cargo is injured—that is all."

"Yes, we'll have to make good. There's no way out of it," said Wilson. "All reports concerning this Herr Amos Horowitz seem to place him as a responsible and honest importer. We cannot afford to fight him with nothing to fight on. We would lose half our cargoes within a month."

And so it was finally decided to pay for the loss of the perishable stuff in the flooded compartment. The affair was hushed up, and the great *Nord Light* sailed again on time, filling her regular schedule, and setting at rest all rumors concerning her injury and probable safety on the high seas.

A few months after this, Mr. Jones, of the shipping office, was promoted, and forthwith married Miss Jackson. That young woman's services had been important for the company; and Mr. Wilson, as a reward, offered the pair a bridal suite in the great *Nord Light* for their honeymoon voyage. This sort of thing was not uncommon for large firms, but the happy lovers were glad to take advantage of it. They sailed away and arrived in Havre, where they took train for Paris, to spend a week before returning. Jones was now chief shipping clerk in his own department, and could be spared but a month.

In the great French capital Mrs. Jones saw many people, and spent many happy hours watching the crowds on the boulevards. She was among strangers in a strange land, but she noticed a peculiar-looking man with a black beard riding in an automobile. The gentleman bowed, and as he stood up the pair saw that it was, indeed, the agent of Herr Best, the marine chemist. They set down his diffidence to meeting them to the unfortunate affair about

the paint. They smiled and watched him disappear in the crowd of vehicles. Then they took hands, and Jones squeezed his wife's a little.

"I'm so glad you put me wise to those fellows, love. But for you I might have fallen for their graft. After all, that fellow James is not so bad. He was not to blame—no, I am sure of it."

"Well, let's forget it now—we have each other, anyhow," said his wife. "A woman is generally right with her intuitions, and I was suspicious when I read of those reports about Herr Best being in two places at the same time. I hope you will always be guided by my love, dear. But let us get back to the hotel and dress for the opera."

They arrived shortly. Upon the bed lay an immense box.

"But I have bought nothing—what can it be?" said the girl.

Jones stripped off the coverings. Then he opened the box. Six immense plumes of varied hues lay before them. They were huge plumes, feathers from the best African birds.

Jones and his wife stood looking silently, not understanding. Then he lifted another layer of the paper, and six more gigantic feathers showed resting upon the bottom.

"Why, each one is worth fifty dollars at least. Who could have sent them?" cried the girl.

"Er—eh—well, I don't know—exactly—but you know that agent fellow promised me a lot of feathers as a wedding gift—er—well, he was not so bad, after all. He was not to blame for that paint thing—he was an honest man—and we did him an injustice. He was square, at least."

Mrs. Jones took up the feathers and held them, one after the other, in her hands. She had never had anything like these, never dreamed of buying such expensive things. Yet she was thinking rapidly.

"Shall we keep them? Would it be right?" she finally asked.

"Why not?" asked Jones, with perfect candor. He was thinking of the paint.

There was a long silence.

"Yes, I think we will keep them—why not?" said the lady.

SUPPORTED BY THE COURT

A YOUNG lawyer is the hero of this story. At least, he was young when the incident occurred. Now his name is so prominent in legal circles that it would be unkind to reveal it.

He was defending a criminal, and, in doing so, was making his first appearance in court.

"The unfortunate client for whom it is my privilege to appear," he said, his tongue and lips dry and thick; "the unfortunate client, your honor, whom I am defending—ahem! ahem!—I will repeat, your honor, the unfortunate man whom I here represent—I might say this most miserable and unfortunate man——"

Just then the judge leaned forward, and said, in a soft, encouraging manner:

"You may proceed, sir. So far, the court is with you."

THE BIGGEST BUSH LEAGUE ON EARTH

FATHER," asked the little boy, "what are sand-lot baseball players?"

"They resemble very closely the political bush leaguers."

"What are they?"

"A political bush leaguer is a fellow who does a lot of playing around, but never gets on the salary list."

Clerk of Company D

By Robert J. Pearsall

Author of "The Law of the Machine," "Comrades in Hate," Etc.

Some men are married to their jobs. Here is a tale of a soldier who was so taken up with his position as pay clerk that he worried over it every waking hour of the seven days a week and never took a walk or a swim and never played cards. His job was as precious to him as his life. There was a reason

FIRST SERGEANT LANGE, newly arrived from the States, whistled contentedly as he followed the clerk's voluble explanations of the company "paper work." He wasn't much of a pen pusher himself, as he sometimes boasted, and he realized the value of a good office man. But there was an anxious, half-worried note in the clerk's voice that puzzled him.

"All right, all right," he said at last, leading the way to the little room that opened off the office and served as their sleeping quarters. "We'll get along, I guess. You say your name's Mowrer?"

"Yes."

"How long have you been on this job?"

"Four years," with a strange note of pride.

Lange stopped filling his pipe, and sat up and stared at him. "Four years!" he exclaimed. "Is *that* all? What did you do—ship over on it?"

"Yes."

"Well, it must be a soft berth! Don't you think it's about time you were giving some one else a chance?"

An expression of outright fear swept across the wizened face of the little clerk. "There can't anybody do it any better'n I can," he asserted, with a sort of timid defiance. "Of course, if you've got somebody else, I can go to duty. But I've done it long enough, I ought to know——"

"Oh, sure," disclaimed the sergeant hastily. "I was only joking. I had a man, name Gallon, came out with me, but—— Only too glad to keep you. And about our transfer pay accounts, now, d'you think you can get 'em on this month's pay roll?"

The clerk hurried out of the room to get the necessary data. The first sergeant blew a cloud of smoke after him, and surveyed him through it wonderingly. "Well, I'll be jiggered!" he muttered. "I've heard of professional dog robbers before—— Married to his job, by thunder, married to it!"

From the beginning, Private Mowrer had been terribly misfitted to the service. He was slight of stature, retiring of disposition, timid of eye, his voice was a creak, his walk a shamble, and his ill-formed body had a peculiar list that threw his right shoulder two inches lower than its mate, and made him the butt of all cheap wit, and the despair of the drill sergeant.

He came to the Islands as a recruit, joining the company at Cavite. For a month he led a very unhappy life. It would have been hard for him to have said which hurt him worse, the badinage of his comrades in the squadroom or the impatient reprimands of his superiors on the parade ground. When, largely through accident, he was assigned to duty as assistant pay clerk, he seized the opportunity of escape

from these miseries with fawning eagerness.

The job took him out of barracks, and relieved him from drill and guard duty. Besides, there was a sort of dignity attached to it; he ate with the noncoms, he was sometimes addressed as "clerk," and it put him on terms of more than ordinary familiarity with the officers, so that they occasionally disguised a command with a "Will you?" and allowed him to address them without standing at attention. And now and then he himself was able to give an order, and to make up working and guard details composed of the men who had formerly ridiculed him.

His immediate superior was a corporal named Galt. Galt was a second hitch man, and somewhat indolent, and gradually allowed Mowrer to take over most of the routine work of the company. Mowrer, knowing that the company would shortly return to Olongapo, minus a third of its number, and that consequently one of the two would be relieved, was very glad to do it. He dreaded being turned back to duty. He knew that he now had real enemies among the men, and that the abuse and ridicule would be redoubled. He used to lie awake nights thinking of it, and planning a way to avoid it.

Galt drank; Mowrer did not. It may have been mistaken kindness that impelled Mowrer, along toward the latter part of the last month they were to spend in Cavite, to present Galt with two quarts of "squareface" gin. Galt had just started to work on the pay rolls, an onerous task. He mixed so much alcohol with his ink that the pay rolls were returned from the pay office in Manila with the recommendation that the man who had prepared them take a course in elementary arithmetic. Galt was relieved the same day, and Mowrer succeeded him.

So he became a full-fledged pay clerk. But his haunting fear of losing the job did not diminish; instead, it became an obsession. This was caused partly by a conscious unfitness for his work; he wrote slowly and laboriously, and was in the habit of adding on his fingers. Also, he possessed a chronic lack of self-confidence. He knew that there were others in the company better qualified than himself. As a consequence, he worked early and late, and was on the job seven days in the week. When he had nothing else to do, he would check over the muster-roll data, item by item, or pore over the credits and checkages on the pay accounts. When he found a mistake, it caused him agony. When a mistake escaped him, and was discovered afterward by others, he lived for days in a sense of shame and apprehension.

As the months passed and his body softened, his dread of straight duty increased. He realized that a hike would be impossible to him, and that he would have to learn his drill over again, like a recruit. Exposure to the sun, such as his comrades underwent every day, dizzied him, and a week on the rifle range sent him into a fever. He was taken to the sick bay, but lied most hardily to the doctor, so that he was able to escape after a day, and get back to the office before any one else supplanted him.

After two years, his term of foreign service came to an end. But to return to the States meant to return to guard duty. He put in a request to remain on the station, and, not because he liked the service, but because it was essential to the approval of his request, agreed to reënlist at the expiration of his time. When he was discharged, he was offered a furlough, but declined it. He took a day's leave in Subig, and then returned to his desk.

Since he had joined the company, its personnel had entirely changed. Company commanders and first sergeants had come and gone many times. Each of these changes brought a certain dread to Mowrer's heart, a fear that some court favorite, some "handshaker," as he phrased it, would win his place. Sooner or later it was bound to come. It is no exaggeration to say that he lived his every waking moment in the shadow of this fear.

For First Sergeant Lange, Mowrer early conceived an intense distrust.

Lange was a younger man than most first sergeants, quick of movement, rapid of speech, inclined to rough jokes and overmuch laughter, and lacking in dignity. For example, when, as happened the second day after his arrival, he woke from a siesta and caught a glimpse of Jocko, the company mascot, disappearing through the window with one of his slippers, he leaped from his bunk with a wild yell, and, clad only in his underclothing, pursued the offending monkey around the barracks, to the delight of the privates hanging over the upper railing. That sort of thing detracted from his own importance, and also from the importance of Mowrer. Also, it opened the way for intimacy between Lange and the privates, and that, since intimacy breeds friendship, was what Mowrer dreaded.

"Don't you ever get tired of this plugging, Mowrer?" asked Lange one day. "Why, it'd wear me out. Tell you what, you put in for five days' liberty and go to Manila. It'll do you good. I can get along without you, or, if I can't, I can get Gallon down to help me. What d'ye say?"

Mowrer started, and looked at Lange suspiciously.

"Oh, I don't know," he replied, shuffling. "I'd just as leave not. I'd rather be here. Things would get mixed up, and something might happen that——"

"You take yourself too serious," replied Lange half impatiently. "What d'ye think would happen if you croaked? Company D would rustle along same as ever, wouldn't it?"

"I suppose so," admitted Mowrer.

"Well, it'll have to, if you keep this up," declared Lange. "The way you've been mooning along here for the last month would kill any man, or drive him crazy. Why, you don't talk to any one, you never go for a walk, or a swim, or play cards, or—anything. You don't even drink! You just sit there and sweat over those confounded papers. Forget 'em, can't you? They ain't so all-fired important."

He might as well have asked Mowrer to forget his very life.

Mowrer had already been suspicious of Gallon, who was a handsome, happy-go-lucky youth of twenty or thereabouts. This conversation with Lange satisfied him that his suspicions were correct. Just as he had, in the old days, planned to supplant Galt, so he conceived the thought that Gallon was planning to supplant him. He fell to creeping up on Gallon stealthily, and to listening to his quips and jokes with the first sergeant. Also, he worked more unremittingly, pottering with his papers from reveille until taps, so that by no possible chance would he give Lange an excuse for removing him.

Still, in spite of his care, things happened; little, infinitely perplexing annoyances, unaccountable mistakes. Trial balances refused to balance, extra names appeared on the guard detail, special-duty men found their way to the available list. Such blunders had never occurred in his work before. He developed a habit of checking and rechecking interminably, until his brain whirled. Still, after the final scrutiny, when the papers were turned over to the first sergeant for the captain's signature, Lange would often discover an obvious error at a glance. It was maddening.

Still, in these cases, Mowrer had to admit that he himself was to blame. But there were other things that seemingly could be brought about only by some malificent outside agency. Papers became mysteriously disarranged and misplaced; twice Mowrer returned to the office to find the contents of the waste-paper basket littering the floor.

One day a guard detail disappeared altogether. He had left it on his desk while he went to get a drink of water. When he returned, it was gone. It was a small matter; it necessitated only a trip to the headquarters building to procure another. But the mystery of its disappearance set him rummaging everywhere. He could not find it.

As he was on the point of giving up the search, he heard Gallon's loud laugh ring in from the veranda just outside the bedroom window. The laugh would have angered him at any time. Now

it did more; to his morbid mind it identified Gallon as the mischief-maker.

He went into the bedroom and peeped cautiously through the window. Gallon was in a chair; Lange was perched on the railing facing him. The monkey had climbed the post against which Lange was leaning, and deftly tilted Lange's hat from his head to the ground below. Gallon roared and Lange chuckled, but Mowrer hated the two of them.

They talked baseball for a moment—both were members of the regimental team—while Mowrer listened. Then Gallon abruptly changed the subject.

"By the way," he said, "what is the matter with that owl-eyed clerk of yours? Every time he looks at me he gives me the shivers. And the other day, when he called out my name for mail, he near choked over it. Lord knows I ain't done anything to him."

"S-sh," said Lange. "He's all right; it's his infernal job. He's been on it too long. What he needs is straight duty, in the States. But——"

"Well, I ain't got anything to do with that," complained Gallon, but half in jest. "Why, he picks me out and watches me like a bum villain in a melodrama."

"Watches you!" exclaimed Lange. "Aw, come, you're seeing things. He never—— Well, by Jupiter!"

He had caught sight of Mowrer, who, his caution forgotten in his growing rage at the turn of the conversation, was staring venomously at Gallon's back.

Lange's astonishment was written on his face. Gallon whirled, but the face at the window had disappeared. He turned again to Lange.

"What was it?" he asked.

"Oh, nothing," said Lange. "I just thought of something. I got to go."

He walked around to the door of the office, but found Mowrer sitting at his desk, fumbling over his everlasting card index. Mowrer did not look up.

Lange regarded him for a minute, on the point of demanding an explanation, and then a strange sort of pity for the little, shriveled, faithful clerk dissuaded him, and he passed through into the quarters.

"Mad, mad as a hatter," he muttered to himself. "Now what's to be done?"

For a while, Mowrer, knowing that he had been observed at the window, dissembled cunningly. He appeared more cheerful, and even cracked an unaccustomed joke now and then. But all the time he was watching, watching, trying to catch Gallon at his work.

He did not succeed. But on the very day following the disappearance of the guard detail, he entered the office and found his muster-roll cards, which he had kept for the last four years with such infinite care, pulled from their box and scattered on the floor.

When he saw it, it took all his will power to keep from crying aloud. He stood for a moment with his hands clenched and his jaw set. When he finally bent over to gather up the cards, a little trickle of blood ran from his lower lip, where it had been caught and held between his teeth.

He was still searching—two of them he never found—when Lange entered. Lange watched him for a moment without speaking.

"Hello," he said at last. "What's up? Looks like a cyclone."

Mowrer hesitated, trembling on the verge of a mad outburst, for by this time he had convinced himself that Lange was also in the plot against him. But he controlled himself.

"Just an accident," he lied, trying to smile. "They slipped out of my hands. It's all right."

"Your hand must've been going at a powerful rate when they slipped, then," said Lange, looking at him curiously. "Here's one I picked up outside the door."

Mowrer took it and thanked him confusedly, and started to sort them.

"Say, Mowrer," said Lange abruptly, after a minute, "how'd you like to do some guards? Don't you think it'd do you good? You might come back after a while, if you wanted to."

Half a dozen of the cards dropped under the desk. Mowrer bent down be-

hind it, and groped for them. When he reappeared, his face was very white.

"Of course," he said shakily, "if my work ain't satisfactory——"

"Oh, piffle, it isn't that," said Lange irritably. "Your work's all right, although things *do* get mislaid. Of course, if you don't want to——" He gestured largely and strode to his own desk. Full-blooded and aggressive himself, it was hard for him to understand Mowrer's morbid shrinking from the life and the work of the squadron.

That afternoon, when he was sure he was alone, Mowrer stole into his bedroom and slipped five cartridges into the magazine of his rifle, and one into the chamber. Also, he took some twenty others, and wrapped them in paper to prevent rattling, and distributed them in various pockets. He did this without any definite plan or intention; it was only in obedience to a vague idea of being in readiness—— You see, in four years the Filipino sun had burned its way very deeply into his brain.

He grew into the habit of hiding in the little anteroom adjoining the office, and lying in wait. With his ears pressed close to the thin partition, he would listen, listen for an hour, maybe, for the sound of the intruder. He never caught him, although once, when, hearing Sergeant Lange stirring on his bunk, he emerged, he found that a transfer pay roll which he had prepared and laid on Lange's desk was lying, very much crumpled up, on the window ledge, so that a breeze would have carried it away.

Then the end of the month came, with its pay roll, and muster roll, and report of drills and instructions, and generally increased burden of work.

The preparation of the pay roll should by this time have been mere routine to Mowrer. Instead of that, it was nerve-racking. He was two days late getting it completed. That forced him to start in on the muster roll, that special detestation of all military clerks, with a brain that was already fagged and worn to the breaking point.

The making of a muster roll is work for a steady hand and a very steady brain. It comprises the military history of all men in the command, and it must be written with the utmost exactness. A single mistake, or scratch, or blot, or erasure condemns it. Even a misspelled word calls for a letter of criticism. It must be absolutely, inhumanly, maddeningly perfect.

Mowrer spoiled sheet after sheet. He was finally reprimanded by the sergeant major for wasting so many blanks. This worried and frightened him. He had but one idea left—to avoid criticism, to keep the rapid decline of his powers hidden from his superiors, and so to hold to his place.

He resolved to write the roll at night, after every one else had retired, and to write it so painstakingly that no mistake would be possible, considering and weighing every word before he put it down, *drawing* every letter——

No one who has not tried it knows what an ordeal that is. For three nights Mowrer drugged his brain with black coffee and occasionally rubbed flexibility into his cramped fingers. On the third morning he flung down his pen with a little triumphant cackle of laughter, knowing that he had finished, and that his work was beyond reproach. The muster roll lay before him, perfect, he knew—the only perfect thing in the world! He felt an immense pride, even love; he wanted to pick the sheets up and fondle them——

He arranged them on the desk, ready for the captain's signature, and secured them with a paper weight. Then he heard reveille sound at the guardhouse. He went into the bedroom, got his towel, and soap, and toothbrush, and thence to the washroom. When he returned, Sergeant Lange was rubbing his eyes and dressing.

"You've been up all night?" he asked Mowrer, with a disapproving glance at the undisturbed bunk.

"Yes."

"I hope you're done."

"Yes."

"Well, I'm mighty glad. It's about time to call a halt. You'd kill yourself. Now, see here, after office hours I want you to turn in there and sleep.

You've got to rest. If you touch pen to paper for the next two days, I'll put you on report for disobedience. I'll do the work. Understand?"

"Yes," said Mowrer. What did it matter? The muster roll was finished.

He went in and had breakfast, eating with an appetite that surprised him. He remembered vaguely that he had swallowed little but coffee for forty-eight hours. Then, while the rest of the company drilled, he sat down and prepared the morning report. He had a little trouble with the totals, but finally got them right. He sat for a moment wearily, thinking that he would be glad to rest.

He heard the men come trooping in from drill. Gallon's voice rose over the rest, as usual. He appeared to linger on the front steps, talking with Lange. It was something he wanted to know about squad movements.

"The bootlicker," snarled Mowrer. His suspicion and hate, forgotten during the stress of the last few days, revived. He rose and walked into the adjoining room, with a sudden resolution to watch over the precious muster roll until the company commander had signed it, and it was safely on its way to headquarters.

He turned toward the desk, and then stopped short with a gasping cry, for where the spotless muster roll had lain there lay now only a crumpled mass of blood-red paper.

He stared at it for one tortured moment, during which he sensed what had happened. The sheets had been crushed and torn aimlessly, and then flung down, and over them had been poured a quart bottle of red ink that had been standing unstoppered on the shelf above. He saw that they were irretrievably ruined. Then the dripping, crimson fluid that stained them seemed to spread and spread, until it covered the walls of the room, and the floor, and permeated the very air.

"They've done it," he half whispered. Then, "I'll get them, I'll get them, I'll get them," over and over again.

With two strides, he passed through the office to the bedroom. His rifle was slung beneath his bunk. He jerked it out with such violence that he struck the front sight on the iron frame of the bunk, and bent it nearly level with the barrel. He started out with it, hesitated, then jerked the shells out of it, threw it down, and picked up and loaded the first sergeant's rifle. The damaged sights would not affect the first shots, they would be at close range, but afterward there would be the jungle and the flight—— He would need a perfect gun.

He listened for an instant. Lange and Gallon were just outside the office. The rest of the men had gone upstairs, to their quarters, so that the two were alone and at his mercy. Only, if he used the door, he would emerge within two feet of them, too close to bring the rifle into play. His way led through the window.

He passed through the office again, and into the anteroom. The window was open. He climbed through it stealthily, but his rifle scraped on the window ledge. Lange and Gallon heard the sound and turned, to find themselves looking into the muzzle of his leveled rifle.

For one instant both were frozen stiff with fear. That was fortunate, for Mowrer's forefinger was already pressing the trigger, and had they turned to run he would have fired. As it was, he delayed, with a gloating intent. That delay gave Lange time to collect himself, and measure his chances. As for Gallon, he was gaspingly and tremblingly afraid; there lay no hope of help in him.

"If you move, I pump you full," said Mowrer very distinctly. "Stand still."

"And if we don't move, what then?" inquired Lange, contriving, with a great effort, to hold his voice to the tone of a flippant jest.

"I kill you anyway," said Mowrer. "But——"

"Sort of be-damned-if-you-do-and-be-damned-if-you-don't proposition, eh?" said Lange. He saw that Mowrer had something to say, and he reasoned that he would not shoot until he had said it.

"Never mind. I'll finish you, anyway, you and your plots, and that handshaking, bootlicking coward that's trying to hide behind you. No good, Gallon. I can put a bullet through six in a row at this range."

"Stand quiet, Gallon," whispered Lange. Then, aloud: "You're mistaken about the velocity, Mowrer."

"No, I ain't. It—— You're trying to make me forget myself," with sudden rage. "I'm going to tell you why I'm going to kill you, and then I'm going to kill you, and if you interrupt again I'll shoot you through the belly, and if you don't I'll shoot you through the head, and you can take your choice."

"Well, go on, then," drawled Lange. "I'd like to know."

"You know well enough, but I want it to soak in. Just because I ain't so agreeable as some, you want to get rid of me. And you'd play tricks on me, you and your friends, and spoil my work and ink my muster roll—my muster roll!" His voice rose insanely. "Red—red ink——"

"Behind you!" Lange suddenly roared, with a startled glance over Mowrer's shoulder.

It was a stale trick, but it was the only one at Lange's disposal. And, instantly, Lange knew that it had failed. Mowrer turned his head a fraction of a point, his eyes darting to the side, but his brain comprehended the ruse too soon to leave space for a rush. And Lange knew, with that instantaneous perception that comes to those who are about to die, that when the madman's gaze returned again to the front, he would shoot.

But a strange thing happened. Mowrer's eyes did not return. Instead, he stood for an instant rigid, staring in through the open window. Then, as Lange sprang for him, his whole body seemed to relax. The rifle dropped, clattering, to the floor of the veranda, while Mowrer leaned against the window ledge and pointed into the room, laughing crazily.

"It was the monkey," he cried, "the monkey——"

Lange, reaching him and throwing an arm about him, saw the thing that had saved his life—Jocko sitting on the desk and dabbling the muster-roll cards playfully in the red ink.

When Gallon came up, and, after the manner of the very young, was for calling the guard and rousing the garrison, Lange restrained him. "Easy, easy," he said. "Feel of this poor lad's bones. For whatever purpose, he's worn his body and mind out doing work for me and men like me, and why should I say the word that'll give him ten years? I'm thinking the sick bay and a transport back to the States, and a medical discharge, is the proper medicine for this man, and that, if the powers that be'll let me, I'm going to see he gets."

So Mowrer came back to his own land.

ICED WATER ON THE DIAMOND

AN overfondness for the water wagon has been responsible for many a lost baseball game. Ice water is forbidden to athletes training for the ring, for the track, or for football. Why is it provided for baseball players? is a question the trainers often have put up to the managers and club owners, seemingly without effect.

It is recognized that ball players cannot follow the methods of other athletes. They are not training a comparatively short time for one supreme contest, but for a six months' campaign, and if they should get into the best condition they could not maintain it, but would "go stale." So they are allowed many liberties that are denied to other athletes in training. Some of them regard this as a license to violate the laws of health—to the great disadvantage of both themselves and their clubs.

The Surgeon

By Robert V. Carr

Author of "Bill Smith, G. A.," "Bucking the Hoodoo," Etc.

As told by the live-stock commission man. A forceful story of the West with this lesson: "You may think you can beat the game of life with marked cards, but it is only because Fate isn't ready to land on you. Fate takes her own time about squaring things up, but when she does, it is *good night!*"

I'VE always held that no matter how low-down a man is, there's a white spot in him if you know how to locate it. Most of us hate to put in our time lookin' for white spots, as it's a heap easier to see the bad in a man than the good. But comin' right down to cases, lookin' for the good in folks is about all that's worth while.

Yet there's men that you're just forced to admit hain't no good. Get off and look at them from the north, south, east, and west, and there hain't a sign of common decency. They would rob their poor old blind grandmothers, double cross their best friends, and even be crooked with themselves. Such a man was Grif Blunt, a cowman who got his start by bein' handy with a brandin' iron when mavericks were plentiful, and by a hundred dirty tricks coverin' some thirty years in that country.

Up to a certain night I never locked horns with Grif Blunt. From the first time I saw him, and I'm free to admit it, I would have loved to have dropped him in his tracks. But business is business, and Grif shipped three trains of good steers a season. I was rustlin' live-stock shipments for a certain white little commission man by the name of Billy Dayton, and was long on policy. Grif never threw me no business, but there was no tellin' when he would; so, up to a certain point, I spread the soothin' sirup in his vicinity, and let it go at that. But my heart was bad toward him, and I was always hopin' some public-spirited citizen, as the feller says, would bounce a bullet off'm Grif and put him where his big beller would be heard no more.

Grif was as big as a skinned mule, and just about as pretty. He was a bunchy-faced devil, with an under lip that stuck out heavy and thick, and a pair of little pig eyes. He was smooth-shaven, but his hair was like gray hog bristles.

He was cruel to his hosses, and it was said that he killed his wife with his cussed brutality. His only son—a boy comin' eighteen—tried to kill him, and, failin', skipped the country.

Grif loved to see some livin' thing in pain. He loved to torture something that had life in it. But he had the money, and had run his bluff on the whole country, and so they left him be.

Grif wouldn't beat a man up in the ordinary style. He would kick him and jump on him after the poor devil was down. No man who got a beatin' from Grif Blunt was ever much good afterward. And it seemed that he always come out winner. There didn't seem to be a man in the country nervy enough to tackle him. Plenty there were who hated him, but somehow they didn't want to tackle him.

Along with his body, which was like a gorilla's, Grif had cunnin'; he was as tricky and shifty as a fox. What he couldn't get by bulldozin' and brutality, he got by shady means; and he'd managed to accumulate property that would run close to half a million.

Grif was mean to every one that he

had any dealin's with, but the man who had suffered most at his hands was the finest, gentlest, most decent man on that range; he was the doctor, and his name was Tayler—"Doc" Tayler.

Doc Tayler and Grif Blunt both come to the Western country at the same time. Seems they were raised in the same town back in Missouri. And, in one way and another, I learns that Grif had always run over Doc. As kids, they were not evenly matched. Doc was always a little shaver, and Grif always a big hulk. And, in them kid days, it was Grif's habit to run over Doc and beat him up about every so often.

Everybody loved Doc Tayler, but he was not what you'd call a business man. 'Bout every deal he went into, he got the worst of it. He was one of them kind of men who was so honest and decent himself that he thought everybody else was. Naturally, he got trimmed by those poor fools who imagine that they can turn a shady trick and not have to pay for it. Believe me, where there's a hump there's a holler; and no man does something crooked but what some time he will have to suffer for it. It may be in this life or the next, but finally he will have to pay the bill. You can't show me where you can start anything, but what some time it will be finished, and you will have to be present at the finishin'. You might think you could beat the game of life with marked cards, but it is only because Fate hain't ready to land on you. Fate takes her time about squarin' things up, but when she does land, it's good night. You can call it Fate, or call it Justice, or call it anything you've a mind to, but try to work the double cross and it will get your goat sooner or later.

Of course, I liked Doc Tayler, and used to hang out in his office. Of evenin's, when I was in his town, I used to drop into his office and generally bring along a box of extra good cigars and a bottle of ripe budge.

For looks Doc was a little, thin man, with a short beard, and his hair turnin' gray around the edges. He wore glasses, had a quiet, gentle way about him, and leaned a little forward as he walked. He was a bachelor. I often wondered why, until I hears his story, and then I didn't wonder no more.

On them nights that I would visit with Doc, he'd just lead me on to talk about my little helpmate, Leona. Seems he liked to hear about folks lovin' one another, and, bein' that I loved and trusted him, I was free to talk about my home and Mrs. Johnny Reeves to him.

In his proper-speakin' way, Doc would start the ball rollin' by sayin': "I presume that you are more than anxious to return to Chicago. It must be a wonderful joy to be blessed with a wife possessing the beauty and lovable attributes so markedly distinguishing Mrs. Reeves."

I remember his words, for I learned them by heart so I could repeat them for Leona. And one time Leona came out with me. I had been tellin' her about Doc Tayler for years, and all the sweet things he had said about her. And, I be dogged, when she meets him, she don't just shake hands with the little old feller, but, bein' a real woman, she kisses him. Guess it was the first time he'd been kissed in years, for he couldn't speak for quite a spell.

And always after that, when I would be talkin' about Leona, he set there in his chair, his chin on his chest, a-dreamin' some fine, sweet, sorrowful dream. At such times his face was even more gentle than usual, and the lines about his eyes deeper and more sad.

So, one night in his little office, smelly with medicine, and with the skull of some gobbler whose troubles were all over, but who once loved and hated like the rest of us, on his desk, he tells me his story.

He names no names and shows no hate. But it was a bad, bad story that made me long to get my gun out of my grip and hunt up Grif Blunt and slip about six loads into his carcass, and leave him kickin'.

When Doc first come to the camp as a young medico, he loved a girl. But as soon as Grif Blunt saw that Doc was about to corral some happiness, he concluded to break in. He couldn't get the

girl fair, and so he got her with lies. She married Grif, and he abused her like a dog, and she finally died. But before she passed, she told Doc that she was sorry—for, after all, he was the man she loved.

Then Doc accumulated a little money and put it in the town bank. Grif, now grabbin' land, cattle, and everything else he could get his hands on, concluded to trim the little bank. He had a lot of worthless land on his hands, and he loaded the bank down with the stuff. When the crash came, Grif had the real money and the bank a lot of mortgages. It was an old game, and frequently worked in the West. Of course, Doc's money went with the rest; and he knew that Grif Blunt had got it.

After a spell Doc gets a little more money and concludes to go into the cattle business on the side. But he only lasted one season, for Grif run his cattle off the range, hired gun fighters to scare his help, and in the end put him out of business. But Doc didn't do nothin'; just kept workin' along, speakin' a kind word here and there, and doctorin' folks whether they had the money or not.

Most likely Grif hated Doc Tayler because Doc was decent. I can't account for it no other way. It seems that Grif was tryin' to prove that bein' decent doesn't pay, for durin' them long years he kept at Doc Tayler without a sign of remorse or let-up. The little Doc never fought back, and never resorted to the law. He simply never spoke anything but good of Grif, and avoided him as much as possible. But about every so often Grif would get drunk, and, just so sure as he got drunk, he would hunt up little, gentle Doc Tayler, and torture and abuse him.

It was one of those nights when I was visitin' Doc in his little office, that Grif came in, roarin' drunk.

As a side issue let me say that I had brought my small grip to Doc's office. I had some cigars I wanted him to try out, and a bottle of extra fine brandy to sample. Along with the cigars and brandy was my papers and advertisin' stuff, and my six-shooter. I had just set the grip on the table and taken out the cigars and brandy, when in busts Grif.

"Good evenin', Grif," says Doc, mild and gentle.

Grif snarls something I don't catch. Then he sees the brandy, and with about as much manners as a hog, pulls the cork and takes a big swig. His system is to take whatever he can take.

I can feel something comin' up inside of me, and I know that I am about to get killin' mad. But I don't say nothin'; just pull the grip toward me a little.

Grif don't notice me. He slams down the bottle of brandy, and looks at Doc with his little pig eyes. The little man looks up at him, gentle and without hatred nor regard—just looks at him. Still, come to think of it, there was pity in Doc's look—pity for the man who was abusin' him.

Grif spreads his feet wide to brace himself, and says in a rough, sneerin' voice: "You're a fine little whiffet to call yourself a man. I can take six like you and eat 'em 'thout salt—eat 'em raw. Don't you know I was always better than you—always will be better than you? Don't you know I get what I want—always get what I want—money—anything? Recollect I took her——"

At that Doc comes up out of his chair, white and shakin' like a man with a chill.

"Set down, you little scrub!" bawls Grif; knocks Doc back in his chair; the chair topples over, and my friend lays on the floor for a spell.

By that time I have filled my hand with a little speaker that everybody is bound to listen to—Colonel Forty-five, esquire.

Doc is gettin' to his feet. Grif starts to knock him down again, when the big brute happens to feel something pressed against his side; that *something* is my gun.

Says I to Grif Blunt: "Make another move, and I'll blow you in two. Stand right still, and keep your hands up."

I didn't tell him to put his hands up, but he wasn't so drunk but what he knew what to do. Still Grif Blunt

wasn't scared; he wasn't afraid of a gun. He don't make any breaks, but I can see that he is not afraid of a gun.

He turns his bullet head, and sucks in his under lip. Says he: "You want to get in on my game, too." He grins wicked.

"Don't talk and don't grin," I comes back. "I'm just prayin' for you to make a move as an excuse to kill you. But I'll warn you fair. Back for the door and back quick."

All the time my finger is just kissin' and kissin' the trigger.

Grif backed. He was bad, but he knew that I meant what I said, for in my voice was the killin' tremble. He reached back, opened the door, and sidled out. But before the night swallowed him, he snarls back: "I'll get you both."

"Talk's cheap, old dog," I snaps; and he drifts.

I then pour out a couple of slugs of first aid to the injured, and Doc and me down them. After takin' his toddy the little man drops down on his sofy.

Finally he says: "Her husband." His voice was mournful.

He did not seem to want to talk, and I begin to get restless. At last I told him I guessed I'd beat it for the hotel.

"Very well, Johnny," he says, in his kind voice. "I shall not retire for some time."

He got up, and, although a little shaky, follows me to the door of his office.

"See you to-morrow, Doc," I says. "So long."

For some reason he don't say nothin'; just shakes my hand.

As I get into the night, I recalls Grif's partin' words, and keeps my gun handy.

It's gettin' along toward ten o'clock, and the little cow town is up on its hind legs and pawin' the air. Three or four outfits are in town, and spendin' their hard-earned dough. I can hear the click of the roulette wheel, and the yelp of some cow-puncher who is deceivin' himself that he can beat it.

While I'm not strong for night life, I conclude to drift around a spell—sort of look in here and there, and see what's doin'. I did not feel like hittin' the hay right away, and thought to kill a couple of hours by watchin' the chumps who thought they were havin' a good time.

The trail of sin is really not interestin' to an old-timer on the road. He sees so much that he knows the finish of every fool that travels it. There's nothin' in it. Still, when there's nothin' else to do, a man can stand around and watch the animals perform. The red-light world is a make-believe world, and there's no one in it who's really happy. After a look at it, I always liked to crawl into a clean bed with a good book to read. And that's the conclusions of an old cow-puncher who knows.

I drift from saloon to saloon, and gettin' more weary of it all the time. I'm thinkin' every minute to strike out for my room, write a letter to Leona, read a little, and go to sleep. Of course, I'm still mad about Grif Blunt, but somehow thoughts of Leona sort of take the mad out of me. When a man's thinkin' about his home, he just can't stay sore at anything.

It is close to midnight when I notice a bunch of men draggin' something out of a saloon. I'm idle and curious, and so I go up the street to see what they're luggin'. When I gets up to the crowd, I sees that it's Grif Blunt they're a-carryin', and that he's groanin' like he's 'bout to die.

I follow along a little ways, and one of the bunch puts me wise.

Says he: "Grif's been tearin' round all night. Tied into a big Swede down from the hills, and went to rough-house him. Swede was pretty stout, and give Grif a terrible run for his money. Grif goes at him for all he's worth, heaves him up in the air, and slams him on the floor. But just then Grif falls back against the bar, and grabs himself, his eyes fairly poppin' out of his head. Best we can make out is that he's busted something inside of him. The Swede's O. K., but Grif's suff'rin' terrible."

"Where they takin' him?" I asks.

"Doc Tayler's, of course; no other place in the country to take him."

I didn't say nothin' more. I concludes to trail the bunch and see what Doc does with Grif. I was sort of wishin' I was in Doc's place. I don't know as there's any Injun blood in the Reeves family, but I could walk along and listen to Grif howl, and enjoy it just like it was music. Grif never done nothin' to me, but I was Doc Tayler's friend, and when I take sides, I join for the war.

On we go to Doc Tayler's office, with Grif groanin' like he was bein' tortured to the limit. They drag the big lunk into the office, and little Doc jumps up from where he'd been dozin' in his chair. The mark of Grif's hand is still on his face.

They lay the groanin' Grif down on the sofy, and stand back and look at the doctor sort of funny.

Just about then Doc Tayler becomes the doctor—the man who knows his business.

Says he to me, brisk and like he'd never met me: "Light that lamp, please."

I does as he tells me, and stands at his side with the lamp, while he looks down at Grif. The big brute will not look up at him, but keeps pressin' his hands on his stomach and lettin' go of them deep, deep groans.

"Give me something—something to stop pain!" Grif finally gasps.

Doc don't say nothin'. All of sudden Grif gets crazy with fear. He raises up and blubbers and gasps: "You hain't a-goin' to let me die—you won't let me die—this way——"

He falls back and flounders.

Still Doc don't say nothin'. Then the hog on the sofy gathers himself for another try. He says: "Do something—for the girl's sake."

The cheap coward was appealin' to Doc by ringin' in the daughter of the woman the little man had loved and lost. I knew Grif's daughter by sight, and she was like her mother.

I get tired holdin' the lamp. Also, I get tired of Grif's groanin' and blubberin'. "Let the big stiff die," I mumbles to Doc. "If 'twas me, I wouldn't turn a wheel."

The doctor still looks down at the man who has treated him worse than a dog for a lifetime. All the time Grif is bleatin' and beggin' for Doc to do something for him. I can see that the little man is goin' through hell barefooted.

Hardly knowin' what I'm sayin', I let go of a mean whisper: "Let the dog die, Doc; he's no right to live."

Doc turns and looks at me as he would at a child, and I felt sort of ashamed. Then he turns to the men standin' back near the door, and asks them to carry Grif into the little hospital he has back of his office. They lay Grif on a high table, and, with Doc's orders, a couple fix him for examination. Doc then gives him some dope—something to dull his pain.

I'll never forget the sight of the little gray, wizened doctor examinin' that big brute in mortal agony in the beginnin', but gradually calmin' down under the dope. It come to me that a real doctor is about the finest thing on earth. Of course, there are a lot of them who are cold-blooded robbers and grafters, but it is not the fault of their profession, which is the best on earth.

To Doc Tayler the man on the table was not his enemy who had dogged him for years; he was a human bein' in pain and near death—a patient to be cared for.

After Doc finishes his examination, he turns to me, and says: "Old weakness. Recall that he was troubled slightly with"—he gave it some medical name—"as a boy. His unusual exertion to-night has made an operation imperative. I might delay it until to-morrow, but I am fearful of"—another medical name—"and, I believe, we will operate shortly. Unless the operation is performed he has less than sixty hours to live."

"Little I care," I said.

But Doc didn't seem to feel like I did. He gave me a little more information, though. He decided to try and straighten Grif out with medicine first. But he shakes his head as he says it; the knife is the only thing.

By and by the crowd drifts out. Doc

sends for a woman that helps him as a nurse, and the young feller who is runnin' the little drug store Doc owns. Then begins the real work with medicine and hot towels. It don't do much good.

It is bright, blarin' day when Grif comes out from the dope Doc has fed him, and the pain grabs him right.

"I will be compelled to operate," Doc tells the man, who is suff'rin' the tortures of the damned.

And then we all discovers Grif Blunt's little pet fear, and the same is *cold steel.*

"No—no—no!" he fairly screams. "Not the knife—not the knife!"

Hain't it a caution how 'most every man has his little fear? That there Grif had lived in his body all his life, and loved his big carcass. While he was willin' to risk it in a knock-down and drag-out, the thought of a keen knife slippin' through his hide chilled his rotten heart. Though tired and dead on my feet, I has to smile. Old bully Grif was sure gettin' his.

Well, we gets to it finally. After gettin' the big wolloper on the operatin' table, and everybody posted as to what to do, I, as the range foreman and dope feeder, shoot the hop into Grif per Doc's directions. The big dub don't take it to suit, don't snuff it up as he ought, and I slam his head back and feed it to him like learnin' a calf to drink. Pretty soon he's quiet.

There's a number of men, come in to see the carvin', standin' back out of the way. Many of them are hard men who have roughed it and seen blood spilled more than once. But when Doc starts to operate, most of them leave.

I'm busy at Grif's head, but I see what he does. I feel a little sick, but hold my nerve fairly well.

Quick, sure, and certain the little surgeon cuts a half moon in Grif Blunt, works back what I took to be muscles, and then gets busy with the interior fixin's. I'm runnin' the sleep-juice end of the deal, and takin' out my spite on the crookedest man in that country.

Still, I has to admit that Grif, as he lies there, is a grand figure of a man—the great chest, and wide, massive front of him.

Like a man in a dream I watch the sickenin' work. Doc Tayler is another man. He makes no false motions, no mistakes; he knows what he is doin', and how to do it. And upon his sure fingers hangs the life of the man who had done him all the dirt he possibly could.

It was a hard job for one surgeon, with only a lot of greenhorns to help. But at last it was finished, and me and the drug clerk lugs Grif into a little adjoinin' room and drop him on a bed same as we would a quarter of beef. I throwed a blanket over him, and hit the trail for the brandy bottle.

On that night the meanness and what body courage he had left Grif Blunt forever. He became a great, big, cowardly, soft-spoken gobbler, who, if you took out a pocketknife, would turn pale. And he acted toward Doc Tayler the same as a big, harmless dog. But the Doc would have nothin' to do with him, and, so far as I know, never spoke to him after that night of the operation. Grif tried every way to get Doc to notice him, but there was nothin' doin'. So far as Doc Tayler was concerned, Grif Blunt was dead.

Last of all, when he got on his feet, Grif come to me and said: "Johnny, you helped Doc Tayler that night, and I am goin' to ship my cattle to your firm from now on."

But I'm not of a nature that forgets. All the men who have done me dirt I have down in my little book, and never again as long as I draw breath do I want anything to do with them. I don't want revenge; I just want them to keep off my trail. So I am compelled to say to Grif Blunt: "You can ship your cattle to my outfit or ship 'em to Gehenna, but, you great big cowardly trimmer, don't you ever speak to me again as long as you live."

Then I turns and leaves him, his thick under lip hangin' down, his clothes saggin' on him. I just hain't no use for a big bluff who has to be half killed to be decent.

Genius Inc.

By Edward Goodman

"If I only had time——" You've heard the phrase many times. Judging from the frequency with which we hear it, we should say that there would be giants on the earth in these days if only the pigmies that we are had more time to devote to our avocations rather than our vocations. Here is an instance of a genius in embryo, who because of the necessity for earning his bread and butter had no time to give to developing his genius. Then the syndicate took him up. It was a new gamble for the financiers—and you will hear how it paid, and whom it paid

I AM a playwright. I have been one all my life, even in those early days when "The Peak of the World" was merely a cloudy hope, chafing and fretting at the back of my brain. What is more, I always knew my own powers. I realized that all I needed was time to write plays not only worthily, but with commercial success. At that hungry period of my life, however, time was hard to find. My days and hours were all invested in hack work that brought me in—rather unsteadily—buckwheat cakes, sale suits, and a cracked, dingily decorated roof to look at when I lay abed mornings, fighting with despair. I ground them out daily—the sentimental stories, stupid articles about the high cost of living, silly reviews of sillier books, and interviews with those of my friends that I could persuade the editors were great or near great. I knew these did not make for me one-tenth of what my play could earn, but the play would take months to finish, and there was the meanwhile, during which I was growing older and getting no nearer to "The Peak of the World."

Then there was Marjorie. I suppose really if it had not been for her I might have run along dreaming. But when two straight-seeing blue eyes burn their way inside you until they start the engine chugging there you can't doze on. You've got to be up and—at least worrying.

Yet it wasn't Marjorie so much that worried me. It was old man Dawson, her father. The loose fat on his full face could ease into the most jovial smile; but I found out, when I found Marjorie, that there was muscle behind that fat, and it could tighten his jaws and set hard lines about his steely Irish eyes. It was a pity, for Dawson had money, and if I had married Marjorie then neither she nor I would have objected to my borrowing some of what would be her share until I could turn out "The Peak of the World" and make enough by it to pay back and run smoothly besides. Dawson, however, had made his money hard, and he wasn't interested in literature. He stipulated that I should be able to earn at least three thousand a year before we got a cent from him.

Of course, Marjorie could have come to struggle with me without money; but, beside the fact that she loved her father dearly, she had a good deal of his sound common sense. She could see that this would be a bit of sentimental folly that not only would do me no good, but might hinder me."

"I would be forcing dad to give all our money to charity," she would explain whimsically, "and he'd be terribly unhappy, poor old dear, trying to decide which asylum would give him the worth of his money in gratitude. I couldn't have the heart to be responsible for that as well."

This is how things stood with us when John Rolleson blew in.

John and I had chummed through college together. Since those days, however, we had grown some millions apart. Some of the millions were inherited, but most of them were earned. John was a little man whom you might have taken for a particularly mild curate when his face was in repose; it had all the necessary whiteness and unoffending quiet and sad weariness. His hair was thin, thinner even than he was, and thin hair does add to an expression of humility. But when the sparks got sparkling behind the eyes it was easy to understand the earned increment—and why he came to look me up for auld lang syne. He was a poet in his way.

He found me pegging away at "That Mystery Called Jane's Heart."

"If you're busy," he said, "I'll come in another time."

"No," I answered hastily, "I don't want to lose you again. Besides, the only interesting thing about this junk is how the readers stand for it."

"Then why do you write it?" he asked.

I told him.

It is remarkable how spilling the heart warms the breast. I had not seen John in five years; yet after five minutes he had sunk into crooked comfort in my room's one easy-chair—a mission morris I had saved from college—and was smoking one of my old class pipes that was as sweet as the old chemistry prof, and smelled like the old chemistry lab. We were as close to each other again as though we were cutting a math lecture together. Even while I was complaining of the hack work I couldn't help imagining it was written for Crusty Williams. Lord, how old Crusty would have mangled "Jane"! To write literature is necessary—in college.

Then John asked me the old question: Why didn't I go into business?

"Don't! Don't, please!" I pleaded. "Maybe imagination is a curse, but I've got it, and I've got to develop it."

"Thanks," he said, with that peculiar snap of the jaws that used to frighten me when I first knew him, and might have now but for the reassuring smile that followed. "Where do you think I'd have landed without imagination? If you had seen that Staten Island swamp before I coined it into homesteads by dumping my good cash in it you'd faintly scent the meaning of the word. When Bill Ketchem came to me with his idea for manufacturing a cloth out of shavings and glucose everybody else laughed at the machinery, and wanted to know what could be done with the stuff when it *was* made. Wasn't it simply because I used imagination to see the effects before they were that *I* didn't laugh, but put up the coin? And now look! Why, your own window curtains"—he rose to finger them lovingly—"are made of my Sawsilk. Isn't it beautiful, with the colors the sun puts into it? It's different because it's transparent, and because you can clean it with a damp rag. And because it was different it was a success."

"Yes," I said vaguely.

"Hundreds are using it for tablecloths, and saving wash bills. And we're experimenting now with a slightly different compound for carpets. I know women who have made charming coats of it, far prettier than rubber, and just as waterproof. Do you suppose"—his enthusiasm was marching him nervously up and down the room now in jerky strides, with Oriental gestures, a marionette with the breath of the heavens in it—"do you suppose all the pleasure is in the money it brings? Why, it's in the conception and the working out—just as with you when you plan and write things. And what is that if it isn't imagination?"

He stopped for air, and I took advantage of the minute:

"But where would you have been if you hadn't had money to begin with?"

He regarded me for a moment in silence, and then shook his head.

"You've got me there," he admitted frankly.

"And me, too," said I gloomily.

He sank thoughtfully across its arm

into the chair, and sat puffing at his pipe, his legs dangling.

"Tell me about this play of yours—'The Top of the World,' or whatever you call it," he commanded suddenly.

I did—and the glow in his eyes led me into every writer's extravagance. I ended by reading to him the half-formed, incoherent, detached bits of the play that I had managed to set down on paper up to date. For two minutes after I had finished my last apology for its crudeness he smoked in deathly silence. He was standing up now in the middle of the room, his feet planted firmly some distance apart. He told me later that he always did that when in danger of allowing his imagination to carry him too high.

Finally his words drifted out from that narrow opening between his teeth which the holding of the pipe stem made necessary.

"Of course—you need—time—and money—to create that," he said.

"Of course," I answered, in a low voice, hopeful and anxious without knowing precisely why.

"It's just like any other idea—it needs backing—greenbacking," he continued.

I had said enough on that subject, so I remained silent.

His next words startled me:

"How much?"

"What?" I asked blankly.

"How much? How much? How much money would you need to give up hack writing and devote yourself to this?"

My first thought was of Marjorie and her father's stipulation. I hesitated, wondering where all this was leading. Then I decided to speak out boldly.

"Three thousand a year," I said.

"At five per cent—only sixty thousand," he figured more to himself than to me.

"Yes, only sixty thousand," I mocked bitterly. "Two stories at thirty thousand would bring it to me. Only—thirty dollars is nearer to what I get."

"Suppose I provided it?"

He had been a good friend of mine, and I had theories about borrowing and paying back, but hereditary pride and prejudice conquered at the moment. I stiffened.

"Charity!" I said; but he interrupted.

"I know nothing about charity, but I think I know something about business. You'll be incorporated for the necessary sixty thousand."

"You're joking!" I said uncertainly, trying to see through the gravity of his still, pale face.

"Lots of others have said that." Suddenly he smiled grimly. "But not the man behind the idea—as a rule."

"It's—it's so—unusual," I explained. "But of course—if you care to risk it." I grew more courageous. "All I want is three years. If at the end of that time I can't do anything I'll acknowledge I'm hopeless, and you can withdraw your capital."

"That's the idea!" he said. "Only I shan't be the sole investor. I haven't enough money free. I'll have to let a couple of friends in on this."

And he did. Brenner came in at once, but I never could quite make out how he got around timid little Beeman. There is no fire so sure as enthusiasm; his enthusiasm must have sizzled when he put the proposition up to Beeman.

At last the papers were formally drawn up, and I—Robert Hallett—became the endowed machinery of the Hallett Literature Company, Inc.

For a while visions of a home with Marjorie and a theater with the S. R. O. sign at its door blinded me. Joy is the greatest motive power in the world, but if applied suddenly, full force, it is liable to stall the engine.

My first rational act was to rush off to tell Marjorie. I found her in her own little "book room," as she called it, to distinguish it from her father's gloomy and indigestible-looking library. She was seated in a low armchair near the window, sewing on some delicate-colored stuff, and her soft hair took on an added gold from the sun's rays that smiled on it. A feeling of great, quiet joy thrilled me—that at last I was to have this woman for comrade.

"Bob!" she exclaimed, jumping up

to greet me, and reading good news in my face. "I'm so glad! What is it?"

I told her. It was five minutes of life's real fun such as justifies all the waiting.

Shortly after her father came in, and we told him. At first he beamed, then the muscle gradually crept in to control the fat.

"Sounds fine," he said slowly. "But suppose at the end of the three years there's nothing doing, and you're back where you were again?"

That thought didn't disturb me; it was so impossible. I knew I could make good with "The Peak of the World" at least; and then, with the infinite, untroubled leisure I saw for myself the attaining of innumerable Peaks of the World——

But Dawson's muscle was firm.

"You waited this long," he said; "wait a bit longer, till I'm as sure about it as you are."

We argued it out till the sun had completely disappeared from the little room. But muscle is muscle, and the upshot was that we were fated to look forward to three years more of delay. It was my first blow, and not so deadly after we had come to face it. We were young, the years would be filled with glorious work, and success might so easily come sooner.

Oh, the glory of sitting down to write what I wanted to, how I wanted to, without hurry, and without fear! The joy of not having to go around and "talk up" my work like a drummer! No more computation of the incomes of famous songbirds, no more working to produce a happy ending for people I did not care a fig about, no more providing pet animals and hobbies for noted citizens who had neither. Calm, careful, clear creation. I must have felt the joy of the first shoemaker.

The Hallett Literature Company thrived, thanks to the magazines and the Sunday papers—or perhaps I should say thanks to Rolleson's appreciation of the value of advertisement. It wasn't all just writing for me, for there were interviews. These were the specks in the sun. At first I didn't want to go in for them at all, but John prevailed on me, and an hour a day was not much to devote to the business end. My own experience in writing interviews came in handy now. That the chats with me made interesting reading was not due entirely either to facts or to the literary ability of the reporter on the job. The hobbies I created for myself made those I had donated to others look like mice in a menagerie. Alas for my becoming modesty and reserve! I came to enjoy it.

Marjorie and I would laugh over the garish headlines together:

GENIUS, INC.
THE FAIRY TALE OF THE WRITER WHO REVOLTED AND THE CAPITALIST WITH NERVE.

HOW TO BE ENDOWED:
AUTHOR HALLETT TELLS HOW HE FOUND A MODERN MÆCENAS.

It was not long, after notoriety of this sort, before editors came to me for stories.

"He's not out to make money just now," was John's invariable reply, while I trembled over the offers they were making. "Nothing must be permitted to interrupt his labors on his play."

This statement, neatly compiled for publication, had its own effect. In a few months I was contracted for the first story I should write, with options on what followed, at a thousand dollars each.

Things had gone much faster than we had reckoned. In a little less than a year "The Peak of the World" was ready for production.

Before this, however, Marjorie had come to visit my den, and had met John. I'm not likely to forget that meeting and the hunger that leaped into his eyes. I think Marjorie saw it, too, and the strange, hard look of his lean jaw. But while I only felt a momentary pity, and dismissed it from my mind, Marjorie's instinct awoke in her an active distrust.

"Of course I'm ever so grateful to him for what he has done for you,"

she declared to me afterward; "but I don't like him. I do *not!*"

I tried in vain to convince her of his worth. In spite of the fact that he called on her often thereafter, though she had not asked him, and was out as often as she dared to be, I continued to notice nothing wrong. I suppose it was my preoccupation with rehearsals.

Meantime, I noticed that timid Beeman was losing what little nerve he possessed.

"This holding off may be all very well," he had demurred often enough; "but why not take five hundred for a little story now? Results are results, anyway, and a bird in the hand——"

"Often dies in the clutch," I tried to reassure him with epigrams.

Even the story contract failed to hearten him. It was only after rehearsals had begun that his courage returned—or, rather, that some of mine and John's soaked into him.

And then, just a week before the opening of "The Peak of the World," came his amazing apology:

"I—I—hope you won't mind. Of course I believe in you—and all that. But productions *are* risky, and I'm not really well off, you know. I've got to be careful. So—when Rolleson offered—I—I thought—— It's just as well to be careful."

"What do you mean?" I asked impatiently.

"I—I've sold my shares to Rolleson."

For the first time, a glimmer of suspicion darkened my mind, and made me uncomfortable.

I was actually sick when I heard about Brenner. He didn't tell me. I never saw him after that, and never found out what John had said to him. I only heard that he, too, had been bought out three days before the première.

JOHN ROLLESON TO REACH THE PEAK OF THE WORLD ON MONDAY ALONE.

CHIEF SHAREHOLDER IN HALLETT LITERATURE COMPANY BECOMES SOLE STOCKHOLDER.

This was the general tone of the headlines now. The advance notices of the play were filled with the incident. Marjorie seemed nervous and constrained when I talked about it.

Well, "The Peak of the World" made good. It is added to that list of magic words like those with which Aladdin opened the treasure cave. The intelligent beheld the good behind the glitter, and came again and again. The others followed the fad. It was the topic of conversation among débutantes for a whole season. Business men talked about literature and advertising and me. I had been suddenly shot into fame, and Rolleson was harvesting his luck.

Apart from the printing rights, my play was grinding out a fortune. It drew two-thousand-dollar houses regularly. Eight performances a week, and ten per cent royalty—advertising and Rolleson had fixed that—brought the Hallett profits in six weeks to nine thousand six hundred dollars. Add to that the three thousand for my first three stories produced then, and behold—John, a year after his investment in me, had reaped twenty-one per cent. How Brenner and Beeman felt I can only guess.

About this time I had taken to reading Zola. Man's mind needs relaxation, and just as the professional humorist reads tragedy for refreshment, so I, whose life had become a fairy tale, turned to sordid realism for relief. "Pots Bouilles" had me bound fast that historic Sunday afternoon when John Rolleson broke in on me. I put Zola aside.

There were pipes, and there was good sherry. Of course three thousand a year doesn't admit of much good sherry, but I was being influenced in expenditure just then, not by my income, but by that of the Hallett Company.

John got around to the subject of Marjorie. He was guardedly praiseful, but he need not have been so cautious. My happiness was overflowing, and the incense of joy was in my eyes.

"I can never thank you enough, John; a year ago I thought——"

"Nonsense!" he interrupted. "Look at the gate receipts."

"What you've done for me can't be paid for," I exclaimed. "It was your wonderful imagination as much as mine that has made 'The Peak of the World' what it is. Why, I can't tell you how much I feel I owe to you. I'd like to give you my next two stories, and all my publishing rights besides—and even that won't square me."

He drew his eyebrows together.

"I don't understand," he said.

"Eternal gratitude is one thing," I answered; "but I'd like to add something a bit more substantial to show my appreciation."

"Probably you will as the years run on," he said calmly.

"As the years run on——" I repeated, and a sudden fear choked me as I looked into his white, peaked face.

"Don't you know," he said, and his eyes narrowed, "that a corporation has a perpetual life?"

It was as though I had received a stunning blow on the head. Not without some surprise, I heard my own voice go on mechanically:

"This—this—was only—a friendly—temporary—concern—to—to help me."

"Perhaps—at first."

"And now?"

"Why do you suppose I bought out the two B's?" he smiled. "Am I greedy?"

I couldn't grasp it. "Why?" I whispered huskily.

Through the slits of his eyelids above the smoke of his pipe, his eyes grew very ugly. He was looking straight at me, and his words came as sharp and sinister as that cruel stare.

"All this money might be bad for you," he said. "It might win Mr. Dawson to you."

I sprang to my feet.

"You mean——" I cried.

He rose, and placed his pipe quietly on the table.

"I mean that I, too, love Marjorie." His jaws made that strange snapping sound.

It was impossible. I found myself laughing strangely.

"You're joking!"

"The law doesn't joke," he said.

"The law——" I stammered.

"It makes corporations perpetual."

I might have choked him on the spot but that Marjorie and her father came in just then and saved both our lives.

It was a wild scene. Dawson refused point-blank to let his daughter marry a fool who was earning around fifty thousand a year and getting only three. Looking back on it now, I can hardly blame him. John would not be moved by any argument. He insisted on maintaining the corporation for life. He had always managed to get what he wanted, and he made no bones about stating that now he wanted Marjorie. Temperamentally he had the advantage of me. At this point I lost my head. I remember storming over his impertinence and treachery, and Marjorie standing so still and pale, her eyes turned away from both of us, as though the struggle had nothing to do with her. Perhaps it was a vague realization that the scene was hurting her that, with its sting, urged me on to further folly. In a burst of hysterical self-confidence I made a direct appeal to her, saying that I knew she preferred me, with my poor three thousand, to any one else in the world, and begging her to prove it by coming to me now.

Then for the first time she looked at me squarely.

"No," she said clearly; and to me it was as though the world had burst asunder, and everything was black.

Dimly I heard them leave the room, and the door slammed, an act on her father's part that was intended to express his contempt for me. John did not go with them, but must have left shortly after. I have an indistinct memory of hearing his voice, but I have no idea of what he may have said. I sat with my head in my arms and stared into impenetrable desolation——

Two hours later a telegram aroused me:

> We must not give in. There is some way out, and we must find it together without compromise. MARJORIE.

For several minutes the only word in that telegram that I saw was the one which a disinterested party would have considered the least important. I thank Providence, Marjorie had not sought to confine herself to the cramped conventionality of regulation telegrams, and "together" remained for me to cling to—a spar in the sea of despair.

With the aid of a long-suffering lawyer, we wrestled in vain with the legality of the situation. There wasn't a loophole for even a trust to crawl through. Once I went so far as to call upon John. After that I decided to save my pride. There was no use in giving it away for nothing. It was really Marjorie who at last found the solution.

"Why," she exclaimed, in one exasperated moment, "this is tyranny! Talk about the grinding down of labor!"

"Marjorie," I shouted, hugging her, "I've got it! The very thing! We'll strike!"

The manager was the first to be tackled. At first he could not see the proposition at all, but we painted to him in glowing colors the advertisement there was in it. The greatest theatrical success in the decade was suddenly to stop performance—without reason. All money for advance sales would be refunded. Thousands of disappointed theatergoers would talk about it. Articles and suggestions without number would appear in all the papers. And later—when the production was started again, and the whole romantic truth made known—well, did he think that any one within miles of a newspaper would not scrimp and borrow, if need be, to see that play?

He was a little, round, dark-faced man with a noticeable nose. The nose became more noticeable as the mouth receded from beneath it in a speculative smile. Then we played our winning card gently. Should we win out against the present régime, we'd require only seven per cent royalty instead of the ten.

That got him. It wasn't until five minutes later that he consented, but we both knew then that he would.

"Well," he said, with his fascinating and unprintable accent, "three weeks—a classic time now—three weeks I'll chance it. But at the end of that time, either way, on it goes again——"

"Good!" we breathed.

"And—and," he hastened, "if you win out, seven per cent."

The actors were easy. They loved the sport of it, and the three weeks' vacation at full pay which we promised them. It really extended their engagement and not their work. Of course it would cut down my future income, but this time it was worth while. The wonder of it all was the way that old Dawson sided with us. He risked the three weeks' salary if I didn't pull out. That gave us the courage we needed, for it meant that Robert Hallett in himself was not objectionable as a son-in-law.

Having sworn them all to the strictest secrecy in the matter, we called on Rolleson. Our outward calm was a marvel of acting. Our reception was as polite as a diplomatic dinner. We were waved to inviting easy-chairs in the soft recesses of which Marjorie and I tried our best to sit with straight-backed dignity. The head of the Hallett Company lolled in his.

"I represent, as you know, Mr. Rolleson, the labor of the Hallett Literature Company. My work and the conditions of it are most agreeable. But my wages, I find, do not meet my requirements." He was about to interfere, but I rushed on: "As a successful author, I have the expensive dignity of my position to uphold. As a successful lover"—in spite of rehearsals, Marjorie fidgeted when Rolleson looked at her then—"I have other expenses to meet. I came to ask for a raise. At present I receive five per cent of the capitalization, and earn over twenty per cent. I am forced to ask you, as future wages, eighty per cent of the corporation's gross earnings."

A smile crept from the ends of Rolleson's lips.

"A rather large demand for labor," he suggested.

"It's skilled labor," I smiled back.

"And if I refuse the request?"

"Demand," I corrected.

"Then?"

"Strike."

"In this particular case," put in Marjorie, "I think you will find it impossible to employ a scab."

"I admit that," Rolleson said; "but," he added slowly, "there are other peculiar factors to this case. For instance, if there were to be a strike, Mr. Hallett would have to give up his most cherished work forever. They say an artist must express himself."

"I can learn to express myself in other fields," I suggested.

"And then," Rolleson continued, "'The Peak of the World' production will still go on making money."

"Pardon me," I ventured; "it has been arranged that there shall be a complete walk-out. The production strikes, too."

"I doubt it."

"Which means——"

"I refuse your demands." He rose; that closed the interview.

The next day the performance stopped. There was a grand furore, and the free advertising we got was more than even Marjorie had hoped for. All the actors were off on midwinter vacations, so there was no danger that the secret of the limited time of our strike would leak out.

The furore without, however, was nothing to that within. Rolleson stormed in to me. What was it? He couldn't get a word out of the manager. What had we done? What was the game? Managers don't act like that for nothing. And when reporters came to him as head of the Hallett Company, what was he to tell them? His calm had completely evaporated.

One week elapsed. He had tried to force the manager to produce, but the contract had not stipulated more than three weeks. He had thought of having it performed elsewhere, but our manager had all the rights. He had tried to see Marjorie and her father, but they were miraculously out whenever he called. So he waited.

The second week he regained control of himself. He would often drop in to see if I were writing. The excitement of the contention made it easy for me to abstain. He told me that it would be impossible for me to keep up the inactivity. I plunged into social matters to show him, but all the while I knew that he was right. I could not be kept from my desk forever. So the second week passed.

Now the manager grew restless. He claimed this was tommyrot. If he did not announce a revival soon the play would be forgotten. To have his theater idle in mid-season was ridiculous. He must at least start advertising the continuation of the run.

Things looked desperate. There was a family consultation at which Dawson's fat had a tendency to harden when he thought of the three weeks' salaries and looked at me. I think it was those salaries that determined him.

The manager was in the room, grumbling and threatening; Marjorie was as near to tears as I have ever seen her; Dawson was scowling, and I beseeching them all to be firm and patient, when Rolleson was announced.

"I'll try it," said Dawson, after a heartbreaking pause. "But, mind you, it's only a trick. It's not truth—yet."

"And to-morrow," wheezed the manager, "I announce revival—yes or no."

I quivered. We had just hustled him out of the room when Rolleson entered.

"You'll pardon me," said Rolleson suavely.

"Certainly, certainly," chirped Dawson, with a threat behind his cordiality, and I blessed him for it. "Come in! Glad you have come. You are just in time to hear that Mr. Hallett is going to start in to-morrow as my advertising manager. I feel that he has learned much in that line while working for the Hallett Company. And—he is engaged now to my daughter."

For the second time in my life I felt sorry for Rolleson. The look he cast at Dawson was that of a deserted king to his last loyal subject. After perfunctory congratulations, he vanished.

"Looks like business," prognosticated

the manager's head good-humoredly from the other side of his opened door.

However meanly Rolleson fought for success, he accepted failure with the large comprehension of his marvelous imagination. It was a complete surrender. The next day I got a letter saying that since he could not bring himself to grant my demands he had decided to dissolve the Hallett corporation.

Even after our wedding, the New York engagement of "The Peak of the World" kept on. The story of the dissolution and its causes created, as we had hoped, a tenfold interest. It is renewing its success now on the road. Old Dawson is always genial. We often entertain the manager and the cast. And I have just finished another play.

If I hadn't I should not have had time to be writing this story.

THE GRIT OF TY COBB

THOUGH Ty Cobb has been the subject of thousands of stories, comparatively little of his actual personality ever has been conveyed to the public. This is because he is averse to personal publicity—a statement that doubtless will excite astonishment and incredulity, and perhaps derision, among those who have deemed him "swelled-headed." But it is an actuality. Perhaps no better proof of it can be offered than the course he took when he was stabbed by a highwayman in Detroit one night last summer, when he was on his way to catch the Tiger special for the East.

He proceeded to the depot and went to his berth, without saying a word to any one except the Tiger trainer, Harry Tuthill, regarding the adventure or his injury. He mentioned it to the trainer because he thought the wound needed attention.

And verily it did. Something of its nature can be guessed by the way the trainer treated it. It was in Cobb's back, and had bled profusely. To clean it out, the trainer applied antiseptic solutions by inserting his little finger, full length, straight into the gash, and moving it about, back and forth, from one end to the other, a distance of perhaps three inches. In other words, the wound was more than two inches deep, by about three inches long, a bigger incision than a surgeon makes when he operates for appendicitis, with elaborate ceremony, and consigns the patient to a hospital bed for a fortnight to recover. But Cobb took no anæsthetic; simply lay quiet in his berth—and asked Trainer Harry not to say anything about it.

When they reached Syracuse a prominent surgeon was called, who regarded the wound as so serious that it must not be sewed up, owing to danger of infection. So he stuffed a yard and a half of gauze into it, to keep it open, to drain. That same day, instead of being in a hospital, Cobb played a full game with the Tigers against Syracuse, an exhibition contest that he could have sidestepped on almost any excuse. But he desired, first, to make light of his injury, and, secondly, to avoid putting the Syracuse management "in bad" by not appearing when he had been advertised as a special attraction.

Because of that, the seriousness of the wound never became known. As an exhibition of grit that has made Cobb great, it was without a parallel. And he supplemented it the following day by playing in a championship game against the Yankees in New York, with all the energy and dash he ever exhibited, though almost any other player, with such a wound, would have been out of the game for two or three weeks. And by continuing with his team, not missing a single game on the Eastern trip, he convinced the public that the stab had been merely a scratch not worth bothering about.

Songs of Spiggoty Land

By Berton Braley

The Yellow Terror

[Colonel Goethals visits the various parts of the canal work in a yellow motor-driven railway car which the men call the *Yellow Terror*.]

YOU can hear its sharp "putt-putt!"
As it whizzes through the cut
Or comes flying to the station at Gatun,
And whatever job you're on
From Balboa to Colon
From the sunrise to the blazing afternoon,
You may see that yellow car
As it ranges near and far
With an energy persistent and infernal,
And wherever it may rest,
On the east side or the west,
You can hear the workers chuckle, "There's the Colonel!"

There's the Colonel,
There's the Colonel,
With his eye upon the mob
He's a miracle supernal
And he's always on the job
He makes us do our damnedest
But our love for him's eternal
And his car is on the siding—
There's the Colonel!

When you're sweating on a slide
You may find him by your side,
And he'll probably address you by your name,
Or when tamping dynamite
He may dawn upon your sight
For he's always keeping tab upon the game,
In the swamp or on the hill,
At the spillway, or the fill,
Comes that *Yellow Terror* car with vim eternal,
And wherever it may stop
At the mixer or the shop,
You can hear the workers chuckle, "There's the Colonel!"

There's the Colonel!
There's the Colonel!
With his hair as white as snow,
But with heart forever vernal,
He is boss of all the show;
With his busy *Yellow Terror*
And his cigarette eternal,
Oh, we love him like a brother—
There's the Colonel!

The Bug Hunters

(Sanitary Division)

OH, they chase the wary skeeter to his lair
And they slay him by the million then and there,
And the chigger and the gnat
And the young domestic rat,
Well, they just exterminate 'em everywhere!

Oh, they fill the stagnant marshes full of oil!
And the peace of the tarantula they spoil,
And they go around and make
Life unpleasant for the snake
Who so often in our boudoirs used to coil!

And they enter in the native's humble cot
And they scrub and fumigate him on the spot,
For though picturesque, perhaps,
As are other native chaps,
Is the Spiggoty hygienic—he is not!

Yes, the sanitary people lead a life
Which is fifty-nine varieties of strife,
For they deal with white and brown,
In the jungle and the town
And with Mistah Cullud Person—and his wife!

So we boost for Colonel Gorgas and his crew
Who have blotted yellow fever out of view,
Who have changed a deadly port
To a blooming health resort,
Which is something people said they couldn't do!

The Murder of Jack Robinson

By Howard Fielding

Author of "Larry the Listener," "Bill Harris—His Line," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

A woman knocked down and seriously injured by an automobile is taken to the Lawrence Hospital, where she refuses to reveal her identity. One thing alone worries her, and that is the loss of her handbag and umbrella. Eleanor Perry, her nurse, has a strange effect upon the patient, the woman evidently fearing her, and in delirium she links the name of the nurse with that of a Jack Robinson, endeavoring to warn the man of some danger. Dr. Warren, in charge of the case and in love with Eleanor, grows curious and jealous, but the girl denies knowledge of the patient as well as of any Robinson. Warren's mind is not eased, however, as he dreads most that some day Eleanor will discover his appropriation of stock belonging to her; already another of her admirers, Hardy, seems to know something of it. Now follows the attack on Jack Robinson. Fate gets Warren to the scene, where he is astounded to meet Eleanor. Robinson dies before he can give full information as to his assailant, but he mentions the name of Clifford Wainwright. What happens is enough to show Warren that Eleanor had known the murdered man; also that she has some secret understanding with an artist, George Brown, who fortuitously appears at the Robinson apartment. Futhermore, Warren learns that both Brown and Eleanor are in communication with Clifford and Henry Wainwright, natives of New Zealand who have just come to New York. To complete the tangle, Dr. Warren intercepts a note from Clifford Wainwright to Brown, traces the foreigner to his hotel, and discovers him with a badly-sprained ankle; Eleanor is seen talking with Henry Wainwright; and finally the doctor finds a box she has hidden, which contains about a half million dollars, evidently money stolen from Jack Robinson. Warren secretly appropriates this cash, and cross-examines Eleanor to no end. But he is convinced that George Brown is the murderer. On the other hand, Steinfeldt, the police captain, is sure of Clifford Wainwright's guilt. In searching Robinson's rooms photographs are found in which Warren recognizes Eleanor beside a strange man. Also in that search the hospital patient's handbag and umbrella are discovered. Out of the latter Warren sees a paper fall and slip behind a wardrobe. A cable from New Zealand identifies Jack Robinson as one Richards, former coachman to the Wainwrights.

CHAPTER XII.

WARREN walked home with nervous haste, and it was not a good day for that sort of exercise. Hot, sticky, irritated, degraded by a sense of uncleanness, both bodily and spiritual, he entered his consulting room, and found Hardy waiting.

The room seemed dusky after the glare outside, and in the midst of it the gambler made a very clear picture, with his cool, fresh skin, his spotless linen, and light, elegant attire. He had been reading of the Robinson case in the latest editions, and calculating the chances of the game. His life, which had run a little stale of late, was now quickened by unselfish interest in Eleanor, and the effect was distinctly beneficial. He looked more than handsome, a genuine figure of romance; and Warren, in whose bosom all bad impulses were riotous, viewed this engaging presence with a twinge of envy. The gambler, on his part, turned a steady eye upon the doctor, and inwardly remarked that he had lost his nerve. The facts at Hardy's disposal did not permit him to know why, but he trusted his own judgment in the matter, and drew the necessary inference: this is not the man to be Miss Perry's adviser in her present situation.

Since Warren had been weighed in the balance and found wanting, and Stewart, who would have been the young lady's natural adviser, had run away, it seemed possible that Hardy

This story began in the July Month-end number. News stands will furnish it.

might be forced to take an active part in the affair, offer his own services, and confer with Eleanor. He would rather not. In his scheme of existence it had been provided that he and Eleanor should never meet again. He had thought this all out, some months ago, and had decided that there was a certain hazard in the world which he must never take, because he would inevitably lose his own peace of mind without a chance to win. He had deliberately, sincerely, and very respectfully declined to play, but now the suspicion crept into his mind that he was going to lose, anyhow. Such seemed to be the will of Chance, and Hardy smiled the faint, enigmatical smile of the gambler as this prospect dawned upon him.

"Well, here I am, doctor," said he. "Have you found anything for me to do?"

Instantly the idea of utilizing Hardy took shape in Warren's mind. No one would suspect him of having any connection with the Robinson case. He might safely carry a message to Eleanor, for, even if he should be followed from Warren's house to the hospital, the matter could be very simply explained. He was about to cross the ocean, and was saying good-by to the physician and the nurse who had recently served him. Nothing could be more natural than that he should have set apart a single hour for both these visits of courtesy.

Accordingly the doctor told of his failure to see Eleanor, not concealing the fact that Steinfeldt had been the cause of it. He gave his own conduct the best face it could wear; prudence and not panic had governed his behavior, and the wish to save Eleanor from annoyance had been his only motive.

Hardy saw much more than that in Warren's haggard countenance, but, having only human penetration, he could not reach the marrow of the truth; could not guess that almost half the spoil of last night's crime lay right behind him at that moment, and so near that he could have touched it with his cane but for the intervening iron of the safe. "What is this man afraid of?" he asked himself; and, having no reason to suspect that Warren's fears were personal, he was forced to suppose that they related to Eleanor. Her position, then, must be critical. He sickened at the thought of prying into her affairs, but there seemed to be no other course open.

"What's the matter at the hospital?" he said. "The place is watched, I suppose. If you should go there between now and one o'clock, Steinfeldt would get word of it, and he'd know that you considered Miss Perry to be in danger. What of it? What can Steinfeldt do when he gets there?"

Warren began an evasive answer, and Hardy cut him short.

"You don't want the police in the hospital," said he. "You haven't told me so, but I can see it. What's the reason? Is there somebody there who knows too much?"

Warren's thoughts flashed to the nameless patient, but he answered roundly: "No."

"Of course, Miss Perry is bound to be questioned," said Hardy, "now or later, there or elsewhere. What does it matter? That's not what you're thinking of. You say you don't fear anybody's talking. Very well; if it's not a person it's a thing. Miss Perry has something which connects her with this case, and you're afraid the police will find it. Is that true?"

"No, no; certainly not," protested Warren.

Hardy rose with his accustomed grace, and strolled leisurely toward the door.

"Thank you," said he. "You've relieved my mind. I shall see Miss Perry in a few minutes. Is there any message you'd like me to give her?"

Warren was now pacing back and forth, racking his brains. His problem was this: How can I relieve Eleanor of Robinson's cash box, and saddle it upon George Brown?

It is not surprising that Warren failed to find an immediate answer to such a riddle as that. He perceived, however, that it was necessary to warn

Eleanor about the pictures, and he reluctantly decided that Hardy must take the message.

"I want you to tell Miss Perry," said he, "that Captain Steinfeldt has some small photographs of her and a certain man—together, you understand. The captain thinks this man is Clifford Wainwright, but that's a mistake. Miss Perry will know who the man really is."

Warren could not make even so guarded a reference to George Brown without disclosing malice, and Hardy saw it.

"You seem to have it in for this fellow," said he. "Why?"

"Nothing of the sort," said Warren. "I don't know him."

"You must have seen him, of course," responded Hardy. "When and where, if I may be permitted to inquire?"

Warren did not wish to give Hardy any more information than was absolutely necessary, but like an embittered woman he could not hold his tongue. He told how he had seen the man standing at the door of Robinson's apartment, shielding himself from the dying rascal's observation; and though the doctor preserved a studious moderation of language, his true feeling burned through it into plain sight.

"Do you think it was he who hit Robinson?" Hardy asked.

"I know nothing except what Robinson told me," answered Warren. "He accused Clifford Wainwright."

"Is there a mix-up here?" said Hardy. "Can this fellow in the photographs be the real Clifford Wainwright, and the man with the broken ankle be somebody else?"

Warren might have answered this question decisively, since he knew that George Brown had been in New York before the Wainwrights sailed from New Zealand, but his knowledge of this matter had not been obtained by such means as could be revealed.

"The identity of the Wainwrights is settled by their visit to Stewart's office," said he. "There was another New Zealander present to introduce them—a man of some standing, and not connected with the Robinson affair."

Hardy had not heard of this before, and naturally he asked who the man was.

"I forget his name," said Warren.

"So has Stewart," remarked Hardy. "Singular coincidence."

He studied the inside of his straw hat for a moment; then looked up at Warren with that odd smile of his, a little sad this time, very attractive, very puzzling.

"Where could I find Steinfeldt?" he asked.

"Don't try to buy those photographs," said Warren. "You can't do it.

"Bribery is what I despise," returned Hardy; "but Wall Street lives on it, and I live on Wall Street. So you see I can't claim to be too good for it. In fact, it's not the welfare of my own soul, but Steinfeldt's, that would withhold me from the transaction. Good-by. I'll see you again soon."

When he was gone, the doctor tried to pull himself together, but his mind refused to think; it went blank, every time he appealed to it for a plan of action. In order to give it rest from the concentration that had exhausted it, he called in a patient, and probably derived more benefit from the consultation than the man who paid the fee. A little more of this automatic work might have set him right, but he was interrupted by the ringing of his telephone. It was Eleanor who had called him.

"I'm at the hospital," said she. "Can you come over—right away?"

Warren dared not ask why his presence was desired, nor enter into explanations on his side.

"Have you had any word from me?" he asked.

"Yes. Mr. Hardy's here now. He told me——"

"Carefully, carefully, Eleanor! Look out what you say."

"I'm not afraid of Captain Steinfeldt or anybody else," she replied. "If you come right over now, we can get ahead of him. I've talked with Mr. Hardy about it, and he says——"

"Hold on, for Heaven's sake! Wait! I'll come!"

A soft sound of suppressed laughter floated along the wire as Warren hastily hung up the receiver; but he was halfway to the hospital before the suspicion dawned upon his mind that there might have been an element of calculation in Eleanor's recklessness. If she had not scared the wits out of him, would he have yielded to her wish? He felt in his bones that his going to the hospital now would be construed by Steinfeldt as an underhand proceeding, and would result in immediate retaliation.

He had just passed Broadway when he was aware of some one close behind him; and the next thing he knew this person was directly in his path, facing him. Yet there was no impression of hurry; the maneuver was accomplished with that easy, somewhat absent, air which you may have observed in a cat.

"Excuse me, Doctor Warren," said the man, apparently honoring the doctor with only a small part of his attention. "I was looking for you."

Warren swallowed his heart in time to save it, and said: "What for?"

"Captain Steinfeldt wants to see you. He's at the station."

"Tell the captain that I am sorry, but I have just been called to the hospital on an urgent case."

"If you could give me two or three minutes right here," the detective suggested, "I guess that would do, and you wouldn't have to bother about seeing the captain."

Plainly this was a stratagem for delay. Steinfeldt had determined that Warren should not have a conference with Eleanor in advance of his own interview with her, or only a brief one at the best. Doubtless a message was already on its way to the captain; it might even have been sent the moment Warren left his house and set his face in the direction of the hospital.

"I don't care to stand here," said Warren. "It's too hot. If you'll come in with me, perhaps I can give you a few minutes."

He led the man in by a basement door, nearer to the spot where they had been standing than the main entrance is. A corridor ran rearward to the X-ray and "high-frequency" installations, and the waiting room for patients in that department stood vacant, as Warren had foreseen it would at this hour. He entered, and invited the detective to be seated. The man asked a few unimportant questions, merely to waste time. Warren, meanwhile, was waiting for a doctor or a nurse to pass along the hall. It was one of the nurses who first appeared; and Warren congratulated himself, for she was a clever girl.

"One moment," said he to the detective, and then called the girl by name. She returned, and they stood for some seconds in the doorway, Warren gradually shifting his position till he was out of sight from the interior of the room.

"Stand there," he whispered to the nurse. "Pretend to go on talking with me. When that fellow gets impatient, and comes out, say I'll be back directly."

As he moved softly away he met one of the young surgeons of the staff, whom with a word he sent to the assistance of the nurse. It is very fortunate on such occasions to be dealing with disciplined people; they can do as they are told. For a matter of five minutes the detective, sitting at the back of the room where Warren had placed him, heard a low murmur of two voices, and was satisfied. Then uneasy thoughts began to steal into his mind; he arose and walked to the door.

"Doctor Warren will be back right away," said the nurse blandly.

"Yes, he will," said the detective. "Where's he gone?"

"To the children's ward," she replied. "If you're in a hurry, I'll take you there."

"You'd better take me to the foolish ward, if there is one," said he in a tone of deep conviction, and found his own way out to the street.

Meanwhile Warren was in quest of Eleanor, with no immediate success.

Eleanor had left no word; therefore she must have expected Warren to know where to find her. Reasoning

upon this clew, Warren went to the door of his private room, where the stolen money was hidden, and tried to put his key into the lock. It encountered resistance, as he had thought it would. Eleanor had found a key that would fit, probably one snatched at random from any door along the corridor. He spoke her name softly, and was instantly admitted.

It was Eleanor who had let him in. Hardy stood by the cupboard, removing the lock with his knife, whose blade he had broken to make a screw driver.

"I hope you won't mind our not waiting for you," said Eleanor. "Mr. Hardy thought we'd better hurry."

"Does Mr. Hardy know——"

"Oh, yes," said she; "I've told him everything. He knows just as much as you do."

"Indeed," said Warren, with an acid smile. "What does he propose to do?"

"He's going to take the box away," she replied, "after we've seen what's in it."

"That hardly answers my question," returned Warren, irritated by the placidity of his companions, and still more by the notion of some secret understanding between them. "What is he going to do with it? He's dealing with stolen property, and very dangerous evidence in a murder case. He can't run around with it under his arm, you know."

"I've brought a suit case," said Hardy. "It was at the club. I was going to take it abroad with me. After my talk with you, I thought I might find a use for it, so I went and got it."

"What do you suppose Steinfeldt will think of your bringing a bag in here?"

"Nothing at all," responded Hardy, carefully removing one of the screws. "The chances are that Steinfeldt doesn't know half as much as you think he does. Still, I agree with you that this box oughtn't to stay here any longer."

"But you can't keep it, Hardy. Don't you see that? The contents must be valuable to be the motive of such a crime as this."

"Papers, I understand," said Hardy. "They must have a rightful owner, and of course Miss Perry intends that they shall be put into the proper hands as soon as possible. I'll attend to that, under her orders."

"I object to Miss Perry's giving any orders or having anything more to do with this affair," said Warren. "I want to see her entirely clear of it. The men who killed John Robinson ought to suffer for it, but Miss Perry's interest in them prevents my taking any action. She and I discussed this matter last evening, and I agreed that the thieves should take the booty and get away with it if they could. That was the best thing for her, so far as I could see."

"Why give anything to thieves—if there are any in this affair?" said Hardy. "Why not give it to the fellow it belongs to? That would be my way, and you'll hardly suggest that it wouldn't be Miss Perry's."

"It certainly would be," said Eleanor. "I have told Doctor Warren already that no one intends to do anything wrong. The intention from the first was to do right. I suppose he thinks I show too little feeling about the death of that man. It is partly because I know how it happened, and partly because I know that at the proper time the person who did it—who did whatever was done—will tell the truth about it."

"Yes," said Hardy thoughtfully, "that's probably the best way. If I'd done this, I think I'd tell the truth. But," he added, with quiet emphasis, "I'd tell it to a good lawyer first, and see what he had to say about it."

He opened the cupboard door, took out the black box, and held it under his arm while he carefully dusted the shelf where it had lain. Then he came forward to the desk in the middle of the room, where Eleanor stood, her face of a pearly whiteness, yet smiling in defiance of a torturing anxiety.

"'J. Robinson,'" said Hardy, reading the rude inscription on the lid. "It's cut into the metal; we can't invent an owner for this thing. Miss Perry, I'm afraid we'd better not take the time to open it."

"Why not?" said she. "Nobody knows where we are."

"Captain Steinfeldt must be drawing mighty near——"

"Mr. Hardy, I'd rather face Captain Steinfeldt with those papers in my shoe than not know where they are, nor whether they're anywhere. Set the box here, please."

She had several small keys on a ring, and she tried them in turn, but none would fit. Warren knew that he could pick the lock, but for obvious reasons dared not show his skill. Yet he wished the box to be opened, not only for the effect upon Eleanor, but because he hoped that Hardy would decline to be the receiver of so great a sum, the proceeds of a robbery that could no longer be glossed over by any fiction of Eleanor's, her own invention, or one that had been told to her.

"That lock can be broken," said Warren, pulling out a drawer of the desk, and selecting an old surgical instrument of the proper form; but Hardy interrupted, saying that it might be better to preserve the lock for future use.

"I believe I could pick it with a bent wire," said he. "Have you any pincers? And perhaps Miss Perry will oblige me with a hairpin."

These articles were produced, and Warren saw his own performance of the previous evening repeated with less trouble.

In the critical instant, when the box opened under Eleanor's eyes, Warren was watching her with the most concentrated attention, and he could not doubt that she was taken wholly by surprise. After the first shock she rallied quickly; plunged her hands into the money, tossing it out upon the desk, and, at last, stared in bewilderment at the bare walls and bottom of the box. Then she slowly raised her head and looked across at Warren.

"Well," said she, "you told me so. How did you know it?"

"By my common sense," said Warren. "A sort of miser, and his money box, and some thieves who wanted it—these were the elements of the affair. Could anybody doubt what kind of case it was?"

"But it wasn't," she protested.

Warren answered with a wave of his hand toward the money.

"The facts seem to be against me, I admit," said Eleanor, "yet I am telling you the truth. Why does it seem so strange to you? Did you never hear of a man's having papers that didn't belong to him, and another person's trying to get them away?"

"There is one sufficient reason for my disbelieving that story," answered Warren; "it was told to you by the men who led you into this deplorable affair."

"Not at all," said she. "I told it myself."

But Warren went on, without heeding her:

"Can't you see *now* that you have been a dupe? I am still in ignorance of the details; I don't pretend to know why these men needed you; but it's evident they had a use for you, and dragged you into their game."

"That's the funny part of it," said she. "They didn't. I dragged them in."

"You? Never!"

"But I did. I was the prime mover, and original first cause, the author of this brilliant success, the discoverer of John Robinson!"

Warren was staggered by this declaration, and Hardy, in his own self-contained way, was perhaps equally impressed. He cut in very promptly.

"Why, then," said he, "there's no need of another word about it. If you understand the affair as well as that, it's all right. Doctor Warren and I are perfectly satisfied to go ahead. The thing to do now is to get this undesirable wealth out of the way before our friend Captain Steinfeldt drops in to see us."

Warren was in a quandary. It seemed a favorable time to question Eleanor; she had shown a sudden and surprising frankness; but on the other hand he did not wish Hardy to hear her story. Hardy meanwhile was counting the loose money, deftly as a bank teller.

"Three hundred and eighteen thousand in all," said he. "Shall I make a memorandum of this amount?"

"What for?" demanded Warren. "You're certainly not going to take it."

"My dear sir, the matter's not open to discussion," Hardy said. "I've got to take it. I've given my word. I promised Miss Perry that I'd take charge of this."

"But you didn't know——" she began.

"Neither did you," said he. "We were on precisely equal terms. You really mustn't ask me to go back on my agreement now. I couldn't do it and preserve my self-respect."

"This money is nothing," she said. "Heaven knows I don't want it. I'd rather the police should have it. Isn't there some safe way to give it to them?"

"No way that's safe for the man the money belongs to," answered Hardy. "I'm afraid he'd never see it. At the best, it would go to the courts, and the man's grandchildren might get a part of it; he'd hardly live long enough. For I don't mind predicting that the ownership will be a nice point of law."

"All this is words," said Eleanor. "You think of nothing but my danger."

"Your danger and my own word of honor," he replied. "Miss Perry, I beg you to let me take the course I feel to be right. I promised to help you here, and in a certain way. If I don't do it, it will shame me to the end of my days."

"Is that true?" she asked, looking him in the eyes. "Then do it. If harm comes of it, I'll do what seems to *me* to be right. The truth will be told——"

"To a lawyer," Hardy interrupted, with a smile; "to a lawyer first. If any one concerned in this affair feels moved to give an explanation of these remarkable occurrences, let him rehearse it first in the ear of his counsel. I would strongly recommend Mr. Stewart. He'll be back in time, I suppose?"

"I can't answer that question," she said. "There are reasons—I'm very sorry——"

"It's not at all necessary," said he; "and, besides, we haven't time."

He began to gather up the money. Eleanor walked to the window, where she stood leaning her elbows on the ledge, which was breast high, her head supported in her hands. Suddenly she looked up, and spoke without turning.

"Captain Steinfeldt is coming," she said. "He's on the other side. Now he's stopping; one of his own men, I think, is talking with him."

"I'll have a look at the captain," said Hardy. "It may be well that I should know him by sight. Will you lock this, Doctor Warren?" And he pushed the box across the desk.

The instant that Hardy turned his back, a course of reasoning and a line of conduct appeared in Warren's brain full formed. He knew that there was now no chance that Robinson's cash box would ever come into the hands of George Brown, but it might fall into the clutches of Steinfeldt within the next few minutes. There was no certainty that Hardy would pass the captain and his cordon of detectives without question. The box, with "J. R." on its lid, might be seized, with what results to Hardy and to Eleanor it was perhaps too late to consider, since there was almost equal danger whether Hardy should take the thing or leave it.

Warren's anxiety, for the moment, was centered on the money itself. If Steinfeldt should capture it, those three packages, still in their original form, might be identified; the source from which they had come might be discovered, and thus the whole story of the Robinson affair be read. Warren did not wish any one except himself to have the clew to that story; he did not wish it to pass out of his own hands even into Hardy's. That clew was in the bundled money; it was too valuable and too dangerous to be relinquished.

Hardy had not covered the small distance to the window before all this had been thought out. Warren took the three packets, and thrust them into the drawer of the desk, which still stood open. This he closed. Then he dropped the lid of the steel box over the poor

remnant of its original contents, slid the bolt of the lock, and made an effort with the pick to disarrange the mechanism so that the next man who should try to operate it would not find the task so easy.

The desperate nature of these acts absorbed his mind completely. He knew only that the others did not turn, that he was not seen. He was not aware that Hardy spoke in Eleanor's ear:

"Those papers have been bought. That's the explanation of the money. Some one has been too quick for you. Think who it might have been."

She made a sign of comprehension, gave Hardy her hand without a word, and walked toward the door.

"I think I'd better put myself in Captain Steinfeldt's way," she said to Warren. "I can't avoid him, of course; and the next best thing is to keep him from meeting Mr. Hardy."

Her hand was on the knob of the door. Warren put his own on hers, checking her.

"You have broken your bargain with me," he whispered.

"How?"

"You promised that this box should be given to a certain man."

"Well?"

"You have given it to Hardy."

"How do you know that he is not the man I meant?"

He stepped back, staring at her. She opened the door and passed out.

Warren turned away, and saw Hardy putting the steel box into his suit case.

"You and Miss Perry seem to understand each other," Warren said.

"I understand that she's in a position of extreme difficulty," Hardy answered. "It's a time for her friends to rally, I should think."

"Where are you going now?"

"To the club first, then to the pier, where I shall carefully miss my steamer. She sails at two."

"And that box?"

"My present plan is to put it in safe deposit. By the way, I suppose you can call a cab from the office in case mine doesn't show up. I inveigled a fellow into riding down with me from the club, so that he could go on with the taxi, and my taking the bag out of it wouldn't look queer. He was to send it back in twenty minutes. Listen! I thought I heard the cab."

They stood silent for a little space, and in that silence Eleanor's voice came to them very clearly from the hall.

"Don't be alarmed, Captain Steinfeldt," said she. "There's an elevator."

"That'll help *some*," responded the captain's oily bass. "This is no day for stairs."

Warren started at the voices, and glanced uneasily over his shoulder. Hardy looked at the door, then at the wall beyond, his gaze moving steadily, as if door and wall were transparent, and he were following Eleanor with his eyes along the corridor.

CHAPTER XIII.

Hardy got away without further mishap, and in ignorance of the injury already done him. He had made himself responsible for the greater part of Robinson's mysterious wealth, and there was a shortage in his cash amounting to a trifle of three hundred thousand dollars; but at the moment this was not one of his troubles; it was one of Warren's. The doctor did not attempt to foresee what would happen when that deficit should be discovered; delay was what he hoped for and expected; and at the worst he saw himself facing Hardy with a firm denial.

The money itself constituted his most immediate danger, and his thoughts were concentrated upon the care of it. He had noticed in the office a sealed parcel addressed to himself, and he knew what was inside—a surgical work of formidable size sent to him by the publishers. This he carried to the den, where he removed the seals carefully from the wrapper, and proceeded to perform a major operation on the book, cutting out a portion of its vitals, and neatly substituting the three packets of money. To work fast is a trick of the surgeon's trade; the job was all done

before a layman could have made up his mind how to begin.

He put the volume—which had suddenly become one of the most valuable in the world—on a table in his dressing room upstairs, and was instantly startled by a knock at the door. His apprehension was rather increased than diminished when there entered the same young surgeon who had helped him hoodwink the detective in the basement. The visitor closed the door carefully, and came forward, reading no welcome in the countenance of his superior.

"Doctor Warren," said he, "I'm here to give information, not to ask questions. There's something going on, but it's none of my business. I've just met Miss Perry with that police officer."

"I know all about that," said Warren.

"So I supposed; but I've just caught a rumor that may not have come to you. It seems that there's been a good deal of sleuthing around here to-day. I'm told that some of the doctors have been approached, but it's mostly the nurses. Now, of course, this Robinson affair must be the cause of it, but where the connection is I can't see. The questioning is all about an old fellow who died here last winter. His name was Stone. You may remember him."

"No," said Warren. "It couldn't have been a surgical case."

"It wasn't. There's no inquiry about the cause of death. The point seems to be to connect Miss Perry with this man."

"In what way?"

"I don't know; it's not ten minutes since I first heard about it. I thought you ought to be informed."

"Thank you. Where is Miss Perry now?"

"She seemed to be headed for the roof garden."

This was the name given to a space on the roof of an extension running north from the main building, and accessible through a third-story window. Some of the staff had spread an awning there, and had even gone to the length of buying wicker chairs and a table, while the nurses had contributed a few potted plants. Patients were not admitted, for the roof had no rails.

As he approached this favored spot, Warren saw Steinfeldt seated in an easy-chair, his head bared, his countenance eloquent of content. He was in the act of setting down an empty glass, which Eleanor immediately refilled from a pitcher of cold grape juice.

"Say," remarked the captain, "that stuff is good. I got to get some of that. What do you have to pay for it?"

Eleanor happened to know, and something businesslike in her reply seemed to impress Steinfeldt favorably.

"I'll bet you're a well-informed woman," he said. "Ah, doctor"—as Warren stepped out through the window—"you find me combinin' business with pleasure. This is one grand little place. I haven't been comfortable before since I put my clothes on this morning."

The four small photographs lay on the table. Steinfeldt saw Warren's glance rest upon them and then flash to Eleanor.

"It seems I was all to the bad about those things," said the captain. "I thought they were taken yesterday; they must have been, of course, if the man's Clifford Wainwright. But Miss Perry says the millinery won't do."

"I haven't worn that hat since early in April," said Eleanor. "The weather was very warm at that time, if you remember, and I'm dressed accordingly; yet it's not a costume for June."

"She says the man's a broker named Wythe who used to do business for her father," the captain continued. "Know him?"

"Slightly," said Warren, taking up the photographs. "I shouldn't have recognized him."

There was, in fact, no resemblance. Eleanor had merely named a large, smooth-shaven man of the right type. Perhaps she could have done no better, but the deception seemed sure to recoil upon her with disastrous results.

"He called upon me several times this spring," said Eleanor. "It was about some stocks that had belonged to my father. You remember."

She appealed to Warren to support this fiction, and he mumbled an assent.

"I think Mr. Robinson snapped us as we passed the house where he lived," Eleanor proceeded. "I've seen him standing on the steps with his camera."

"I guess that was the way of it," the captain assented. "Queer how fresh these prints look. They must have been kept in the dark and not handled. Well, the man can't be Wainwright, and that ends my interest in the matter."

It seemed unnatural that Steinfeldt could so easily be satisfied, but his face was inscrutable. His hands, as usual, were clasped upon his stomach, and when he presently remarked upon the advantages of a cooling drink that would stay cool after a person had swallowed it, one might have thought that he had been entirely occupied with that reflection.

Warren meanwhile had been studying the prints somewhat more calmly than when they had first come under his eye; and he now confessed to himself that the concentration of his own mind upon the man had made him see far more of George Brown than was really there. Steinfeldt might have great trouble in finding any one who could put a name on these distorted, blurred, and truncated presentments.

"Miss Perry," said the captain slowly, "do you know anything at all about the killing of Jack Robinson?"

"Nothing whatever," she replied.

"Very good," said he. "I'm glad to hear it. But there's another lady in this institution that does."

The mention of the nameless woman caused Warren very grave anxiety. He could not understand the captain's attitude toward Eleanor. It seemed far too cordial; and the suspicion that she had bought his good will by valuable disclosures rose inevitably from the simplest considerations as to the man's character. Warren naturally thought of a bargain already made, and not of one that still lay secret in the captain's mind; and the obvious, though mistaken, inference was that Eleanor had given him important information about the mysterious patient. Therefore it seemed a piece of trickery when Steinfeldt proceeded to tell Eleanor how the injured woman's hand bag and umbrella had been found in Robinson's rooms.

By the same illusion, Eleanor's suppressed excitement looked like overacting, and her surprise at the bag's meager contents rang entirely false. For human penetration is a poor thing, and a man requires only the mildest provocation to deceive himself. As a matter of fact, this subject had not been mentioned before Warren's arrival, and Eleanor was truly astounded to learn that the missing articles had come into Robinson's possession.

"This is what happened, as near as I can find out," the captain continued: "That woman called on Robinson around three o'clock, and stayed about an hour. Several people saw her, both coming and going. When she left she walked to Broadway, where she stood for as much as two or three minutes, undecided; and then the accident happened. But the curious thing," he went on, after a considerable pause, "is what Jack Robinson did. No doubt about it, though; I've got all the evidence I need. Just as soon as she had left him he skipped out of his house by the back way, into the yard, through the little gate in the fence, and across the cleared lots to Fifty-fourth Street. A taxicab was coming along, and he took it. He rode to Broadway, and up to Fifty-fifth Street, where he arrived at the very minute of the accident; in fact, he came near running over her himself. His cab stopped right beside her as she lay, and he was down in a flash. I haven't anybody who actually saw him put the bag and umbrella into his cab, but of course he must have done it—which was easy enough in the confusion. Perhaps he meant to put her in, but I guess not. He didn't touch her. Rode away, and left her lying there."

"Oh, impossible!" Eleanor's head sank forward. She seemed sick with horror—moved, indeed, as the doctor thought, more deeply than the story warranted. "Not even such a man as that—— He couldn't have known

whether she was dead or living, whether she would suffer——"

"Looks fierce even to me," Steinfeldt admitted. "Still, what was she to him? We don't know. I'm told that she made quite a fuss about her things."

"She expressed a certain amount of anxiety," Warren responded. "I suspected that it was a question of identification, but the articles themselves don't support that theory."

"Jack may have taken out the joker if there was one," said the captain. "I figured myself that he might have swiped the property in the first place so that she wouldn't be recognized. However, we'll have to see what the lady herself has to say. How is she this afternoon?"

"I don't know. I haven't inquired."

"I wish you'd do it now," said Steinfeldt. "See if you can't fix her up so that she can talk to me, if it's only for two minutes. The thing has got to be done. I'll have to camp right here till that woman is ready to see me. I'm pretty near through with Miss Perry."

Indeed, the captain showed no sign of having another question in his ample bosom. Plainly he had no more to say while Warren was present; and the doctor, seeing that it would be useless to remain, made an ungraceful exit through the window.

Steinfeldt did not move except for his eyes, which covertly followed Warren's retreating figure.

"Now," he said, "we can talk more free; but you better shift so you won't have to speak straight toward that window. Your voice carries. Keep it down."

Eleanor drew a deep breath, and expelled it with an irrepressible shudder. Then she made the desired change of position.

"But I've nothing of any consequence to say," she remarked, by way of protest.

"Oh, yes, you have," returned the captain. "You know all about this case."

"Even if that were true——"

"You wouldn't tell me? Yes, you will. And why? Because you're a smart girl—the smartest I've seen in the fifty-three years that I've been alive."

"This is flattering, but contradictory," said she.

"Being smart, you won't tell. That's what you mean, I suppose, but you'll think different before I'm through. You may believe me or not, but my interest is to get you out of this tangle, and I'm goin' to show you how it can be done."

"I shall be obliged," said Eleanor. "It seems to me, however, that you're the only one who is trying to get me into it."

"There are people you don't suspect," he said. "Some of them are right here in this hospital. They know more than you think they do."

"As to what?"

"As to the one big point," said he—"the connecting link between you and these Wainwrights. There's the real meat of this case." He pointed straight downward with his fat forefinger. "One month ago there was eight thousand miles of God only knows what between your feet and theirs. Your head was stickin' out one way, and theirs the other, into the wind that blows around the world. Yet the same idea was in your mind that was in Cliff Wainwright's, and because of that fact Jack Robinson will be planted to-morrow. Reflectin' on a thing like that, almost anybody would want some kind of an explanation."

"Well," said Eleanor, "have you found one?"

"I have," responded Steinfeldt, his voice becoming softer and more intimately confidential. "In the month of January last," said he, "there was a man died in this institution. His name was Benjamin Stone. He was an old, lean, white-whiskered party, with eyebrows like a horse's mane. All gone when you got him; not worth repairing; but the wonderful methods of modern medical science kept him alive some weeks after he ought to have been dead. Harmless old bird to look at. You remember him?"

"Yes," said Eleanor, speaking with difficulty, for the captain's manner seemed to have expanded like a gas, to the exclusion of the respirable air.

"Nursed him, didn't you?"

"I was one of the nurses on that case."

"Well, you'd hardly think I once had a warrant for that man," said he; "but I did—about two months before he was brought here. I looked him up in a grand-larceny case, and this is what I learned: It seems he'd come all the way from Christchurch, New Zealand, where he'd been a lawyer's clerk, and a neighbor of your friends, the Wainwrights. Nothing against him out there. He was respectable, and thought to be pretty well off; but his employer died, and Stone quit the country. Drifted to Frisco, where he is supposed to have dropped his money in mining stocks; and then came here, flat broke, and took a job in a lawyer's office—not much above the office boy.

"He didn't stay long, and after he'd quit the firm discovered that somebody had been milking their mail very extensively. The case was reported on the quiet, and we found that old Stone—who had been on his uppers till recently—was now living very comfortable in a nice boarding house, money in his pocket, and a nervous, jerky smile perpetually coming out and then running back to hide under his whiskers. Looked conclusive, didn't it?"

"Yes," said Eleanor. "I suppose so. You questioned him, of course?"

"I did—and got some very pretty pipe dreams. Whether Stone's mind had begun to go wrong, or he'd always been that kind of a liar, I don't pretend to say. Perhaps he'd caught it here. New York is getting to be a place where everybody lies just like a child that can't tell where his imagination begins and the facts leave off. Doctors say it's a disease. Well, I thought Stone was guilty, and I had a warrant for him on my desk when one of my men brought in the real thief. Stone had nothing to do with it; innocent as a lamb. But where had he got his money all of a sudden? You know already, but I'll tell you. He was living on Jack Robinson."

"I understand from the newspapers," said Eleanor, "that Mr. Robinson was very generous."

"He was *not*," rejoined the captain. "Any man or woman who would talk like a fool and laugh loud could eat and drink with Jack; but when it came to separating him from a ten-dollar note—skin grafting was nothing to it. Stone blackmailed him, of course, and you know how it was done. No less than three people in this hospital have told me that Stone had something on his mind while he was here, and that he confessed to you just before he died."

Steinfeldt paused, his head drooping, his slow brown eyes watching her from under his heavy eyebrows.

"You've got plenty of sand," he said, "but I notice you're holding onto the arms of your chair pretty tight. Don't let go so sudden; that gives it away."

"Do you mean to imply that I tried to extort money from Mr. Robinson?" she said quietly.

"I know better," he replied. "In the first place, you wouldn't do it. You'd starve to death before you'd go against your conscience. But you've got the conscience of the rich, the high and mighty. The law don't cut much ice with you. It ain't because blackmailing is illegal that you wouldn't do it. It's because you ain't built that way." He studied her with languid, relishing attention. "You're an accomplice in a murder," he resumed. "I'd be justified in arresting you and locking you up. But I'll bet you never did anything that you're ashamed of. I know faces—few men better. And you could go to judgment with yours and get by without a question asked. I'm a Presbyterian," he added, with perfect gravity. "May not look it, but I am."

"I'm more afraid of you than the judgment," said she. "I shall at least know what that means."

"What *I* mean is to get you out of the trouble you're in," returned Steinfeldt. "And first we must get the facts straight. Benjamin Stone told you who

Robinson was, and why he disappeared from New Zealand after the accident in which old Mr. Wainwright was killed. He said that Robinson got away with a lot of money, didn't he?"

"If Mr. Stone told me anything," said Eleanor, "it was in confidence, and I shall keep it to myself."

"But you didn't," retorted Steinfeldt. "You wrote it to the Wainwrights."

"I don't admit it."

"You don't have to. The facts speak for themselves. Now, I don't pretend to know the exact nature of the yarn that Stone told you, and it doesn't matter much. Perhaps he believed what he was saying, and perhaps he didn't. I don't think he knew the difference, if you ask me. What came into his mind while he was talking was the truth to him. Say," he added, with solicitude, "you're looking pretty bad. You want to remember that I'm speaking as a friend."

"Please go on," said she. "Hurry! We may be interrupted."

"You thought that Stone must be telling the truth because Robinson had paid him to keep quiet. That doesn't follow. The chances are a thousand to one that Stone never knew where Robinson's money came from. Jack had a past; there's no doubt of that; and I suppose there was something crooked about the New Zealand disappearance. But, bless your soul, the pile that Jack had was too big. He's spent more money in the last three or four years than the Wainwrights ever saw.

"Now, of course, he has attracted the attention of the police, though no serious effort has been made to trace him up. I know more than anybody else, and it's not much. But I *do* know that he lived for a while in San Francisco, and that two of his closest associates were bank burglars. Several big jobs were pulled off on the coast about that time, and it's possible that Jack was concerned in them. It's possible he threw his pals, and got away with the most of the money. Wouldn't such a man pay a few dollars to keep Stone quiet, even if Stone knew very little more than Jack's real name and the New Zealand story—perhaps all wrong, at that, and mostly the work of the old man's imagination?"

"You think Mr. Stone was a—romancer," said Eleanor. "I saw no sign of it."

Steinfeldt rolled a pitying eye upon her.

"I know how you feel," he said. "There's a cold hand on the back o' your neck, the fingers creeping up into your hair. If the story that Stone told you was a dream, what kind of a position are you in? You and these Wainwrights have stolen a thief's money, and killed him incidentally while you were doing it. And you've got no justification whatever."

"I admit nothing," said she.

"Not even that you were present when it was done?"

"Certainly not."

"I guess you were," said he. "I guess you've given me good evidence of that. You say these photographs were taken early in April. Robinson had kept them all this time, and yesterday, of all possible days, he threw 'em away. Why? It looks to me as if he'd got 'em out to show 'em to somebody. They were right on top of the stuff in the waste-basket. Seems to me he'd have been more likely to show 'em to you than anybody else, and I guess it was one of the last acts of his life."

"The papers say that Mr. Robinson had been out," said she, "and that he came back just before seven."

"He did; and found you waiting. That's the way I figure it. Then there was a talk, and it became violent, and Clifford Wainwright, who was listening outside the window, on the fire-escape balcony, jumped in and interfered."

He stopped short, for she had looked him out of countenance.

"This is the New York disease," she said, "mentioned by yourself a moment ago. Your facts have ended, but your imagination is going right on. You *wish* I had been in that room, but you don't know anything about it. The truth is, I wasn't there."

"Perhaps not," he said, spreading out

his hands. "But it don't make much difference whether you were or not. You're a party to this conspiracy, all right, and the law makes you a principal."

"That depends on what really happened," said she.

"There ain't much doubt what happened to Jack Robinson," rejoined Steinfeldt; "and it occurred in the course of a robbery planned by you."

"It is true, there seems to have been a robbery," said she. "Several things were taken, I believe."

"Three," said the captain, holding up three fingers.

"I was about to speak of that. Has it occurred to you that they may not all have been taken by the same person?"

Steinfeldt's face brightened in a most remarkable manner.

"Now you're gettin' on," said he. "This is what I've been gradually working up to. Three things are missing—first, a box containin' money, hid under the hearth; second, Robinson's pocketbook; third, the pin out of his tie."

"Why do you say 'a box containing money'?"

"Because Jack had no business, no income, no safe deposit, no bank account. Nobody ever saw him draw a check. Yet he spent thousands, lived liberal, and was nowhere near the end of his pile, as I know from the looks of him. He had plenty, and for as foolish as the thing seems to you and me, there's no doubt where he kept the money."

"Where is it now?"

"You know a good deal better than I do. But," he added, with strong emphasis, "the pearl pin is different. I bet you did some hard thinking when you read about that in the papers."

"And you?"

"I think I know who got it."

"A *black* pearl, I believe."

"Black—yes. The same shade as Andrew."

"Understand me," said she earnestly. "I know nothing about this. I don't accuse him."

"Neither do I—yet," said Steinfeldt; "but I shall. Andrew don't act right. I thought at first that he'd let you into the house and was excited with the idea of making some money out of you and your friends. But after putting him through the thirty-third degree I'm satisfied that he's got no secret except his own. It's the pearl pin. And that leaves the very interestin' question: Which party got the pocketbook? Do you know?" He quivered with excitement. "I give you my solemn word I'll never use the answer against you or any friend of yours."

"I will tell you the truth," said she. "I know no more about the pocketbook than I do about the pin."

"All right; that settles it." He sank back, relieved. "Andrew got 'em both. His story about a man's jumping down from the fire escape is straight; but Andrew didn't chase the man. No; he went up into Robinson's room to see what was the matter—found Jack knocked out, and robbed him on a simple, natural impulse, thinkin' it would be laid to the party that struck the blow. Then he ran out to the street and raised a rumpus. His yelling 'Where'd he go?' and all that business never quite got over with me. Did it with you?"

"I had an impression at the time that he was overdoing it," said Eleanor.

"Now, then," said the captain, bending forward and speaking with conviction, "Andrew's a thief, and we've proved it. The thing to do is to put the whole business on him."

The proposal seemed truly infernal, and Eleanor paled with horror.

"The man's death?" she whispered. "You can't mean that!"

The seasick expression appeared upon Steinfeldt's countenance for the first time during this interview.

"Nothing like it," said he. "That would mean the chair, and I wouldn't stand for it. Besides, it couldn't be done. Robinson's dying statement settles that question; we know who did the killing. The thing is to put the best face on it that we can, reduce Wainwright's offense to manslaughter, and save you altogether."

"I don't understand."

"Because you don't know the law. If you were present in Robinson's rooms with intent to rob him, and a friend of yours was there on the same errand, and Robinson got killed as a result of it, the charge against you is murder. But if you were there on an innocent errand, and your friend, thinking you to be in danger, jumped in and hit Jack, you're only a witness. It all rests on the stealing of the money box. I know Andrew didn't get that; he'd have broken it open with an ax and run. Let your friends turn that box back, and I'll do the rest."

"Do what?"

"Put the box on Andrew," said the captain. "That's no injustice to him. He's a thief, anyway; and I'll make it my business to see that he gets no more time for the job with the box thrown in than he'd have got without it. I'm a square man, Miss Perry, and you can rely on me to deal absolutely fair with this nigger."

Eleanor made no attempt to understand the captain's confused morality, but she felt the need of further light upon his plan of action.

"How will this help Mr. Wainwright?" she asked.

"Does he need any help?" returned Steinfeldt. "Doctor Warren says he can acquit the man on this matter of his ankle. Let Doctor Warren go ahead and do it. Best thing that could happen. Turning back the money box will take the worst feature out of the case."

"And if it isn't returned?"

"Isn't returned?" echoed Steinfeldt. "Why not? What do they want of the *box?* I didn't say anything about the contents. Who knows what was in it, or ever will know now? Whose money is it? Miss Perry, the fact is that it can't be identified nor traced back. It don't belong to anybody. Robinson had no heirs. Do you want to see it go to the State of New York?"

"I'm sure I don't know," said she.

"That would be foolishness," he said. "The State don't need it. Tell your friends to turn that box back privately to me. Of course, there's got to be *something* in it. We'll settle the amount later, after I've found the pocketbook and the pin."

"Would you care for a key?" asked Eleanor.

Something in her tone seemed to hurt the captain's feelings.

"I tell you this money has no rightful owner," said he. "If it had I wouldn't touch a cent of it, not to put a roof over the heads of my children. I'm a poor man, and proud to be so, considering the opportunities I've had. I'm no grafter. Even as this case stands, with that money just as free as a nickel that you might find on Broadway, I don't want much. I'm acting for you more than for myself, because I like you, and believe you're a good girl. I've gone over the whole matter with you; I've told you the only way to get clear; I've shown you the thing that ought to be done. Turn that box over to me, stick Andrew for all the stealin', and acquit Wainwright on his ankle. Then we can all be happy. That's the safe lay. I've figured it out; I've set it before you friendly and plain. The rest is up to you."

He rose and poured out half a tumbler of grape juice. As he raised it to his lips Doctor Warren appeared at the window.

CHAPTER XIV.

The doctor's entrance just at the end of the scene was too well timed for Steinfeldt's views of what is natural. He guessed that Warren had been listening at the window, and also that he had not been able to hear anything worth while. Both guesses hit the mark. Warren, returning from his visit to the woman of mystery, had tried to overhear the last part of the conversation on the roof, and had failed. Something in the tone of the voices let him know that he had missed a very lively skirmish, but he believed that it could hardly match in interest the experience which he himself had had in the half hour of his absence.

He had found his patient in a greatly altered frame of mind. The despair which had shrunk her spirit to its small-

est compass seemed to have passed away, and to have been followed by a mood more buoyant than any she had shown since her misfortune. She had risen above mere obstinacy, and was ripe for active rebellion against fate. Warren was much pleased to note that she regarded him as a possible ally.

She appealed to him against the nurse's refusal to let her have a newspaper, and the edict against the press was rescinded. A copy of the *Evening World* was brought, and the woman plunged into the story of Jack Robinson's death. At the very outset she seemed to encounter some surprising statement, and for the next few minutes her mind was evidently the scene of much distracted thinking. What could have produced this result Warren was unable to conjecture. To the best of his observation, she read the introductory portion of the account over and over again, and went no farther.

Presently, in a breathless, agitated voice, tempered by slyness, she asked for another paper. Seven-eighths of the *Evening World's* narrative was on the inside, and only about half a column of plain type on the first page under the big headlines and pictorial embellishment; but the woman had given only a glance to the main portion of the narrative. It was against Warren's policy to ask questions; the most that he dared venture was a look of surprise, whereat the woman flushed and paled as if detected in a crime.

"There's nothing new here," she said hastily. "It's only what you told me."

"There's nothing new anywhere," he answered. "However, I'll get you another paper if you like."

He found an *Evening Journal* in the corridor, and the patient took it from his hands with breathless excitement painful to behold. As before, she read only the first part of the story; indeed, she skimmed over it so rapidly that Warren doubted whether she could have gathered much of the sense. Beyond question, she was satisfied, however; some single point in the *World's* narrative had been confirmed, and it was one to which she evidently attached the utmost importance. She put the paper down, and lay back upon her pillow, a red spot burning in either cheek, her eyes eager, bright, and as malicious as a cat's.

Warren, meanwhile, had glanced through the opening of the *World's* account, but he could discover nothing in it which seemed adequate to explain the effect it had produced. The writer of the article obviously did not believe that Robinson's dying accusation could be trusted, and he hinted vaguely that the police already had their eye upon a man who might have been mistaken for Clifford Wainwright; but Warren had touched upon these possibilities in his own story, and to find them mentioned in a newspaper could not have been particularly thrilling to this woman.

"Have you read enough?" asked Warren.

She did not reply in words, but she took up the papers again, first one and then the other, and glanced rapidly along all the columns devoted to the Robinson case. Evidently she was not reading; she was looking for something —perhaps a name. There followed a great struggle with her fears, throughout which she seemed to be steadily driven toward some act repugnant to her caution.

"There's somebody I must see," said she at last. "A friend of mine," she added, with such careful emphasis that Warren thought the person might more probably be an enemy. "Can he come here secretly? Can you manage it?"

"I can manage most things here," said he. "I'm the boss. But the spies of the police are outside."

"I think the police don't know this man," she returned. "Oh"—like a long groan—"if I could only trust you!"

Warren asked why she couldn't; and, after considerable fencing, gained his point. She confessed that she was afraid of Eleanor Perry.

"How do I know that you're not telling her everything I say?" she demanded. "You may be in love with her. I think you are, from the way you talked about her yesterday."

"You should use your common sense," retorted Warren. "If my relations with Miss Perry were confidential, shouldn't I know far more than I do about this case?"

"Well," she admitted, "there's something in that."

"Miss Perry tells me that she knows nothing about you. It's only from yourself that I gather even so much as that your interests are opposed to those of the Wainwrights. They profess to have no idea who you are. I heard Henry say so to this officer—Steinfeldt—and he seemed to be telling the truth."

"He'll know me when he sees me," said she. "I suppose they'll bring him over here. That'll be all right; I can trust Henry not to do anything foolish. I wish I was equally sure about you. I feel that you're on the other side."

"That's very flattering to me," Warren rejoined. "What is the other side? So far as I can see, it consists of the persons who robbed and murdered Robinson; and you intimate that I have joined that criminal conspiracy without a motive, without even an invitation. My natural sympathies would be with those who have suffered wrong, not with those who have inflicted it. And if you come to mere self-interest, I'm a doctor with a rich patient whose plight excites my compassion. I don't understand the details of the affair, but it appears that you are one of the robbed, not one of the robbers, and I am disposed to help you. I won't do anything dishonorable or too dangerous, but so far as I reasonably can I'll assist you to get what belongs to you, and I'll keep still about it. Is there anything strange in that position?"

"I don't know as there is," she said doubtfully; and then returned to the point from which all her distrust of him seemed to proceed. "There's one thing you need to understand," she said, with venom; "Miss Perry is concerned in this murder to the extent that you can't get her out of it. There'll be no use of your betraying me to help her. If I tell what I know she'll be lost—utterly lost—just as sure as fate."

"Well," said Warren, with wisdom imbibed from Steinfeldt, "what is there in it for you if you do tell?"

"What's in it for me if I *don't* tell?" she retorted. "That's the point." An anxious pause; then she demanded suddenly: "Do you know a man called George Brown?"

Warren shook his head.

"There is such a person," she said, "and I want to see him right away."

"I guess we can manage it," said Warren. "Where does he live?"

"Right across from John."

"John?" he echoed, for in her haste she had spoken the name with the familiarity of long and close acquaintance.

"Richards—Robinson, whatever you choose to call him," she said, with irritation. "George Brown lives in that light-colored building on the other side of the street. I want you to bring him here this evening—if he hasn't run away," she added, with sudden alarm. "Don't wait till evening. Go there as soon as you can, and tell him not to leave the city till he has seen me. It'll be the worse for him if he does."

"I think he's still here," said Warren. "It seems likely I've seen this fellow. What's his appearance?"

She replied with infinite caution, as if afraid of making some fatal blunder, that Brown was very much the same sort of man as Clifford Wainwright, except that he was younger.

Doctor and patient exchanged a long glance.

"I perceive what you mean," said he; "but aren't you jumping to a conclusion?"

"No," she answered quickly; "but you are. You *don't* know what I mean. You think you do, but you're mistaken."

"I guess not. However, we'll pass that point. What am I to say to Brown?"

"Tell him that I have seen the newspapers, and that I understand everything. I know who killed Richards."

"Then he *was* Richards?" Warren interrupted.

"Of course he was." And she pro-

ceeded with her message: "Say that I'll keep still, but that I'm not doing it for nothing. I know what my silence is worth, and they know what I want. You may say that I don't insist on all; that I'll make terms; but that I've got to be guaranteed fair treatment. They know what will be satisfactory to me by way of guarantee." She paused a moment to gather up her resolution. "I demand all the documents," she said. "Tell him that."

"Is that *all* I'm to tell him?" Warren said, playing his best for further information. "It won't do; it'll only frighten him. He'll skip, if I'm any judge of human nature. You'll have to coat this pill with a little sugar. He won't perceive your good intentions, I'm afraid."

She weighed this suggestion with painful anxiety, striving to measure her own judgment by his.

"I don't know," she said, with a groan. "Perhaps you're right. George is a fool—no, not that; but he's thoroughly English; you never can tell how long it will take him to understand anything. Say I want only the documents; whoever has the money can keep it. If I'm treated properly I'll hold my tongue—I'll say nothing that'll hurt any of them. Otherwise I'll expose their trick right away, and I'll make it as bad for that girl as I can."

"For Miss Perry?"

"Yes. She's at the bottom of it. Tell George I know that. He's a gentleman, in a way, and so are the others, especially Henry. They'll save her if they can."

"Suppose he says he hasn't any documents?"

"He'd better not!" she answered, with bitter emphasis. "Let him get them."

"But if he says he can't?" Warren persisted, appalled by the possible consequences of this demand. "How much time will you give him?"

"Time!" she cried. "Will they dare to talk to me about time? They're standing on the gallows' drop—all of them. Their lives are in my hands!"

"Even so," said Warren, "admitting that you can destroy them, that doesn't settle the matter. Can you save them? You can't win what you want by threats alone; you must have something to offer."

It seemed that this side of the bargain had not occurred to her excited mind. She stared at Warren vacantly.

"Why," she said at last, "I thought—Cliff's ankle—the newspapers say he couldn't have done it; they say you're willing to testify——"

"So I am; but that won't help Brown."

"Well," she said, sinking back into the pillows, "that'll serve for a day or two—perhaps longer. And they must have *some* plan. I can't tell what I can do till I've seen George. But—the documents; I've got to have them. That's the first thing."

"It will be hardly safe to bring Brown here," he said. "The police are watching, and they have several pictures of the man. They don't know of his existence yet, but he may be recognized."

"From photographs?" she said. "They may not look anything like him."

"I guess you've seen them," responded Warren. "They were found in Robinson's room. Captain Steinfeldt tells me you called there."

"Well, what if I did?" she retorted. "That's no crime. It'll have to be proved, though."

"And you think Brown won't be recognized from those photographs? You are a better judge of that than I am, of course, as you know the man so well. By the way, the name Brown is assumed, I suppose?"

She shut her lips tightly.

"You have told me that he resembles Clifford Wainwright," Warren proceeded. "Can he be the cousin—Leslie?"

"What do you know about Leslie?" she demanded. "Are you holding things back from me?"

He smoothed the matter over as best he could, telling her about the New Zealand cable which was not printed in the papers she had seen—editions of the early forenoon, purporting to be of later issue than they really were. Les-

lie, he said, was supposed to be in England, and had not yet figured in the case.

"He's not in England; he's here," she said. "And it's necessary that I should talk to him."

"I hope you're sure of your ground," said Warren. "A mistake might cost you dear. Doubtless you know who plotted to *rob* this man; but who killed him is an entirely different question."

"It's no question at all with me," she rejoined. "I *know*. And, what's more, I'm likely to tell—everything, everything!" She repeated the word with reckless emphasis, so that he glanced fearfully toward the closed door. "Let all these people understand that I'm ugly and desperate. If they don't satisfy me I'll send everybody to the gallows."

Warren stretched out his hand to calm her, and rose, not daring to prolong the interview.

"All right," he said. "I'll see this man, and do my best for you, but you mustn't expect too much."

"You know what I expect," she said —"the documents. Get them!"

He responded merely with a nod, and left the room. He was not wholly dissatisfied with the situation as it stood. Eleanor was in greater and more immediate danger than he had previously supposed, but he still hoped to save her, and he exulted in the thought that no one else could do it. She could be saved, if at all, only by guiding the course of the nameless woman's vengeance.

Warren now felt sure that he should have his patient's whole story if she survived to tell it. She herself could not be entirely innocent; her secrecy and terror were conclusive on that point. The truth, when he should have dragged it out of her, would give him dominance over her acts, and he hoped in the end to control not her alone, but all the other persons of the drama.

The fate of the Wainwrights was a matter of indifference to him; his purpose was concentrated upon their Cousin Leslie, whom he intended to destroy. To the fabric of that intent neither his reason nor his moral nature contributed a single strand. It was woven entirely of primitive emotion, born in us before we had either reason or morals. The long endurance of the last two years had worn the man's nerves threadbare; the stifling of his passion for Eleanor, while constantly and closely associated with her, had heaped up higher and higher within him the energy of that impatience which Hardy's chance disclosure had let loose. Instantly it had encountered other obstacles, fantastic and monstrous, and had swept over them; and some vital part of Warren's self-command had gone down with the flood.

He saw Eleanor in Leslie's power, so completely subservient to him that this murder, not only brutal, but base and mercenary, had not shaken her allegiance in the least. Her first thought, with the dying victim of the crime directly under her eyes, had been to be off and warn her lover. At that spectacle an elemental jealousy had taken possession of Warren's mind and soul, had assumed the direction of his thought and conduct with a frenzied insistence which those alone will understand who have themselves, in some most miserable passage of their lives, felt its infernal power.

As he went to rejoin Eleanor and Steinfeldt, to conduct the latter to the room of the patient, he was conscious of a pleasure in the thought of his coming encounter with Leslie, an aching curiosity to see the man and hear his voice, even to touch his hand.

CHAPTER XV.

The woman of mystery seemed to be a person of humble origin who had enjoyed for some time the advantages of wealth. She must therefore be credited with a considerable success in life, a success somewhat unfairly interrupted by the misfortune of her injury. But hitherto she had disclosed to Warren no talent which could account for her advancement, and he had been forced to suppose that it had been due

to her good looks alone. He was now to see reason to revise that judgment. For in response to Steinfeldt's questions the woman revealed a capacity for falsehood which might have bloomed conspicuous on the top of any organized industry.

With a perfect instinct for duplicity, she took advantage of the truth whenever it would serve her. The secrecy which she maintained, said she, was due to the peculiar nature of her accident. Certain members of her family, living at a considerable distance from New York, were in delicate health, and sure to suffer serious harm from any shock. How could she telegraph to them the news that she had broken her neck? How could she send any cheerful version of the story when the truth might be revealed by a chance paragraph in some newspaper? The only thing that she could do was to conceal her name until she knew at least the actual amount of the damage she had sustained, and what would come of it. Doctor Warren had promised to fix her neck as good as new, and she was waiting for him to do it. Then there would be no more mystery.

As to John Robinson, she knew no more than a babe unborn. How her stolen property had come to be in his apartments seemed to her a question not to be asked of her by the police, but to be answered by them for her satisfaction. Not that she cared at all; she had recovered her things—except a small sum of money stolen from the bag—and that ended the matter so far as she was concerned. She had not called on Robinson; and her manner of dismissing that question was a jewel of artistic mendacity. If certain people said they had seen her they were mistaken. That was easily enough accounted for; there must be plenty of women in New York who looked like her.

"No, there ain't," said Steinfeldt. "The supply is far below the demand."

She seemed pleased with this delicate compliment, but she insisted that she had seen several women of her own type pass along as she stood on the corner of Fifty-fifth Street and Broadway. One of these she had noticed particularly because of her nervous manner—and the fact that she had carried a bag and an umbrella. That was the person, perhaps, who had called on Robinson. She herself had not come from that direction, but down Broadway. And then, with the most engaging simplicity, she gave a sketch of her own doings during yesterday afternoon—a fiction so cleverly constructed that it would probably take the captain about a week to prove that it was not true.

Steinfeldt perspired rather freely during this interview, but he conducted himself with becoming moderation. Even after it was over, and he and Warren were at a safe distance from the patient's bedside, the captain showed no symptoms of violence; and "Ain't she a bird?" was almost his sole commentary on the incident.

As for Warren, he was greatly encouraged. The woman had not only stood true to the spirit of her agreement with himself, but she had shown exceptional ability which promised well for the future. She was more dangerous than he had supposed, and yet a better partner.

When the captain had departed Warren sent an orderly downstairs for a portable X-ray apparatus, which was brought to the private room behind the offices. He also sent a message to Eleanor, and while he was engaged in testing the machine she came to him. He gave her a brief account of what had passed between Steinfeldt and the patient, and she seemed to feel somewhat relieved, but very much more perplexed.

"Do you think any of her story is true?" she asked.

"Not a word," said he. "Steinfeldt failed completely, but I have, in a measure, succeeded. It seemed absolutely necessary to get the truth from this woman. I have extracted some of it, and I expect to get the rest. She is really as deep in this Robinson case as anybody else."

"I suppose she must have been a

friend of his," said she. "It seems very strange I never heard of her."

"She has the advantage of you there. She understands your position in the matter."

"He must have told her," said she. "This is all a complete surprise to me, of course. I had no idea he knew the slightest thing about me, but those pictures prove that he did. Yet why should he talk to this woman about the matter? It was foolish and dangerous, and the sort of thing he never did, so far as we could learn. I suppose the poor man had a heart, and it betrayed him."

"*He* may have had a heart," Warren responded, "but this woman hasn't any. Her feelings are entirely mercenary. What she wants is her share."

"Her share of what?"

"The money, I suppose."

Eleanor shook her head hopelessly.

"This is entirely beyond me," she said. "Did she mention the money?"

"No. She wants the documents. That is her first demand."

"Now, how in the world does she know that there are any documents? You didn't speak of them first?"

"Certainly not."

"I can't believe that Robinson told her the whole story. That would be too preposterous. And yet there's no one else who could have done it."

"She demands these documents," said Warren. "Do you know where they are?"

"I wish I did. But the last thing I'd ever do would be to give them to this woman, whoever she is."

"I think it will have to be done," he said. "Otherwise——"

"It *can't* be done," she interposed. "I know what she wants, but we haven't them; we didn't get them; we failed."

"If that's so, I'm afraid your game is up," said he; "but I won't believe it yet. I have promised this woman that I will see a certain man, a cousin of the Wainwrights—George Leslie, otherwise Brown. You know him, I believe?"

She inclined her head.

"My patient says that Leslie is a friend of hers," Warren proceeded; "but I believe the contrary. So far as I can judge, she holds him to be in the front rank of her enemies. She wants to see him, apparently to make a treaty, and I have given a qualified promise that I will bring him to the hospital."

"You mustn't do it!" she exclaimed. "But you can't. He won't come."

"Because the police have his picture?"

"He doesn't know that yet. He wouldn't come because there's nothing he could do. I begin to suspect there's nothing anybody can do."

The last words were accompanied by a change of manner, as if a new problem were forcing itself upon her attention. She sat down at the table in a student's attitude, striving with grim deliberation to think the thing out. She looked very youthful to the doctor's eye, and he was conscious of a twinge of pity, even of self-reproach. For certainly she had gone out into the world under his guidance, and this was the result.

"I want to see Brown—or Leslie, if that's his name—this evening," said he. "This woman makes very serious threats against him—against all of you—in case he shouldn't come to see her. She pretends to know who killed Robinson——"

"*How* does she know it?" Eleanor interrupted. "What ground, what evidence, does she seem to have?"

"I know only what I saw," he replied. "She read the introductions of the accounts in those two newspapers which are right under your hands. I brought them down here with me to study them. I had already told her the story of the case to prepare her for the interview with Steinfeldt, and she seemed to form no definite opinion then. However, she is so tricky that I can't be sure. I know only that after she had read the papers she declared that she knew beyond doubt who had killed Robinson, and that she would send that person to the gallows unless her demands were met."

Eleanor glanced down at the papers, handled them indifferently, as if she

were already familiar with their contents, and looked up at Warren.

"Well," said she, "I guess she can do it."

"Do what?"

"All that she threatened, or as much of it as the law will allow."

"You have identified her at last?"

"It would seem so."

"Because she was able to read between the lines of the stories in those papers? Is that what you base your opinion on?"

"Not altogether," she replied. "There are many persons who could do that. I judge more by her attitude. Where were my eyes?"

"Your eyes?"

"Women are supposed to see such things," said she. "In plain words, if she is—a certain person her hair is not natural—its color, I mean. And I described her as a woman of my own type."

"Oh, not the least in the world! Her hair was originally black. An Irish type; light-blue eyes, and black hair."

"It must have been remarkably well done," Eleanor said. "I should have asked the nurse; yet I never thought of it. I relied upon myself—as I have done in other particulars of this affair, with the same gratifying success. Even now I'm not sure who this woman is. Will you ask Mr. Wainwright if his stepmother's hair had begun to turn gray? Being a man, he might not think of that, but it would make this transformation much more probable. She wouldn't have had it done merely for disguise."

"I will prepare Henry's mind before they bring him here," said Warren.

"Please tell him that I haven't given up," she said. "I have had a little encouragement to-day, and I expect more this evening. There really is some hope for us. Make them believe that—especially Henry. He is such a despondent person—and so good, so perfectly a gentleman. I can bear to think of Clifford, though I suppose he suffers worse—but Henry goes straight to my conscience like a sin."

"Cast it on Fate," said he. "A gentleman will be always the very bull's-eye of her target. We can't help that. By the way, who did you originally suppose our patient was?"

"We thought she might be some one from San Francisco. Mrs. Wainwright has a number of friends there, and we know nothing at all about them, except that there's one whose name begins with a W, who has been on the stage, and is said to be very pretty. We thought this person might be she, and that Mrs. Wainwright had cabled her to come on here."

"For what purpose?"

"To get ahead of us," said Eleanor; "and she seems to have done it."

"I suppose you will warn Mr. Leslie," said he. "Will he run away? Our patient seemed to think he might."

"Why do you always speak of him in that tone?" she asked. "I can't understand it. You seem determined to dislike him, and it's very unfortunate, because he won't be at all prepared for it. He'll receive you as the best of my friends—the one who has helped me most and been most kind to me. He's shut up like the Roman sentry at Pompeii, heroically doing nothing, and waiting for destruction. It's lonesome, you see, and I fancy he'll be glad to pour out his heart to anybody in whom he has confidence. Is it quite fair that you should go to him, in his peril, with the sentiments of an enemy?"

Warren did not dare pretend to take offense. He thought of only one thing—that she might prevent his meeting Leslie. Self-interest controlled him, and he lied like a huckster.

"Whatever I may think of Mr. Leslie," he protested, "it is impossible that I should injure him. Meeting him in this way, through you, I shall be under certain obligations, of course."

This perjury had slipped from his tongue in mere eagerness; he understood the baseness of it. When their appointment for the evening had been made, and she was gone, he stood for some while with his face in his hands, the prey of shame.

CHAPTER XVI.

A squad of photographers, including several woman, kept watch around the St. Giles, with two policemen to hold them in check; and Warren and his orderly with the X-ray machine were "snapped" from all angles as they passed from their cab to the hotel. The doctor's path was beset by interviewers who barred him out of the elevator as long as possible, and then followed him in. But the fifth floor was evidently protected by a taboo of the police, for Warren was not followed when he forced his way out of the car at that level.

The questions which had been put to him seemed to indicate a change of feeling adverse to Clifford Wainwright. Practically all the morning and early-afternoon papers had emphasized a single aspect of the case—the salvation of Wainwright by a strange freak of fortune in the form of a sprained ankle. The trick of modern journalism is to seize upon the one striking feature of an affair, simplify it so that the dullest dog can understand it, and then "build it up," as the phrase is—make it big and important.

In order to build up the sprained ankle, it had been necessary, of course, to shout aloud that Wainwright had really been saved by it. The accusation and the odd defense were set against each other in the strongest manner, and the other elements of the mystery were subordinated, or made into separate stories. This effect had been produced—it had been flashed for a moment on the picture screen of the press, and had passed into darkness. Something new must be prepared, another slide for the magic lantern, and the indications seemed to be that Wainwright would not fare so well in the next view to be thrown upon the canvas.

Perhaps Captain Steinfeldt had been talking. At any rate, the same doubt which the captain had expressed to Warren was echoed in the questions of the reporters. They had caught the rumor that there might be something spurious in Wainwright's injury. They asked what was the real object of the X-ray examination. Had Steinfeldt demanded it? When would the result be known? Would Warren give it out?

To these inquiries Warren replied that the examination was to be made in the interests of the patient alone; that Mr. Wainwright would probably have no objection to the publication of the results; and that, no matter what the X ray might reveal, the injury to the ankle was serious; it had occurred some while before the murder, and it absolutely negatived and nullified the accusation of the dying man—so far as this particular Clifford Wainwright was concerned. These remarks, as often as they were repeated, visibly discouraged the gentlemen of the press, showing that Wainwright, whose fortunate escape had been so generously acclaimed in the morning, was now the favorite object of suspicion.

A detective hovered about the door of 503, but there was no guard in the apartments. Henry Wainwright answered the doctor's summons, and expressed great pleasure at his coming. Clifford sat by a window in the bedroom, his injured limb supported on a chair, the floor beside him littered with newspapers. He showed the effects of pain and sleeplessness, and there was a wild look in his bloodshot eyes.

"My brother is affected by the heat," said Henry. "You may have heard New Zealand called the cold-storage country? We're not used to this sort of thing."

"New York is a charming place," said Clifford, with a groan. "We are having a delightful time."

Meanwhile, he had been eying the X-ray apparatus with evident uneasiness, seeming to know what it was even while the two cases in which it was carried remained closed. Both the brothers opposed the examination at the first mention, Clifford flatly refusing to submit to it. Warren feigned surprise.

"I understood that you desired it," said he, and privately gave his orderly a sign to withdraw.

When the man had gone Warren laid the matter before the Wainwrights in plain terms, telling them that the effect of their refusal would be disastrous. The ankle was Clifford's defense; it was beginning to be viewed with suspicion, and the one thing absolutely necessary was to check false rumors at the start.

"If you decline to have the injury photographed," he urged, "every paper in this city will clamor for your arrest, and not in vain, I'm afraid. But if I can get a plate to show what I believe is really there that will settle it, and they'll all go off on another trail."

"What is there?" Clifford asked.

"I have begun to cherish the hope that I may find a fracture," answered Warren, with a smile. "The public would be more impressed by that than by any sprain."

"I don't see how I could have got a fracture just by turning it over in the way I did," Clifford insisted; but the doctor assured him that it was perfectly possible, and that he himself had seen innumerable instances. To overlook a fracture in a case of "sprained" ankle is—or, at least, used to be—one of the commonest errors of diagnosis.

There were really not two sides of the argument; to decline the examination was now practically impossible, and Clifford grudgingly submitted his wounded ankle for ten seconds or thereabouts to the exploring beam that pierces muscle and bone.

Warren had made arrangements to develop his plate immediately; the process is not long, and he was very expert. Not the smallest mishap marred the result, and never in his extensive experience had Doctor Warren viewed a sciagraph with anything approaching the satisfaction he derived from this one.

There is in the human ankle a bone that bears the pleasant name astragalus, which it owes to the Greeks. It is quite a large bone, and the leg is set on the top of it, something like the handle of a crutch turned upside down. The astragalus of Mr. Clifford Wainwright was portrayed upon the plate in a faint gray tone, because its fabric offered more resistance to the light than that of the adjoining softer substances whose shapes were darkly pictured. But the astragalus was not all gray; there extended through it a narrow, slightly irregular line that was almost black. It was a fracture; and if the doctor had had it made to his own order it could not have pleased him better.

He had secluded himself in the sitting room while busy with the simple chemistry of the shadow picture's development; he now returned to the brothers, who were waiting for him with extreme anxiety.

"There is a fracture," said he; "but the condition shown is not alarming—from a surgical standpoint."

His last words were uttered in a tone highly significant, and they were followed by a painful silence.

"From a surgical standpoint?" said Clifford. "What do you mean by that? If the thing's not going to cripple me, where's the alarm? I can hear it in your voice, though."

"Let us all speak very softly," interposed Henry. "There are persons in the corridor, of course."

Warren addressed himself to Clifford.

"I am sorry to be obliged to say that this injury cannot have been sustained in the manner you have described to me," said he. "It was not caused by turning the ankle, but by falling upon the heel from a considerable height. Your brother has studied medicine, I believe," he added, giving the plate to Henry. "I think he will concur with me in the view I have expressed."

Henry's eyes were already on the sciagraph; he gave it just one long glance, and turned to Warren with a deference very gracefully expressed.

"My concurrence can add nothing to any opinion of yours," said he, "nor could my dissent be weighed against it. What do you infer from this picture?"

"Why, the thing seems perfectly plain," Warren replied. "Your brother didn't stumble at the foot of the stairs; he was some distance up, and when he

lost his balance he had to jump to the bottom. I was prepared for something of this kind. It was reported to me that his fall shook the house."

"My brother is a very large man and——"

"Oh, nonsense, old chap," Clifford interrupted. "I'm caught, right enough. That was the way of it, Doctor Warren; but is it necessary to say anything about this?"

"That picture must be published," Warren replied. "We can't withhold it; we don't dare. Other surgeons will see it, and they'll know what it means—a few of them. The newspapers will get the facts."

"Do you think it's likely to do my brother harm?" Henry asked.

"I'm afraid it will," said Warren. "He told the same story of this accident to Captain Steinfeldt as to me. Steinfeldt will ask him the same question that I ask now: Why didn't he tell the truth?"

"Brother," said Clifford, "can you think of anything?"

Warren interposed: "Let's get down to the real reason; we'll fix up a story afterward. You had heard of this murder; you knew that you were accused of it; you knew how the murderer escaped by jumping from the balcony. And you were afraid to say that your own injury had been caused by jumping from a height. You shied from the coincidence. It was a natural thing to do, a simple human impulse of caution; but it was a mighty bad mistake."

There was a kind of sickening pause, as if they were all falling through a shaft.

"This is the devil and all," said Clifford softly. "It's lucky you're the doctor, and the other fellow's the detective. He may be a human bloodhound for anything I know to the contrary, but I'd rather take a chance with him than with you."

Warren was impervious to this flattery, and made no acknowledgment.

"Understand me," said he, tapping the picture plate with his finger; "we haven't proved that you committed this murder; we've proved that you didn't. *But where did you get the information about it?*"

The brothers stared at each other blankly.

"There's no way out," said Clifford at last, speaking almost in a whisper. "George will have to stand for it." At that Henry raised a hand in protest, but his brother continued, in the same hushed voice: "Let's see what Doctor Warren thinks of it, anyway. Doctor, the fact is that we have a cousin in the city, though the police don't know it. He has been here some while; he is acquainted with Miss Perry, and it is through him that we have had the pleasure of meeting her. Because he is a friend of hers, we feel sure, of course, that you will be doubly careful not to say anything that might injure him. He has done no wrong in this affair, but we want to keep his name out of it if we can."

"If he is drawn into it," said Henry, "there would be great difficulty in keeping Miss Perry from serious annoyance. They have been rather closely associated in certain matters."

"It was your cousin who called you up by telephone, I suppose?" said Warren, addressing Clifford.

"Precisely," was the reply. "He happened to be on the scene, and he heard that fellow accuse me. So naturally he let me know about it as soon as he could."

"Did he tell you that Robinson's assailant jumped from the fire balcony?"

"Yes," said Clifford. "Yes. Somebody jumped down on top of that colored man, and pitched him through the window. It's the same story that's in the papers."

"Your cousin heard the colored man describe that incident, and he told you about it over the telephone?" said Warren.

"Exactly. That is, I got the gist of it. We were using a language in which we're not very fluent, but he made me understand."

"Some South Sea tongue, I suppose?"

"Maori. My cousin picked it up from his models. He's an artist, and

he got quite interested in our aborigines while he was in New Zealand. He spent a lot of time in the Coromandel region, and made some very clever pictures. A few of them were reproduced in English magazines. As for me, I've always had a smattering of Maori since I was a boy."

"He told you Andrew's story," said Warren, "and you and your brother discussed it, of course."

"Well, rather!"

"You were surprised by the accusation?"

"Stunned—that's the word. Otherwise we shouldn't have made this awful mistake about my ankle. But it was an odd fall that I had had, and we were afraid it wouldn't seem quite natural; it was so much like the other man's experience, you see. So we decided to leave the jumping part out of my story."

"Did you ask your cousin who it was that really killed Robinson?"

"Why—why, no; I don't think so."

"You must have asked somebody," said Warren. "You have learned, haven't you?"

Clifford seemed to suffer from a sudden spasm of pain. It was Henry who replied to Warren's question. "We beg of you to excuse us temporarily," said he. "We have not the slightest reluctance to confide in you, but we think the truth should come to you at another time and in another way. I am sure you will appreciate our motives when all is known to you."

"As you please," responded Warren. "I have no desire to meddle in your affairs."

At this Clifford seemed to revive somewhat.

"The point I was getting at is this," said he: "When the X-ray picture is printed, will anybody else but you be smart enough to see that I didn't tell the truth about my accident?"

"Yes," answered the doctor promptly. "The newspapers will bring up the matter, and the police will ask you to explain."

"If I admit that my information came in that telephone message, will the police be able to find out who sent it?"

"Not legitimately," said Warren. "Nobody saw him. But if the police learn that your cousin is here they'll conclude that he was the man."

"And what will happen then?"

"He'll be in the same position that you were in a few minutes ago. The police will ask him how he knew the facts that he communicated to you."

"He'll say he was up there," said Clifford, "on the scene, or near it——"

"I know how near he was," Warren interrupted. "I saw him. I know how much he could have heard on the scene of the crime or anywhere else. The accusation against you—yes. The matter of the window, and the jump from the balcony—no."

"I think you must be mistaken," Henry protested mildly. "The newspapers say the negro janitor, Andrew, ran out to the street, and met you, and told his story."

"Not on the street," Warren retorted. "He told it in the vestibule, and nobody heard him except Miss Perry and myself. If you mean to imply that your cousin got the facts from Andrew at that time, by overhearing what Andrew said to us, I tell you plainly that nothing of the sort is possible.

"A small crowd had collected, but they didn't close in on us until the very moment when we entered the house. Then they came in after us, and your cousin posted himself on the threshold of Robinson's sitting room; but nothing of any importance was said in that room until your cousin had left his place and the door was shut. The accusation came immediately afterward; the name Clifford Wainwright was spoken loudly two or three times, and might easily have been heard outside; but nothing else. It was as much as I could do myself to understand the rest of Robinson's story, though I had the fellow in my arms most of the time. No person in the hall could have caught a syllable of it. Very well. You say that your cousin told you that the murderer jumped out of the window. How did he know?"

There was no immediate answer. The three men sat in silence, with their heads together, for Henry had managed by warning gestures and by his own example to keep the voices down and to hold the little group close like conspirators.

"Your cousin must find another explanation," Warren resumed. "He got those facts somehow. Can't he tell the truth about it?"

"No," said Clifford. "That wouldn't do."

Warren devoted some moments to careful thought.

"Possibly your cousin knew in advance how Robinson's premises were to be invaded?" he said.

"He had no idea that they were to be invaded at all," responded Henry. "Let me assure you that there was no plan among us to attack this man, to rob him, or to enter his rooms for any purpose whatever. The person who went there did so as the result of the sudden compulsion of events. The act which resulted in the man's death was not dreamed of by the person who did it one minute before it was done."

"Again I ask the same question," said Warren: "How do you know?"

"I have been fully informed as to that," said Henry earnestly. "I beg you to accept my word. You will not question the truth of this when you learn the source of my information."

"When I *learn* it!" retorted Warren. "Do you think I don't know it? You are referring to the conversation you had with Miss Perry when she came down here in a cab. You are right in saying that I shall not question her sincerity, but where did she get her facts? Is it possible that she met your cousin before coming here?"

"I believe she did," Henry admitted.

"Then what she told you was principally a mere repetition of what your cousin had just said to her. She certainly didn't know so much when she left me in Robinson's rooms. We have now worked down to one person as the ultimate source of all the information that any of you had about the murder except the little that Miss Perry gained from the dying man's statements—the most important of which—the accusation—was not true." Warren touched Clifford lightly on the arm.

"If Mr. Leslie, a few minutes after the murder, knew all these facts about it, he must have done the thing himself," said Warren. "Under these circumstances, why does he remain in New York?"

Clifford raised his face suddenly at the mention of his cousin's name.

"Why do any of us do anything?" he groaned. "It's no use."

Warren disregarded this outburst.

"Has Mr. Leslie an alibi?" he asked. "Can he show where he was when Robinson was attacked?"

"Unfortunately he was alone in his apartments," Henry replied. "We hope, however, that he will not be drawn into the case."

"He certainly will be," said Warren, "just as soon as the police learn he's in the city. If they find him and question him, will he say that he was in his rooms alone when Robinson was killed?"

"What else can he do?" asked Henry.

Warren ventured a hint that Eleanor might attempt to protect Leslie by testifying that she was with him at the critical time, but it appeared that this was impossible, though the reason was not stated.

"The situation is obvious," said Warren, addressing Clifford. "You are permitting suspicion to rest upon yourself as long as possible in order to emphasize the importance of Robinson's accusation against you. For that accusation will be George Leslie's defense. I think you're quite right, and I believe you can save him. A disagreement of the jury is the worst he can expect, in my opinion. You will have my help, and Miss Perry's, of course; and we shall be the chief witnesses. For the present, Leslie must be kept cleverly under cover. I agree with you that his flight would be a mistake.

"And now as to this matter of the radiograph: If it creates the trouble we

expect, you mustn't say you got your story from Leslie. It will cost him his life if you do. Say you got it from me, and that you deceived me about your accident on the impulse of the moment. I'll back you up. It's nobody's business what I told you when I came down here. If the police don't like it, I'll suggest that they relieve their minds by thinking of something else."

Clifford sat up straight, and stared at Warren, and slowly extended a brawny hand in his direction.

"You'll do this?" he cried. "By the eternal, you are a brick! It makes me ashamed," he added, with obvious emotion, "that we can't be a little more frank with you. The fact is"—lowering his voice almost to a whisper—"we're afraid of listeners. There have been some queer noises on the other side of that wall behind me. But I don't think anybody could have heard us the way we've been speaking, do you?"

Warren assured him that it was impossible, and drew his chair a bit closer in the hope of more intimate disclosures; but in this he was disappointed.

Warren now played a much stronger card, the message which his patient at the hospital had given him for Leslie, her demand, and her threat. The Wainwrights seemed to be taken completely by surprise, and shaken to the marrow of their bones; but the shock did not dislodge a single incautious word from their lips.

"We don't understand this in the least," said Henry. "We don't know who your patient can be, nor what she means by this preposterous offer of a bargain. I must see her before I can form any opinion whatever."

Warren took this to be a lie, and he was naturally irritated to find that he had lost ground instead of gaining. He asked outright whether they believed that the woman at the hospital was Mrs. Wainwright.

"Impossible—utterly impossible!" Henry replied. "Mrs. Wainwright was in New Zealand when we left. How can she be in New York now? She didn't sail on our steamer, of course, and there has been no other in the meantime. You see, it's out of the question."

Here they were interrupted by the arrival of the orderly to take the X-ray apparatus back to the hospital. Warren remained a few minutes after the man had gone, but accomplished nothing. One may wonder why he should have desired any more. He had reached the point of moral certainty. It was Leslie who had told the story of the murder to the Wainwrights, giving details which proved at least that he had been present when the thing was done. Establish Leslie's presence, and then put him in the dock, and let the jury look at him; it would be quite enough.

There were still some points of Eleanor's connection with the case which Warren was not sure of, though his mind had been considerably relieved in regard to her. He now knew that she could not provide Leslie with an alibi; it remained to find out why. If she would not testify that Leslie had been in her presence when the crime was committed, it was probably because she couldn't. The need was certainly urgent; and though perjury might come a little harder to Eleanor than to ninety-nine other women in the hundred, the difference would not be perceptible in her conduct when the life of the man she loved was at stake. Not conscience, but the fear of contradiction, would restrain her. Somebody must know where she had been during the time in question; and it concerned Warren deeply to discover what the truth was in this matter.

His mind was already bent upon this problem while he took his leave of the Wainwrights. He walked slowly along the corridor with bowed head, thinking; but as he passed the window where he had encountered Steinfeldt on the previous evening a man who had been concealed in the shallow embrasure reached out and took him by the arm, deftly turning him around so that he faced the other way. In this position he was aware of Captain Steinfeldt beckoning to him from the door of the room beyond Clifford Wainwright's suite.

CHAPTER XVII.

The captain disappeared from the doorway as soon as he saw that his invitation had been heeded. Warren found him engaged in stopping a hole that had been cut in the wall next to Clifford Wainwright's bedroom. When this had been done he seated himself in the only chair on the far side of the room, and, with a wave of his hand, hospitably invited Warren to take his choice of the other chairs and bring it across. The doctor complied.

"That was a fine job," said the captain, referring to the excavation in the wall. "It's no cinch to go through one of these modern fireproof partitions and leave nothing on the other side but the paper. A man we call Lefty Scott did it for me. He's a burglar, but I suppose I'll have to pay him for the work. We've got nothing on him just now."

"Could you hear what was said in there?" asked Warren.

"Oh, yes, pretty well," responded the captain, with no great show of interest. "I got your point. It's good enough, but we want something better."

"The point is perfectly conclusive," said Warren, with decision.

Steinfeldt clasped his hands across his stomach as usual, smiled in a somewhat absent manner, and remarked that he was reminded of a story.

"What are you driving at?" demanded Warren angrily.

"Sometimes," said the captain softly, "a mere listener gets a different impression—different, and as a rule more accurate than that of the party that's talking."

"There can't be two impressions here," retorted Warren. "If this man Leslie told the Wainwrights how Robinson was killed, and how the murderer escaped——"

Steinfeldt raised a hairy hand.

"Precisely," said he. "If he did. But did he?"

"You heard me force Clifford Wainwright to admit it," Warren rejoined. "I put him in a place where he had to account for his information."

"You sure did. You had him fairly cornered. I'll admit that. You put him in a place where he had to string you, and he strung you—to the queen's taste."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that Clifford didn't have to be told anything except that Robinson lived long enough to name him as the murderer. That's all there was to that telephone message, and I'll gamble on it. Clifford knew the rest of it before—because he was the party that did the trick."

This obstinacy seemed more than natural, and Warren strongly suspected that it was not sincere. He asked himself what could be the captain's motive for pretending still to cling to the belief in Wainwright's guilt. It puzzled him.

"I find difficulty in understanding your position," said he. "Do you doubt that the man's ankle is really broken?"

"Not if you say it is."

"Isn't it a fact that Clifford's admissions to me, coupled with the evidence of the woman who heard him fall, are proof that he sustained this fracture here in the St. Giles about six o'clock?"

"That's the whole case," Steinfeldt rejoined. "Robinson was seen on the street, going home, about twenty minutes of seven. If Clifford Wainwright was crippled then, there's nothing to it."

"You still believe that Clifford was not much hurt by his fall on the stairs," said Warren; "that he was determined to go to Robinson's rooms in spite of it, and that he actually did go while his brother was away buying a bandage. And that afterward, when Clifford had been informed of the accusation against him, he and Henry fractured the ankle in some artificial manner in order to provide a defense."

"Yes," returned Steinfeldt, "that's the theory."

Warren now had the captain where he wanted him.

"I have sent my X-ray plate away to have prints made from it," he said. "The reporters will ask for them, and

I thought they'd better have good ones. The plate will be returned to me about six o'clock, and if you will come to my office I'll explain it to you. I'll prove to you beyond question that your theory is impossible."

"No, you won't," Steinfeldt rejoined. "The truth can't be impossible. I'm a practical man, doctor, and I know my business, which is the detection of crime. The story of Robinson's death, as told to me by you—and verified by other testimony—shows me that Jack named the man that done him. I don't care if the party on the other side of that wall has got two broken ankles and a broken back; he did the trick; he killed Jack Robinson."

Warren became angry under the influence of contradiction and of his own morbid prejudice and rancor.

"Do you intend to let Leslie escape?" he demanded.

Steinfeldt leaned forward and touched him on the knee.

"Not if I can get him with the goods on him," said he. "There was a money box of some kind stolen from Robinson. Somebody in this bunch is taking care of it. Is Leslie the one? Find out about it, and let me know."

The cat was out of the bag at last. Here was the explanation of Steinfeldt's attitude throughout the interview, his feigned indifference and digressions in the line of family history. Not the robber, but "the goods," was what the captain wanted, and he had taken his own peculiar way of leading up to the point.

"I'm trusting you full and free," Steinfeldt proceeded, "because I know where your interest lies. You won't throw me; you won't tip Leslie off. You're gunning for that guy, and I see it plain enough; but you'd better be careful. Don't make this a conspiracy, for if you do you can't keep Miss Perry out of it. I'm under bonds to help you do that, and, what's more, I'm in negotiations with the young lady herself on the same subject. I'll give her a reasonable time to respond, but in the meanwhile if I can get Leslie dead to rights, with something in his possession which definitely connects him with this crime, I'll do it. Then I'll force a confession out of him, and we'll have the inside facts to go on. Having those facts, we'll fix up a story for the public, and ultimately for the courts. It'll be straight enough, I guess—no great amount of perjury required—but it'll let Miss Perry out clear and clean. Are you on?"

"I suppose so," Warren replied. "Your proposition is not difficult to understand. You offer me Miss Perry's safety in exchange for my services in helping you find the property that was stolen from Robinson. But I don't know what it was, nor what's become of it. I should think, however, that the cash box, if there was one, would have been too dangerous an article to retain. If Leslie took it, he probably got rid of it at the earliest opportunity."

"You'd think so," responded Steinfeldt; "but my experience is to the contrary. In cases like this, men don't act promptly unless it's very easy. They drift along—and get caught."

"Our criminal is of a higher grade than that," said Warren; whereat the captain put on his seasick face in a mild manifestation.

"High grade nothing!" he said. "You'd do the same yourself."

It was a shrewd thrust, but Warren was too intent on other matters to appreciate the force of it. In his perplexity an idea came to him—the same that Steinfeldt had conveyed to Eleanor—the thing desired was not the box, but its contents.

"You believe that Robinson's loss was in money, don't you, actual cash?" said he. "How do you expect to identify it in case the box has been disposed of?"

"I don't have to identify it," the captain responded. "The party I find it on has to account for it. And he can't, because the wad is too big."

"How big?"

"I don't know," Steinfeldt answered honestly. "It might run into six figures, and I shouldn't be surprised."

This opinion seemed moderate to Warren, who knew the truth.

"And you think the money was the motive for the crime?" said he.

"I think it's what they got. What they were after I don't pretend to know. But it won't take me long to find out if I can catch one of them with Jack Robinson's bank roll in his clothes. Do you know where Leslie's living?"

Warren shook his head. He did not wish the captain to descend on Leslie prematurely.

"I didn't feel like asking the Wainwrights for their cousin's address," he said, "but I can get it. Leave the matter to me."

"Yes," said the captain, "that'll be the easy way, I guess. We don't want to show our hand to the Wainwrights at this stage of the game, nor worry it out of Miss Perry. She knows the address, of course. There can't be any doubt now as to who it is that figures with her in those photographs. Too bad—too bad! She's a fine girl, and it would hurt my feelings to show her up in this case. I hope my duty won't drive me——"

"You have agreed to protect her," Warren interposed. "That is the sole condition upon which I'm helping you. If you make any move against her I'll put obstacles in your way in this affair that will block you completely. I advise you not to antagonize me."

"Not for gold and precious stones," responded Steinfeldt. "I ain't looking for trouble—certainly not with you. I've got respect for your ability; I want you on the side of law and order, where I am."

Warren sneered at this unconsciously, but Steinfeldt did not fail to notice it. He patted the air soothingly with a fat hand.

"Don't let your feelings run away with you," he said. "You're a high-strung, overworked man, nervous as a cat, and too full of personal interest in this matter to see it plain. You're so worried about Miss Perry that you exaggerate what I'm offerin' to do for her. It looks crooked and funny to you, but it isn't. The same thing's done all the time. A number of parties are concerned in a case, and in order to get the ones we want we let the others go.

"The consideration for our doin' so is usually a confession; but we don't care where it comes from so long as we get it. I don't ask Miss Perry to confess, nor to do anything that will bring her into public notice more than she is now. All I ask is your help in recoverin' the stolen property. Ain't that legitimate?"

"Possibly," Warren assented; "but it isn't within the power of the police to promise immunity. If the district attorney should agree——"

"Is there any doubt of it?" Steinfeldt demanded. "I couldn't make a deal to protect the party that actually killed Robinson, but the door of salvation stands wide open for anybody else. You can gamble on *that*. This case looks just as tough to the district attorney as it does to me, and if he can see a conviction in it at no more cost than saving this girl's reputation, will he kick? He will not; nor anybody else. Well," he added, with a sigh, "that's all settled. You'll locate Leslie, and I won't try to do it by using those photographs, nor in any way connectin' Miss Perry with your friend." And he relished the start that Warren gave at that word. "Goin' up—goin' up!" he said. "Don't do it, doctor. Gee, but you're a bundle o' nerves!"

Warren did not relish being baited by a man of this type. "I will consider what you have proposed," he said, getting to his feet. "I take a perfectly calm, rational view of this affair. Miss Perry's situation appeals to me exactly as it would to any man of right sentiment who had known her a long time, as I have. If I am of a nervous temperament you are the first person that ever discovered it. I'm supposed to be about as susceptible to excitement as a brickbat. Don't be afraid that my nerves will lead me into any indiscretion."

Annoyed by having yielded to this fresh evidence of irritation, he made an impatient gesture of farewell, and turned toward the door.

"Good-by, doctor," said Steinfeldt

softly. "Don't take any wooden money." And with this conventional pleasantry he seemed to forget Warren's existence immediately, and sat slouching in his chair, clasping his stomach, and looking down along his waistcoat with a comfortable smile.

Warren opened the door cautiously; the corridor was empty, yet as he walked in the dim quiet of it he seemed to be observed by hidden eyes. He refused to be interviewed on his way out from the hotel, making but one answer to all questions: "Six o'clock at my office." At his own door, however, he was accosted by a single reporter who barred his way—the same man who had given him a card that morning outside the Flower Hospital.

"Doctor," said this person, "spare me a minute. I want to show you an aspect of this case. It's established that Robinson was Richards, the ex-coachman, and that the Wainwrights came here to see him."

"They say they didn't."

"But they did just the same. And they came openly, to a swell hotel, registering their own names, and taking no pains to keep out of sight. They consulted a reputable lawyer, and that proves that they were about to take some action against Robinson."

"I know nothing about that," said Warren.

"That action would have been taken to-day," the reporter proceeded. "The Wainwrights wanted something from Robinson—not his money, of course; that's ridiculous—I mean to go in and take his actual cash. They were after information, or documents, perhaps; that's the way I figure it. Now, what would have been the immediate result? One of two things—the search of Robinson's rooms under a warrant, in which case the money would have been found; or, on the other hand, a scare thrown into Jack which would have led him to put what he had in a safer place. Now, of course, they had an agent in this city—somebody who was keeping his eye on Robinson."

"I have heard of no such person," said Warren, alarmed.

"There must have been one certainly," said the reporter. "It's a long way from New Zealand to Sixth Avenue, and Robinson might have gone to Jerusalem while they were getting here. And I ask you who but that watcher of theirs would be likely to get onto the size of Jack's pile, and at the same time would know just how long he could wait before taking it for himself? Isn't it too much of a coincidence that Jack was robbed the very night before the Wainwrights closed in on him? Another day, and the money wouldn't have been there. Why, this case is a pipe! The Wainwrights' agent waited till the very last minute, and then made a play for his own pocket."

This theory fitted Warren's like mortar between bricks. It seemed as if the reporter must have actual knowledge of Leslie's status in the case.

"If your conjecture is correct," said Waren, trying to draw the man out, "I should think the Wainwrights would denounce their agent, and put the police on his trail."

The reporter smiled; he was an old hand at criminal investigation.

"Their man has given them a story," said he, "and they've fallen for it. Whether it was an alibi or an excuse I don't know, but he's put it over on them; that's evident."

"But Jack Robinson explicitly accused——"

"Oh, punk!" the reporter interposed. "Jack didn't know who beaned him; he guessed at it. Dying accusations are the devil. I've run up against them many a time. And so have you."

"All this may be true," said Warren, "but I can't help you to prove it."

"Yes, you can," the reporter insisted. "You can find out who the Wainwrights' spy in this city was. I'll give you a clew: It was somebody hired by Stewart, the lawyer, and that's why he's skipped. He's heard the man's story, and doesn't believe it. He declines to support or defend him. I—and probably others—would be making Stewart's life a burden this minute if we could find him. That's what he ran away to escape."

"I can't find him, either," Warren said; "and I wouldn't if I could."

"Why not?" the reporter pleaded. "My paper will spend big money on this case, and you might as well have a slice of it, absolutely on the quiet, of course."

"Excuse me," said the doctor. "I don't care to sell a man's life."

"Sell his life?" the reporter protested. "Why, the man's guilty, I tell you; he's a brutal murderer and a thief. It's my duty to hunt him down, and it's yours to help me."

"It may be so," Warren replied. "If the name comes to me I will then decide what to do."

The reporter begged hard for a promise that he should have this information first. He offered a very considerable sum, upon certain conditions, and Warren had difficulty in shaking him off and escaping into the house.

He remained within only long enough for the man to get out of the way, and then set out for the Lawrence. The situation had become extremely critical. On account of his relations with Steinfeldt, he could not afford to have Leslie exposed through the investigations of reporters. The captain would never hold to any bargain from which he had obtained nothing. There seemed no way to handle the affair except by putting the criminal and some part of the stolen money into Steinfeldt's hands before the truth should come to him through other channels. Warren had no doubt that Leslie was doomed, and that his fate would be richly merited from every point of view.

At the hospital he went to his room upstairs, and sent word to Eleanor. Almost immediately the head nurse appeared.

"You wish to see Miss Perry," said the woman. "May I ask whether she has told you that she intends to leave us? She has just said so to me."

"Did she tell you why?"

"She said she expected trouble on account of this Robinson affair, and didn't wish it to happen while she was a member of our staff. She takes everything so lightly I couldn't really tell how bad this might be; but it seemed almost as if she meant to go away—to leave the city. I hope that wasn't what she meant——"

"To leave the city?" said he slowly. "No, she won't do that. There will be no necessity for her to do anything at all. This is a wretched case, but she is not seriously involved in it."

"I'm very glad to hear she isn't," said the woman, with considerable feeling. "She frightened me pretty badly, though she behaved just as usual, except that she kissed me."

"That's clear gain for you," said Warren. "Miss Perry will remain right here, so don't be alarmed—and don't talk."

His manner was confident, cheerful, a very good assumption; but it fell from him instantly that he was alone. If Eleanor was preparing to leave the city, it meant that Leslie had decided upon flight, and that she was going with him. Warren would have killed Leslie to prevent this; he had fully reached the point where men do such things. But he was a little stimulated by the added excitement, and it was perhaps more easy than it would otherwise have been for him to avoid the fatal error of a violent scene. At any cost, he must preserve the arrangements for a meeting with Leslie in his rooms that evening.

He greeted Eleanor, when she appeared, with so bright a manner that it surprised her.

"What's this I hear?" said he. "Mrs. Landor tells me that you want to resign. What for?"

"I'm afraid this scandal makes it necessary," she said. "It is not precisely the way in which I should prefer to advertise the institution which has fed and sheltered me."

"The hospital can stand it," said he; "and as for your personal situation, I am more hopeful than I have been hitherto. I am getting very near the bottom of this mystery, Eleanor."

"No," said she, shaking her head; "there isn't any near. When you're near you'll be *there*."

"I'm very close to the man, anyhow," said he.

"What man?"

"The one that killed Mr. Robinson. I know who he is." He raised his hand, checking her. "I'm not going to argue this case with you—not now. There are points as to which I'm still uncertain—for instance, the precise reason why you and the Wainwrights shield this person."

"Why I shield him?" said she. "This is grimly funny."

"There is every indication that the man has played you false, and lied to you——"

"Mr. Leslie, I suppose? You are entirely mistaken."

"In what respect?" he asked. "Do you mean that he did not kill Robinson, or that he was right to do it, and has told you the truth about it?"

"Both," said she. "He didn't do it, and he hasn't deceived me as to the smallest particular of his conduct. He wouldn't, and there's no reason why he should."

He held himself in restraint, though he could more easily have raved at her.

"I am preserving an open mind so far as I can," said he. "Possibly a meeting with the man may alter my opinion. It is now doubly necessary that I should see him. His name arose in the conversation I have just had with the Wainwright brothers; in fact, without intending to do so, I nearly forced them to admit that Leslie did the thing. Unfortunately Captain Steinfeldt was listening in an adjoining room, and heard a part of what was said. He questioned me about it afterward, and, while he still holds absurdly to the theory of Clifford Wainwright's guilt, he means to find Leslie and force a confession from him. Can he do it?"

"Find him?" said she. "Why, yes, I suppose so. But as to a confession—never; not a word."

"Are you sure?" he persisted. "Don't you think it would be better for Leslie to run for it and avoid this questioning? Steinfeldt is a hard man to deal with."

"If he were twenty times harder it wouldn't make any difference," she said. "Mr. Leslie won't confess."

"Do you say this because of your confidence in him or because of the situation in which he is placed?"

"Because of everything," she answered. "I wish I could explain it to you. If I could you'd see as plainly as I do that a confession from Mr. Leslie is not to be dreamed of."

She spoke with extreme seriousness, and her lips closed tightly afterward; yet she smiled—not in the manner of the trifler, but quietly defiant of the cruel facts of life. Warren was convinced, though his distracted mind missed the full possible meaning of what she had said.

"Very well," said he. "I will not venture upon any advice until I shall have seen Mr. Leslie this evening. You and I are to meet, as I understand your plan, at a little restaurant on Fifty-sixth Street kept by a person named Benoit. You will take care that you are not followed, of course."

"I think it doesn't matter very much," said she, "but I will."

"Word of honor that you will meet me there?"

"Surely," she said, "unless I'm positively prevented. Why not?"

He did not answer, but stretched out his hand, and she gave him hers in pledge.

He left her, and returned to his house. The interview had deepened his conviction of Leslie's guilt and of his treachery to his associates. Evidently he had told them a story far too wild for the police—a shallow imposition. That it had deceived Eleanor was a consideration of no weight; she was in love, and her wits were gone. Every meeting between Leslie and Eleanor was a wrong to her, for the man was a liar and a traitor. The brief, ill-fated story of their love, their actual relation to each other, their present plans were known to Warren only through unsubstantial inferences, but he knew one thing surely—that the story and the plans and the relation must be brought to an end. The safe

way to do it was to put Leslie behind the bars of a cell.

This thought ran through Warren's mind constantly while he was receiving the reporters from six o'clock till half past seven. When they were gone he tried to eat some dinner brought in from a neighboring restaurant, but the most of his attention was concentrated upon something which lay near his plate —something which might feed a multitude, though it could not be eaten in its present form. It was the half million dollars which had come from the cash box of John Richards, alias Robinson.

Three of the packets—those stamped with red ink—had been seen by Eleanor and Hardy, and while a positive identification might not be possible it would be better to trap Leslie by means of the other two packets, which were stamped in black. One alone would meet Steinfeldt's estimate of "six figures," and would serve quite as well if hidden in Leslie's rooms and found there by the captain, for the basis of an attempt to force a confession.

But Leslie would not confess, and the wrath of Steinfeldt would descend upon him in consequence. He would become an object of the vengeance of the police, which may well be fatal to the innocent; and as Leslie had the disadvantage of being guilty there could be no doubt as to what would become of him.

After long hesitation, Warren decided to use only a single packet. He must hide it undetected, in the presence of two persons, and as he had no special skill in legerdemain he would better make his task as easy as possible. This consideration was what turned the scale; he chose one packet, and set the other four aside.

When his mind was cleared of this debate there remained another question undecided. He knew that his own safe was not a proper place of deposit for four hundred thousand dollars of stolen money, but his ingenuity failed to suggest any other. His inward promptings upon this important point seemed to be strangely vague and childish, based upon unreal conditions, and changing like the circumstances of a disturbed dream. But the simple thing in which his danger really lay never entered into Warren's fancy, nor did any vision show him the face of Nemesis.

TO BE CONTINUED IN NEXT ISSUE, ON SALE AUGUST 7TH.

THE WRONG WEAPON

CAPTAIN HARRY CLOTWORTHY, who was a cowboy in the rough, tough old days in the West, tells this story to show the iron nerve and marvelous courage of the men who used to ride the range:

A cow-puncher went into the restaurant of a frame hotel in a little town, and ate prodigiously. He ordered something every minute, and his jaw action was as fast as the footwork of the proprietor in running to him with the stews, beefsteaks, and pies. When it was all over, the hotel keeper presented the bill.

"Charge it," said the cow-puncher. "I haven't got a cent."

"You'll pay this bill," said the proprietor, who had a dark and lowering look, "or I'll know the reason why!"

"But I can't pay it. I tell you I haven't got a cent."

At that the proprietor leaped over three tables, and flourished his revolver at the cow-puncher.

"Ah," said the hero calmly, "what is that?"

"It's a gun!" shouted the landlord.

"Oh," said the cowboy lazily; "you frightened me at first. But I don't care anything about a gun. I thought it was a stomach pump."

The Retroactive Existence of Mr. Juggins

By Stephen Leacock

A parable, rather than a story. It may fit you, or one or more of your friends. But if you pass it along, we earnestly recommend you first to run back over your own actions and see if the truth of the parable isn't applicable, at least to some extent, to yourself. We confess to a liking for this sort of thing—it sets us thinking, and anything that does that is good for us.

I FIRST met Juggins—to really notice him—years and years ago as a boy out camping. Somebody was trying to nail up a board on a tree for a shelf, and Juggins interfered to help him.

"Stop a minute," he said; "you need to saw the end of that board off before you put it up." Then Juggins looked around for a saw, and when he got it he had hardly made more than a stroke or two with it before he stopped. "This saw," he said, "needs to be filed up a bit." So he went and hunted up a file to sharpen the saw, but found that before he could use the file he needed to put a proper handle on it; and to make the handle he went to look for a sapling in the bush; but to cut the sapling he found that he needed to sharpen up the ax. To do this, of course, he had to fix the grindstone so as to make it run properly. This involved making wooden legs for the grindstone. To do this decently Juggins decided to make a carpenter's bench. This was quite impossible without a better set of tools. Juggins went to the village to get tools, and, of course, he never came back.

He was rediscovered, weeks later, in the city, getting prices on wholesale tool machinery.

After that first episode I got to know Juggins very well. For some time we were students at college together. But Juggins somehow never got far with his studies. He always began with great enthusiasm, and then something happened. For a time he studied French with tremendous eagerness. But he soon found that for a real knowledge of French you need to first get a thorough grasp of old French and Provençal. But it proved impossible to do anything with these without an absolutely complete command of Latin. This Juggins discovered could only be obtained, in any thorough way, through Sanskrit, which, of course, lies at the base of it. So Juggins devoted himself to Sanskrit until he realized that for a proper understanding of Sanskrit one needs to study the ancient Iranian, the root language underneath. This language, however, is lost.

So Juggins had to begin over again. He did, it is true, make some progress in natural science. He studied physics, and rushed rapidly backward from forces to molecules, and from molecules to atoms, and from atoms to electrons, and then his whole studies exploded backward into the infinities of space, still searching a first cause.

Juggins, of course, never took a degree, so he made no practical use of his education. But it didn't matter. He was very well off, and was able to go straight into business with a capital of about a hundred thousand dollars. He put it at first into a gas plant, but found that he lost money at that because of

the high price of purchasing the coal to make gas. So he sold out for ninety thousand dollars, and went into coal mining. This was unsuccessful because of the awful cost of mining machinery. So Juggins sold his shares in the mine for eighty thousand dollars, and went in for manufacturing mining machinery. At this he would have undoubtedly made money but for the enormous cost of gas needed as motive power for the plant. Juggins sold out of the manufacture for seventy thousand, and after that he went whirling in a circle, like skating backward, through the different branches of allied industry.

He lost a certain amount of money each year, especially in good years when trade was brisk. In dull times when everything was unsalable he did fairly well.

Juggins' domestic life was very quiet.

Of course, he never married. He did, it is true, fall in love several times, but each time it ended without result. I remember well his first love story, for I was very intimate with him at the time. He had fallen in love with the girl in question utterly and immediately. It was literally love at first sight. There was no doubt of his intentions. As soon as he had met her he was quite frank about it. "I intend," he said, "to ask her to be my wife."

"When?" I asked. "Right away?"

"No," he said; "I want first to fit myself to be worthy of her."

So he went into moral training to fit himself. He taught in a Sunday school for six weeks, till he realized that a man has no business in divine work of that sort without first preparing himself by serious study of the history of Palestine. And he felt that a man was a cad to force his society on a girl while he is still only half acquainted with the history of the Israelites. So Juggins stayed away. It was nearly two years before he was fit to propose. By the time he was fit, the girl had already married a brainless thing in patent-leather boots who didn't even know who Moses was.

Of course, Juggins fell in love again. People always do. And, at any rate, by this time he was in a state of moral fitness that made it imperative.

So he fell in love—deeply in love this time—with the eldest Miss Moneycuft. Naturally he did; who wouldn't? She was only called eldest because she had five younger sisters; and she was very poor, and awfully clever, and trimmed all her own hats. Any man, if he's worth the name, falls in love with that sort at first sight. So of course Juggins would have proposed to her, only when he went to the house he met her next sister; and of course she was younger still, and, I suppose, poorer, and made not only her own hats but her own blouses. So Juggins fell in love with her. But one night when he went to call the door was opened by the sister younger still, who not only made her own blouses and trimmed her own hats, but even made her own tailor-made suits. After that Juggins backed up from sister to sister till he went through the whole family, and in the end got none of them.

Perhaps it was just as well that Juggins never married. It would have made things very difficult, because of course he got poorer all the time. You see, after he sold out his last share in his last business he bought with it a diminishing life annuity, so planned that he always got rather less next year than this year, and still less the year after. Thus if he lived long enough he would starve to death.

Meantime, he has become a quaint-looking elderly man, with coats a little too short and trousers a little above his boots, like a boy. His face, too, is like that of a boy with wrinkles.

And his talk now has grown to be always reminiscent. He is perpetually telling long stories of amusing times that he has had with different people that he names.

He says, for example:

"I remember a rather queer thing that happened to me on a train one day——"

"And if you say "When was that, Juggins?" he looks at you in a vague way, as if calculating, and says: "In

eighteen-seventy-five, or eighteen-seventy-six, I think, as near as I recall it——"

I notice, too, that his reminiscences are going farther and farther back. He used to base his stories on his recollections as a young man; now they are farther back.

The other day he told me a story about himself and two people that he called the Harper brothers, Ned and Joe. Ned, he said, was a tremendously powerful fellow.

I asked how old Ned was, and Juggins said that he was three. He added that there was another brother not so old, but a very clever fellow, about—here Juggins paused and calculated—about eighteen months.

So then I realized where Juggins' retroactive existence is carrying him to. He has passed back through childhood into infancy, and presently, just as his annuity runs to a point and vanishes, he will back up clear through the Curtain of Existence, and die—or be born—I don't know which to call it.

Meantime, he remains to me as one of the most illuminating allegories I have met.

BEHIND THE SCENES IN BASEBALL

FIRST hurtling through the air, then plowing and scraping along the hard, merciless base path on his side, as though he were a nerveless bar of iron, scoots a white-flanneled athlete; the crouching catcher waiting to tag him is bowled over; the umpire tensely throws out both hands in token that the run has scored; and the fans, with a brief cheer of triumph, rush for the exits, too intent on reaching the dinner table to pay a thought to what happens after the final play.

Two or three minutes later comes the sequel, revealing the sort of grit and self-sacrifice which made the winning coup possible—unapplauded, unseen, unheard by any of the thousands who had cheered, but as much a part of that ball game as any act that took place on the field.

One of the victorious group of diamond gladiators steering for the clubhouse drops back and joins a man in civilian garb, who is following closely, but always last, like a shepherd caring for his flock. He carries a surgeon's grip. His weather-beaten face is set with the half worry, half scowl of a man who knows that he has a thousand duties to attend to at once, for the sliding and spiking, the wrenching of muscles and joints in desperate throws, or in sudden, tortuous movements, the bruises from wild pitches or strangely bounding balls, blocked sometimes at risk of life, have put a dozen young men in condition to call for first aid at the same time.

"Harry, I ripped that big scab off my right hip when I hit the dirt in the twelfth," the athlete nonchalantly remarks.

The trainer's glance combines admiration and satisfaction at his protégé's "sand."

"Well, your score tucked away the old ball game for us, son," he comes back. "I've got some more of that yellow powder I put on before, that'll dry it up in no time. Say, you certainly spilled old Ira when you slid into him, didn't you?"

And they discuss the play a bit, but as they near the clubhouse the player turns to the trainer with a grimace, and:

"Gee! That's beginning to sting now, Harry!"

The trainer hurries up the steps.

"Get your sliding pads off quick. I'll be with you in a minute," he exclaims, as they dodge through the door—into the esoteric little world behind the scenes in baseball, of which the public knows so little, though writers have pictured it, umpires, managers, and eminent players have exploited it, and even the "bushers" have revealed, in modish interviews, certain of its secrets.

The Man Who Revoluted

By Ledward Rawlinson

Author of "Inca Gold," "The Irrevocable Decree," Etc.

Following a heartbreaking domestic dispute, Juan Fernandez goes forth to war out of the parlor of his mud-and-bamboo cottage. Within twenty-four hours he is in the jungle pirouetting with a mighty army of five hundred barefooted belligerents. While no one was quite clear as to its aims and objects, this was one of the most serious revolutions that Nicaravia had ever known. There was nothing to regret, however, save a lot of unpaid bills and dead presidents. To Juan came honor, fame and power—as well as other things less glorious.

I SHALL go home to mother." The deadly words that have turned many a married man's blood into sherbet rang out clear, concise, and cold. Juan Fernandez shrank back limp and helpless; the cigarette dropped from his long white fingers, and lay on the floor, smoking. Carmencita, his pretty little bride of a year, was going back to the old dobie house on the banks of the Rio Negro, back to the old home with its carved oak doors and wandering balconies, and leaky roof. What a flood of tender memories rushed in on him as he thought of it! Her father had violently ejected him from that home on more than one occasion.

This grievous domestic disputation upon which you have been allowed to intrude took place in the parlor of a mud-and-bamboo cottage on the outskirts of the mud-and-bamboo city of La Flora, capital of the republic of Nicaravia. The walls of the room were covered with crayon portraits, colored lithographs of theatrical stars, dried grasses, and flies. Chairs stood in stiff and rigid rows round three sides of the room, and tiny tables, heaped with paper flowers, plaster saints, wooden angels, and miscellaneous bric-a-brac, blocked progress in every direction. Twenty-seven varieties of tropical birds hung from the ceiling—not by their necks, but in cages. On the floor lay a matting of plaited straw, on the matting a chained monkey and a pet armadillo.

You shall search in vain upon the map of Central America for the republic of Nicaravia. For several decades she played a prominent part in the discord of that ever-turbulent section of the Western Hemisphere, but in the fullness of time her reckless career was cut short, and she vanished as the morning mist before the sun, leaving nothing to regret save a lot of unpaid bills and dead presidents. Neither marble mausoleum nor mossy gravestone marks the spot on which she requiescats, but peace be to her ashes just the same.

Now to return to the cast.

Fernandez was about five feet high, and seemed to be at least thirty-five years old, though he was really twenty-five. Perhaps he owed this appearance of age to dissipation, for he dearly loved the sparkling juice of the grape, and the foamy essence of the barley and the hop. Nevertheless, he was still quite handsome, brimful of chivalry and romance, and had about him that inde-

finable elegance of manner and air of breeding that enables a man to live without working. Of a truth, he occasionally wrote snappy little ditties about graveyards, and lost souls, and winds moaning in cypress trees, and other stuff of that caliber so dear to the Latin American heart, but mostly he did nothing at all, and relied upon his father-in-law to give him his daily beans.

Carmencita was a chubby little maid of twenty, healthy and good looking, with dark hair, café-parfait-colored skin, and lovely black eyes.

Having delivered the aforementioned ultimatum that she was about to return to her mother, she stood like a Roman gladiatress with arms folded on her breast, panting from anger. Juan leaned heavily against the wall, endeavoring to conjure up some plausible excuse for sending a bouquet of roses to a charming young señorita of whom he had quite unintentionally become enamored. Genial, gay, gallant, and obliging, he was forever falling in love with some one.

The time was the hour of the siesta, and the whole city lay dead and still in the equatorial sunshine, absolutely the worst period of the day for matrimonial combats, or activity of any description other than somnambulism. Not a sound but the drowsy buzz of insects broke the stillness for three long minutes, then the remorseful husband spoke.

"Carmencita," he said, stretching out his arms appealingly, "I know I was wrong, but I'll never——"

The girl lifted a firm, protesting hand.

"You have promised to cease your attentions to Palmira Mendoza many times, señor," she answered, in an icy tone that sent the temperature of the room down to forty, and made the birds shiver on their perches. "You may have her now. I am going home, and to stay. I do not wish to see you, nor speak to you again. I hate you, I detest you."

"In that case I shall join the revolution," answered Juan, nonchalantly shrugging his shoulders. "It is sweet and honorable to die for one's country. When they bring my body back to——"

Carmencita laughed mordantly, tossed her head in the air, and left the room. His body wilted like a candle on a summer's day. He stared fixedly at his matrimonial adversary's retreating form. Five minutes passed. When he said the words, Fernandez had not had the slightest intention of joining the rebel army that had been roaming through Nicaravia for so long, but the more he pondered over the idea, the more it appealed to him. His father-in-law continually annoyed him with threats of violence unless he went to work, and shopkeepers continually embarrassed him with their bills. It would be a little fun and a blessed relief, and, best of all, it would bring Carmencita to her senses. For a few moments he stood deep in meditation, then he picked up his panama hat, turned abruptly, and went out through the patio to the street, defiantly whistling the "Marseillaise."

II.

Although he had never in his life handled a weapon of any kind save a gun in the days of his youth that shot a cork anchored to a string, within twenty-four hours the deserted bridegroom was in the jungle pirouetting on to war as blithe and debonair as if on his way to the bank to cash a check. His coat was yellow, with green facings, his trousers red as the setting sun. On his head was a gorgeous helmet, modeled after that worn by the Germen emperor on postal cards, and trimmed with gaudy feathers from the parrot and macaw. The murderous-looking sword that dangled by his side insisted on getting between his legs and tripping him, but he laughed and chuckled contentedly to himself.

Behind tramped a mighty army of five hundred barefooted belligerents, the pick of the jails and water fronts of Nicaravia. Bringing up the rear were three machine guns, a baggage wagon, and, last of all, a sorry-looking dray pulled by a team of oxen. The latter

contained a trunkful of medals, and other diademical decorations belonging to General Arturo Obligato Chincholo, the officer in command, a dark-skinned renegade who had devoted his life to the revolutionary business.

Chincholo was a self-made man. At the age of twenty-one, when he was young and poor, he hired a cellar and organized his first revolution. It was only a modest affair composed of five untrained braves, but by diligence, perseverance, total abstinence, and other trickery, he gathered in more men, and rose to be a power in the land. The general was short and fat, with white hair and white goatee. He had no neck; his head sat upon his stolid shoulders as a stone upon a wall. His uniform was a thing of beauty, cut in the latest style, and heavily barnacled with rolled-gold lace and medals. The white-plumed hat that went with it was missing. In its stead he wore a brown derby tilted at an angle of forty-five degrees. Perfectly devilish did he look.

While no one was quite clear as to its aims or objects, this was one of the most serious revolutions that Nicaravia had ever known. Under the command of Chincholo, it had been on the road for nearly a year, during which time the rebel losses had reached the staggering total of forty-one mules and seven men. Forty of the mules died of old age and family trouble, and five of the men passed away with acute indigestion aggravated by a raid on a bakery. The remainder, owing to a misunderstanding on the part of the government troops, expired from bullet wounds. That was a most unfortunate occurrence, but the president apologized for the error, and one Saturday night gave a banquet to the revolutionists as a further token of his regret. It was a very select affair. When the noisy worshipers of Bacchus could no longer sit upon their chairs, the waiters fed them champagne as they lay on the floor under the table. And there they spent the night, locked in each other's arms.

On Monday morning hostilities were reopened promptly at nine a. m., with the customary formalities and passionate "Viva la patrie" speeches. When the general raised his rusty sword in the musty air, and cried, "For God and country!" a yell went up that knocked the bananas from the trees for miles around. With us patriotism is only a smoldering fire that bursts out every once in a while when some one waves the Stars and Stripes on a vaudeville stage, but with the hot-blooded caballeros of Latin America it is, and always has been, a perpetual million-dollar blaze. There isn't a man who wouldn't gladly leave his wife at a moment's notice to fight for some snake-infested swamp he calls a country, where wild cats go prematurely wild, and mosquitoes carry off children to their dens.

Yet even to-day a Central American revolution is rarely a serious affair, certainly less dangerous than the average North American football game. At the same time, it affords an excellent opportunity for a man to get into fine physical condition. Running develops the calves of the legs, waving the arms makes the biceps and triceps stand out like coconuts, and shouting galvanizes the lungs. The hours are short, and, next to collecting affidavits for divorce cases, the work is the most interesting in all the world.

The day that Juan started his new job as lieutenant of the insurrectos, he learned as the morning wore on that a bloody battle had been arranged with the enemy. In the cool of the evening they were to meet and froth out the vials of their envy, hatred, malice, and other uncharitableness in a little clearing on the fringe of a mahogany forest where the noise of conflict would not disturb the natives nor frighten the birds. Juan did not like the idea of it at all, and suffered immediately from a numb feeling in the pit of the stomach, and a shakiness in the region of the knees that caused him to trail meekly in the rear. Thus early he began to lament his action in exchanging the sheltered life of the city for the indescribable horrors of war, and became utterly dejected and sad of countenance. Soon he made up his mind to desert at the first opportunity. The sparkle of his

joy had subsided completely; his ambition to be the harbinger of the liberties of a great nation became completely short-circuited.

About noon, however, a halt was made for luncheon, and under the influence of a bottle of vino tinto his spirits gradually rose, and drove away his fears. He was ready to fight a mountain lion with his fists now.

All afternoon in the merciless heat of the tropic day, the insurrectos trudged through towns, villages, swamps, and jungles, looting and pillaging en route. And the loot was good that day, too. At three o'clock, when Juan made an inventory of his spoils, he found that he had accumulated a solid-silver spoon, a solid-brass candlestick, a nickel-plated alarm clock, and a priceless old master. The last-named was stolen from a cathedral. It was a fly-specked painting of a melancholy-looking gentleman in evening dress, with that indubitable evidence of saint-hood—a halo—poised at a rakish tilt where an opera hat should have been.

Juan had to hire a peon at a peso a day to carry this relic, for it was to represent the philtre of his admiration for Carmencita when he returned to La Flora, covered with medals, and glory, and dust. As his salary was only fifty centavos per diem, out of which was deducted a fine of ten centavos for being late at every battle, and ten more for firing out of his turn or killing one of his own men instead of the enemy, it doesn't take a correspondence-school course in detective work to guess that he must have been an expert at monte or some other form of the gentle art which has for its motto, "The quickness of the hand deceives the optic nerve."

III.

About four o'clock the rebels entered the village of San José, and, with true Latin American courtesy, seized it, going through the pockets of the women and children first. As this was being done, a torrential rain came down, and immediately the ragged army rushed to cover. The hours passed, as all hours do, if they are not disturbed, and still it rained. Night rolled in. Deep darkness and vivid flashes of lightning came in quick succession. The thunder rolled and cracked most fearfully. To keep their appointment with the enemy was out of the question now, so, in the houses of the complaining villagers, the rebels retired for the night.

Next morning, as they lined the streets awaiting the order to move, a fearful discovery was made. The trunk containing General Chincholo's medals had been stolen overnight. The old gentleman turned red, white, and blue with rage, and instantly ordered his men to search every house in the place. Waving his arms in the air, and cursing the sweet curses of Spain, he raced up and down the streets, threatening the entire populace with an unspeakable end, and a horrible hereafter, unless the glittering souvenirs of his past campaigns were returned. He was awfully mad, was the general, all swelled up like a poisoned pup.

Presently the press agent of the regiment stepped up, a troubled look on his dissipated face.

"General," he said, saluting, "I have the honor to report that our machine guns have been stolen, also."

Chincholo did not spring up, nor swear, nor move a muscle. He stood perfectly silent, perfectly still, staring incredulously at the man before him. Of a sudden a band of rebels came tearing through the street, shooting wildly as they ran.

"They come, they come!" shrieked one of them. "To the woods!"

Chincholo's face was deformed by fury. His dark face turned black as coal.

"What the devil——"

Just then his eyes fell upon a regiment of government soldiers rapidly bearing down upon the town.

"Madre mio!" he yelled, in primal terror, as he gathered up his sword. "This is too hot to last long."

Momentarily forgetting his soldierly resolve never to retreat, Chincholo rushed blindly to the forest that luckily lay half a mile away. His ragged ras-

cals followed at his heels, and soon they were all mercifully swallowed up in a dark tangle of orchid-covered trees and parasitic vines. The old gentleman was sorely grieved at the loss of his medals; when he was not weeping bitterly he was cursing vehemently, invoking upon the citizens of San José death by flood, and fire, and famine.

As for Juan, he felt sick, and miserable, and tired of it all. Of late the excitement had kept him keyed up to the highest pitch, but now the novelty had rubbed off, and he was overcome with fear, and remorse, and shame. Also, the peon had vanishel with his loot.

It was a sorry-looking set of mosquito-hacked warriors that emerged at noon from the dark gloom of the forest to the glaring sunshine of a country running low in hills and watered by the Rio Oro. Worn and broken, they stood on the bank of the river, looking hungrily at the hostile village of Oropesa on the opposite side, and formulating a plan of attack in order to secure something to eat. Suddenly a long, black object floated by. It was a crocodile! The army shuddered en masse. Almost immediately there came another. The attack upon the village was indefinitely postponed.

Furious with rage and hunger, Chincholo gave the word of command, and the incorrigibles started down the river, one behind another like a flock of geese. About two o'clock they reached Platapura, where sympathizers of the cause regaled them with bread and claret. At last their luck had changed; they embraced each other like loving children, and sang and danced with glee.

In the afternoon it rained again, so those of the men that came under the heading of miserable sinners went to mass. Juan remained in his tent and wrote a pathetic letter to his wife, detailing the hardships and exposure that fell to his lot, and pouring out the agony of his homesick soul in a passionate appeal for forgiveness by return mail, registered, and special delivery. This done, he sought out a near-by café, and spent a very pleasant half hour flirting with the proprietor's daughter, a buxom maid of nineteen. The girl, not suspecting her gallant wooer was a grass widower, became deeply enamored, with the result that when the lieutenant finally rose to go, she whispered an awful warning in his ear.

"The people of Platapura are not revolutionists," she said, with trembling eagerness; "their sympathy is only feigned. To-night, when you are all asleep, they are going to swoop down on you and murder you all."

Juan turned white as a marshmallow, and impulsively grasped the girl's hands.

"Is this the truth?" he demanded, through chattering lips.

"It is, I swear it," was the answer.

Lieutenant Fernandez gave a barbarous howl and swooned. Fifteen minutes later he again opened his eyes on this troubled world, but Marie had gone, and he was alone. Snatching a bottle of brandy from the counter, he took a deep draft, then rushed down the street, his heart beating like a steam hammer, his pulses throbbing hard. Only by a severe exertion of will did he keep from running amuck and slashing himself to pieces. Once he fell in the mud, tripped by his sword, but he was up again in an instant. As he approached the old cathedral, Chincholo came sneaking out, having left early to avoid the collection.

Juan approached, bowed, saluted, and salaamed. Then he breathlessly imparted the horrible news of the proposed slaughter of innocent insurrectos.

For a second the general stood stroking his goatee and looking at the ground. Beyond shaking like a reed in the wind, he betrayed not the faintest sign of excitement or perturbation. He was an old war dog, was Chincholo. The smell of powder was meat and drink to him. But, like most veterans, he preferred face powder to gunpowder every time.

Quick as a flash of lightning his hand fled to his holster and he whipped out a silver flask containing cognac.

"Fernandez," he said, in solemn tones, "you have undoubtedly saved our lives. I hereby make you captain of

the insurrectos as a slight token of my everlasting gratitude."

"Thank you," said the young man, in a faltering voice. "Thank you. But there are already five captains in the regiment, señor."

With nervous, shaking fingers, the general lifted the flask to his bloodless lips.

"What matters it?" he gurgled. "I don't like odd numbers. But we must act quickly. The men will be out from mass in a moment, then we will attack these dogs. Show them no quarter, no mercy at all."

"But we have only seventeen cartridges left, señor," explained the newly elected captain, "and you gave orders that those be saved to shoot deserters or chickens."

The general struck a dramatic, world-defying attitude.

"In that case, we will pound out the villagers' brains on the rocks," he said, imbued with glorious and invincible optimism.

Upon further deliberation, however, it was decided that the pounding process might not work out according to specification, for some of the natives of Platapura were unusually massive of build and malicious of aspect; so, just as the blood-red sun was sinking behind the forest, the desperadoes folded their tents like the Arabs and beat it.

Thus one of the greatest massacres of modern times never happened.

At sunset the rebels camped on the south bank of the Rio Tinto, just outside the village of Guadalmina. All through the long, hot night, in an atmosphere saturated with moisture and poisoned by decaying vegetation, they lay in the grass wrestling pitifully with the pilgrims of the night. Flies, germs, mosquitoes, and microbes bit unceasingly, while red ants, whose sting was like unto a red-hot needle, crawled up their legs and down their backs. They were greatly troubled. The language they used was not a bit nice. This was Juan's first experience under the naked heavens; he fervently prayed it might be his last.

Gradually the darkness began to fade. When the first glimmer of dawn was creeping over the palm-covered hills, the renegades prepared to leave their obnoxious bivouac. As the general sat on the ground having the dead leaves and branches combed out of his hair and whiskers by his valet, a shot rang out, and a rebel fell to earth with a bullet in the lobe of his ear. The government troops were intrenched behind an unassailable bulwark of tomato cans on the opposite side of the river! The scene that followed is beyond the might of pen to describe. Terrified beyond all hope, the panic-stricken rebels stood rooted to the ground, praying, and blaspheming, and groaning with fright. Bullets, projectiles, flatirons, and other tokens of good will and fellowship came whizzing and singing from all directions. Inextricable confusion resulted, but Chincholo, as usual, saved the situation. Seizing a rifle, he jumped to his feet, and waved the weapon in the air.

"Viva la patrie!" he yelled. *"Viva Nicaravia!* A hundred cigarettes to the first man that kills one of the enemy or cripples him for life."

No self-respecting insurrecto could withstand a taunt like that, so the battle began forthwith. For miles around, men, women, and children came to witness the slaughter, many of them bringing lunch baskets. At eight o'clock, when the enemy called a halt to allow their guns to cool off, the surrounding landscape had been badly mutilated. Trees were split, the bull ring was wrecked, and the top of a hill a mile away was shattered. The latter was very unfortunate. It simply ruined the view.

Only once during the battle did the rebel sharpshooters hit a man, and that was when one of their number shot himself in the leg. He was bound and gagged, clubbed into insensibility, and operated upon by the camp blacksmith.

Taking advantage of the respite offered by the enemy, the belligerents spent the time preparing a plan of attack to honorably or otherwise extricate themselves from the whirlpool of

war into which they had been unwittingly and unwillingly plunged. To retreat would be to court certain disaster, for then they would not have the river to separate them from their pursuers. It took a lot of hard, strategical thinking to map out a campaign, inasmuch as fifteen out of their seventeen cartridges had already been wasted, but again Chincholo, with his Napoleonic mind, found a way out of the difficulty.

While the right wing of his army was making reconnaissances from palm trees, he dispatched the left wing and part of the breast to the village with instructions to gather up all the empty bottles, rocks, coconuts, and anything else in the way of ammunition or legal plunder that they could lay their hands on. The result was very gratifying.

At nine-thirty hostilities broke loose again and continued unabated through the merciless, equatorial heat of the morning. From his hiding place in the belfry of the old cathedral, Chincholo directed the course of the battle with the frigid precision of a Wellington and the calm of a Joan of Arc. He was a warrior bold was Chincholo, and a firm believer in the principle of the double objective. This has nothing to do with grammar, but to the advisability of keeping the enemy in perpetual doubt as to one's intentions. A great many married men believe in this also.

In spite of the severe and continuous fusillade that greeted them, the government troops crept relentlessly forward under the blazing sun, their guns roaring with ever-increasing vigor. By noon they were within a few feet of the river's brink. The insurrectos were now fighting in a state of hopeless disorganization; regiments, battalions, divisions, army corps, ambulance corps, right wings, left wings, columns, flying wedges, full-timers, half-timers, photographers, and correspondents were woefully intermingled, and all tactical cohesion was lost. Half insane with fright, many of the rebels fought among themselves, kicking, clawing, gouging, and blaspheming. Fernandez lay on his stomach howling for his mother and endeavoring to burrow rabbitlike into a hole in the ground. A sanguinary hand-to-hand struggle was imminent. The excitement was intense; even the river stopped flowing. War is hell, all right.

Exhausted by ceaseless firing, the enemy paused to rest before embarking upon a final, furious onslaught. Blind to the dictates of prudence and common sense, Chincholo signaled the order to fix bayonets and charge. That was the greatest mistake of his illustrious career. Luckily nobody charged. Suddenly above the noise, and the din, and the smoke of battle, a gong rang out. It was the first call for luncheon in the enemy's camp. With a lusty cheer every man wheeled in his tracks and raced wildly back to the mess tent for his black beans and tortillas, postponing the rebel annihiliation until the meal was over. There were still no homicides recorded upon the scoreboard, but a spectator, an unidentified colored man, was rather badly wounded by a flatiron. It entered his back just below the lungs, plowed its way upward through the brain, then reversed, and tore through the neck down to the stomach, where it found a resting place a little to the west of the vermiform appendix. But the negro would not go into the hospital, neither would he give his name to the reporters. He left the battlefield, threatening to consult an attorney.

It was with unbounded glee that the rebels watched their indomitable opponents withdraw. It had been a very close call. Glowing with the satisfaction that he had done all that the exacting military code of honor could demand, Chincholo emerged from the belfry and commanded his men to raid the village for food. This was done with the customary celerity.

IV.

Now it chanced that the wineshop in Guadalmina was unusually well stocked with vino del pais, and the consequence was that Chincholo and his officers, including Captain Fernandez, fell under the heavenly spell which comes only to

those that worship at the shrine of the corkscrew. In Bacchic glee they went roaring and singing through the streets, blissfully oblivious of the fact that the enemy lay within their gates. Seeing the incapacitated condition of their leaders, the rank and file followed suit, so that soon there was not one sober man in their midst. Please do not blame the poor fellows for overindulging in intoxicating liquors. Remember, they had been at war all morning.

Fernandez grew particularly buoyant, for the wine warmed and comforted his bosom, and washed away his fears. As he wandered down Main Street, his eyes fell upon a sad, dog-eyed señorita seated on the cushioned window seat of her balcony, smoking a fat cigar. She was the most divinely beautiful creature he had ever seen, so he bowed just as gracefully as he could in the circumstances. To his intense delight, the girl responded with a wave of the hand and a pleasant smile. For a moment Juan hesitated, thrilling all over like a man being electrocuted.

Just then a blind musician came along, a guitar upon his back. Instanter Fernandez received an inspiration. Drawing his sword and flourishing it menacingly over the musician's head, he demanded the immediate surrender of the instrument. Trembling pitifully, the unfortunate wretch handed over the guitar and fled in terror of his life. A moment later Fernandez began a serenade. Reeling unsteadily to and fro, he sang the sweet songs of Spain and Portugal, paying no attention whatever to the howls and jeers of the populace about him.

Of a sudden he stopped short, his mouth agape, his face pale and troubled. Coming slowly down the street was Pablo, the old horse that had been in the Fernandez family for centuries. He could tell that spavined, ringboned, anæmic quadruped anywhere. Aboard said horse was a lady who appeared to be searching for some one. Another moment, and the guitar would have been "Exhibit A."

Never was a man struck so suddenly sober. Quick as a flash, Juan dropped the instrument and disappeared round a corner. As if fleeing from a troop of tigers, he tore through the streets, howling, and shrieking, and brandishing his sword. The rebel soldiers stood transfixed for a second, then one of their number, believing that the enemy was at hand, followed the captain in his mad passage, and called upon his comrades to do likewise. In ones and twos and threes they joined the ignominious retreat, so that ere long every man on the insurrecto pay roll was at the heels of the frantic Fernandez. Through wide plazas, narrow streets, and blind alleys he led them, puffing, and panting, and gasping for breath. Finally he turned and made for the river, forgetful of the fact that the government troops were encamped upon the opposite bank, forgetful of everything. Into the very jaws of death he led the liquor-soaked warriors.

By one of those imponderable chances of war, it happened that just at that time the enemy was crossing the stream, having decided to decimate the rebel ranks unawares. It was a mean, dastardly trick, and one that is never countenanced by the Board of Trade, but the soldiers of the republic were a low, contemptible lot, even if they did wear uniforms and shoes. Seeing the mob of howling savages led by Fernandez, however, the enemy conceived the idea that the rebels had received considerable reënforcements, and that they were assailed by an overpowering force. Then it was that the unbelievable happened. The government troops turned and fled in hopeless confusion to the forest, abandoning their entire war equipment, consisting of thirteen rifles, one ice box, two regimental colors, fifty-nine miles of railway, ten horses, two bridges, five machine guns, three barber's chairs, two carts full of maps, one case of cognac, and one roll-top desk. The rebels could not believe their eyes; they were spellbound. This was the first time in the history of the republic that the government had known the bitterness of defeat.

Fernandez was quick to take ad-

vantage of this unexpected turn of events. He came to a halt, raised his sword in the air, and cried: *"Viva los insurrectos!"*

Followed a remarkable demonstration. The thunder of acclaim lasted fully fifteen minutes. Then cheer after cheer was given for Fernandez, as the frenzied victors carried him about the enemy's camp on their shoulders. It was an awe-inspiring picture, awfully awe-inspiring.

Presently Chincholo came galloping up, sobbing desolately over the loss of such a tremendous amount of prestige. However, after a pint of cognac he recovered somewhat and embraced the captain in a most affectionate manner. Then, plucking a couple of dozen medals from the permanent collection on his breast, he spiked them on to the bosom of our hero.

"Never before has such bravery been heard of in Nicaravia," said the old man, in a faltering voice. "It will go down to history, and stay down. The overthrow of the government forces is complete. At last we are masters of the situation, thanks to you who shrank from no sacrifice to secure it. You shall be the next president of our beloved, beautiful country. We need a man of your caliber to lead us out of the depths of gloom and despair in which we have labored so long to the glistening mountain tops of hope, and glory, and happiness. The whole country, the whole wide world I might say, will ring with your praises."

Juan smiled sweetly.

"I only did my duty," he murmured, blushing internally at the lie. "I realized that we had arrived at a most critical stage, and that our only hope lay in one resolute attack. *Gracias á Dios,* we have succeeded."

This was the signal for an unprecedented explosion of enthusiasm; the noise of it reverberated afar. In the ripeness of time the revelers came back to earth and purloined a hearty collation of jerked beef and black beans from the enemy's commissary, but, as may be guessed, Chincholo devoted his attention to the cognac. And so it came to pass that when the triumphant march on the capital was initiated, the general was reposing peacefully at the bottom of a wagon. Everywhere the rebel army was received with loving arms and warm hearts, and ovation after ovation was given to Fernandez, for the news of his valor had spread like smallpox through the mighty confines of the republic. There was music and dancing, feasting and drinking, fireworks and earthquakes. The whole country was drunk with joy. Two weeks were consumed on a trip of ninety miles. Finally, one morning about ten o'clock, the conquerors reached La Flora.

V.

What a home-coming it was for Fernandez! The reception tendered him by the people of the capital was the most elaborate affair ever given in the history of Nicaravia, and forbids description. It was a cataclysm of jubilation in which no expense was spared. Forty-five candles were burning in the palace at one time.

About eleven p. m., when the last cannon had boomed, the last skyrocket had exploded, and the last reveler had laid himself gently down in the gutter for the night, President Fernandez sneaked quietly off the throne and out through the back door of the palace, to a little dobie house on the outskirts of the city. Trembling in a most undignified manner, he knocked upon the door. A stranger answered, an old woman.

"Is this the house of Señora Fernandez?" demanded Juan feverishly.

"It is, señor," was the answer. "What can I do for you?"

Brushing the woman gently aside, the president entered. His wife sat in a corner, pale and wan, her eyes red from weeping.

"Juan!" she shrieked, coming forward with outstretched arms. "My Juan, my presidente!"

Such moments are sacred, so we must draw a veil.

When the last kiss had echoed its way over the mountains, the president,

still clinging tenaciously with both hands, looked at Carmencita and said:

"Darling, when did you get back home?"

The señora looked puzzled.

"Home? I haven't been out of the house since you left. I only threatened to return to mother in order to frighten you."

"Then who rode Pablo to Guadalmina?" asked Fernandez, staring blankly ahead.

Carmencita smiled.

"That was your old friend, Palmira Mendoza, the girl to whom you sent the roses. She came to me and said that, as she was the cause of your leaving, she would induce you to return, so I loaned her the horse for the trip."

The president was speechless.

A long moment passed. Slowly the señora took her husband by the arm and led him across the room, then, with anxious precaution, she opened the bedroom door.

On a cot near the window lay two little olive-skinned babies—twins.

The president swooned.

DISCIPLINING BASEBALL HOUSEHOLDS

McGRAW, manager of the New York National League Baseball Club, is very strict with his players, but they all swear by him, for they know that he is "on the level" with them. The same thing is true of McGraw's old side partner, Hughie Jennings. They may "call" their players unmercifully, in the heat of a diamond battle, for some bad mistake, but such castigations are like a father's reproofs to his sons, and bear no ill will. Let some one else offer criticism, and these two managers will fight back just like a parent would were his sons attacked. There is nothing they resent so deeply as newspaper criticism of their players. They assume that they can conduct their own baseball households without outside interference, and as they are the parties responsible for the showing of the teams, they propose to do it.

Both are very hot-headed, and for this reason their seats on the benches are isolated and shiny—the former condition due to discretion on the part of the players, and the latter to nervous hitching about, incited by the managerial view of various plays. If some unlucky wight out on the diamond happens to err, a colleague roosting close to the manager is likely to be the recipient of a spontaneous and unthinking broadside for something not his fault, simply because the manager's mind must be freed. The actual offender generally escapes, because so many things happen before he gets back to the bench that his slip is forgotten.

McGraw strives eternally to drill his baseball knowledge into the brains of his players. The thing he most abhors is a "bonehead" play. It is for such that he chides his Giants, not for the sort of errors that go into the box scores. If his team should play orthodox baseball, and yet lose the entire hundred and fifty-four games of a schedule, he would not whimper. But if a single game is lost through mental inability to grasp a situation, he raves. He cannot stand that.

Fred Snodgrass received a raise in salary for making the costliest muff that ever marked baseball history. But players coming under McGraw's command who display any symptoms of genuine ivory are palmed off on some other unsuspecting manager before their names have had opportunity to become associated with the term "Giants." And it is a notable tribute to his judgment that no player ever passed along by him has made creditable history elsewhere, except Roger Bresnahan, who was let go because McGraw liked him, not because of dislike. Bresnahan had an opportunity to better himself, and McGraw permitted him to embrace it.

What's a Man's Life?

By Hilary Goode Richardson

THE pavements were dry and hard. The water in the gutters was frozen solid. The thermometer stood two and a half degrees below. The wind was playing on the bare limbs of the street trees like harps, and beating Mobley's windows like drums.

Mobley, under a mountain of covers, was lost to all this. It was three o'clock in the morning.

Suddenly Mobley sprang up. He thought he heard some one cry "Fire!" He sat up in bed, listened intently, recalled that his apartment was on the fourth floor, that there was neither fire escape nor elevator. He concluded that he had had a bad dream, and fell back on the pillows and drew the covers about his head.

"Fire! Fire!"

The words came clear and sharp from the hall outside his door. He heard hurrying feet. He leaped from the bed into the cold room. The dark blinds were down. He groped a moment, searching for the matches. Hearing clanging gongs outside, he went to the window and raised the blind. There was the light of fire. An engine was about connected with the plug across the street, and men were hurrying. He heard gongs and the clattering feet of horses, all coming nearer.

He detected the odor of smoke. He hastened to the door of his apartment, and opened it. The hall was dense with smoke, the gas jet burning away down at the other end looking like a taper in the fog. He went down six steps, and was met by a great, rolling, black cloud. He could feel himself suffocating.

Back to his door he hurried. He tried to turn the knob. It would not open! He had left the key inside.

As he was about to sink to the floor he saw flames shooting up the steps.

Death stood before him, towering up bigger than the world, one wing red like fire, the other black like smoke.

Suddenly his door opened. A lantern swung out. Under it he saw the face of a fireman surmounted by a helmet. His first thought was: "I would know that man anywhere."

The man seized him as though he were an infant. He carried him through his apartment. As he passed the bed he grabbed the covers and threw them about him. Out of the window and on to a ladder he went.

Mobley looked groundward, and saw smoke and flame shooting from every window. Before they were down he heard a mighty crash. The floor of his apartment had gone down into the maw of fire.

A taxicab took Mobley to a hotel. He went to bed and slept till ten o'clock.

A servant took his measure, and went for store clothes.

After breakfast Mobley went to the engine house. Men were busy removing the stains of dangerous work. He identified the man—the breadwinner for a woman and three little children—who had risked his life and the lives of four others to save his. Mobley had a fortune and no dependents.

Mobley walked up to the man, feeling the reverence to which a hero is entitled and the gratitude which was a savior's due.

"I just came to thank you for saving my life," said Mobley.

The man, leaning over the apparatus with a rag in his hand, let go a stream of tobacco juice as he glanced up.

"You better move on; you don't want to be blockin' the engine house," he said.

Mobley moved on.

Foolish Questions

By Charles R. Barnes

Author of "From the Ranks," "The Sweeny Stories," Etc.

Something new in the way of detective work. How young Mr. Thomas made a heroic attempt to find the missing jewels by a method which Miss Trent described as "fascinatingly scientific"

MISS HOPE TRENT'S jewels had been stolen, and Warren Thomas, who practiced law and encouraged a streak of the detective within himself, was trying to locate them. Mr. Thomas was a fine, likable chap, clean-cut and wholesome. He was big and breezy; and so inherently honest that he was not a very good lawyer. Persons dropping into his office were quite sure to find him studying sporting pages instead of absorbing Blackstone. For, before entering upon the practice of his profession, he had enthusiastically hitched his great, strong body to the little end of an oar in the varsity boat; and one never outgrows the thrill of a shell's rip through the water.

The young man had his serious side, too. Science, as applied to the detection of crime, appealed to him. And when Miss Hope Trent lost her jewels and went to him for assistance in their recovery, his mind immediately turned to finger prints, the Freudian theory, and such involved brain youngsters. But first he began at the beginning of the case, as all good detectives should do.

"When did this robbery happen?" he asked.

"Some time last night," answered Miss Trent, who was small and talkative, and given to a narrative style which began anywhere and seemed to have no end. "I was at the theater. When I returned, I discovered my loss."

"What was stolen?"

"Three diamond rings and a diamond-and-pearl necklace. Their value is about ten thousand dollars. I'm willing to pay a thousand dollars reward, Mr. Thomas."

The young man considered. "Do you suspect any one?" he questioned.

Miss Trent emphatically did. "I have a new maid," she told Thomas. "The girl came to me only a week ago. Of course, she brought references, but I understand that such things can be forged."

Thomas nodded.

"And," the girl went on, "I've never fully trusted her. I have missed some things—articles of clothing—within the week, but there was no definite evidence against Minnie—my maid's name is Minnie. So I could not accuse her of theft. Once I sent her out on an errand and searched her room, but I found nothing."

"She might have carried the articles out of the house," suggested the lawyer.

"Exactly," agreed the young woman. "And now about the missing jewels; Minnie was alone in the house during my absence at the theater. She tells me that she slept some of the time."

"Have you accused her of taking them?"

"No. And, somehow, I am not at all certain that she did take them. Professional criminals are usually clever people, aren't they? I mean, those who take situations in families just to rob when they get the opportunity."

"Many of them are," agreed Thomas.

"Well," continued Miss Trent, "that

girl seems absolutely stupid at times. She doesn't appeal to me as a person who would have the effrontery to steal valuable jewelry and then stay and bluff it out. Still, she is the only individual who was in the house when my valuables were stolen. What would you advise?"

Young Mr. Thomas pondered. At length he said: "There's a way of questioning her—questioning her without her knowledge that she is suspected. We might do that."

"What is it?" asked the girl.

"There's more or less science mixed up in it," Thomas explained. "You have heard of the system. The newspapers published much information and misinformation about it. You see, a word is supposed to suggest something to the mind; as soon as it is spoken a reply must be given. For instance, I say 'seal.' You instantly associate it with fur, and fur with coat, muff, or boa. Am I clear?"

"I see," said Miss Trent.

"Now," went on Thomas, "suppose we go to Minnie and submit a list of words to her. We'll tell her that we're putting her through some kind of an examination—testing her education, or anything you like. We'll mention a whole lot of words quite disassociated with robberies; such as 'soup,' 'sewing machine,' 'doorbell.' Then we'll slip in 'ring,' and 'diamond,' and 'necklace.' Her replies may give us a clew. If, for instance, she has actually stolen the jewels and passed them to a man confederate, the mention of the word 'ring' would at once suggest 'man.' This system has been successful in some cases. It may prove so in this one. Shall we try it?"

Miss Trent arose. "The very thing!" she exclaimed. "It's so fascinatingly scientific that it surely ought to work. Can you come with me now? We can call Minnie into the library and order her to answer questions. I'd rather find my jewels this way than by appealing to the police. I don't care for the notoriety which would result from that."

Mr. Thomas was quite willing to accompany the girl, so the two left the office at once. They were driven to Miss Trent's home in her automobile; and within a few minutes after their arrival the maid, Minnie, had been summoned to their presence. There was a startled look in her face as she scanned Mr. Thomas' features. Her mistress was not given to summoning her to the library and commanding her to talk with strange gentlemen.

"What's it, ma'am?" she asked.

"This man is looking for a—a——" began Miss Trent.

"A psychological subject," finished Thomas. "Perhaps you may be just the girl I'm searching for, Miss Minnie."

The servant gasped. "I never took no lessons in that, whatever it is, sir," she expostulated. "I don't know nothing but ladies' maid work."

Thomas smiled. "I see you do not understand," he remarked soothingly, as he quickly estimated the girl's mentality. Here was no remarkable mind, he saw at a glance. She was rather pretty, with a slight, agile body. Her hair was light brown, and grew well down on her brow. The chin showed no strength of character; it was weakly oval. There was a certain intelligence in the gray eyes, though, which, somehow, suggested cunning.

Thomas continued in a low, easy voice: "I know you won't object to a short experiment. All I ask you to do is to answer a few questions. I want you to tell me what certain words suggest to you—that is, to say the first thing which comes into your mind at the mention of a word. It may be that you will prove a great help to scientific research." The man spoke seriously, noting with much satisfaction the expression of utter bewilderment in the servant's face. She had no idea what he was driving at, he was sure. "Now, Minnie," he said, "tell me what occurs to you when I say 'shoe.'"

He jerked out his watch, snapped it open, and began to count the seconds. When ten of them had passed, Minnie bashfully answered:

"Shoes make me think that my new ones hurt me cruel."

"Good," commented Thomas. "Now,

please make your replies shorter. For instance, in the case of the word 'shoe,' your answer should have been 'pain.' You understand, don't you?"

"I guess so," Minnie told him.

"Well," he went on, "don't take time to think. Say at once the first thing that pops into your mind. Here's another word: 'dress.'"

Promptly the maid said: "Rip."

"That's it," enthusiastically exclaimed Thomas. "I know what it means. One of your best dresses was recently ripped——"

"It happened to the Mike Dooley Association ball," rapidly explained Miss Minnie. "You see, Julia Sanderson, the actress, was there, sight-seeing, with an elegant gent'm'n fr'en'; and my gent'm'n fr'en' that was dancin' with me kind of rubbered at the lady and walked all over my skirt——"

"Yes—yes," cut in Thomas. "It is all quite plain. Now for some more words. Try 'rug.'"

"Vacuum cleaner."

"'Horse.'"

"Mounted cop."

"'Ring.'"

"Diamond."

There was a short pause, as Thomas cast a quick, significant glance at Miss Trent. Immediately, though, he continued the quiz.

"'Hospital.'"

"Looey Meltzer—he's in for being hit by an auto——"

"Don't explain; answer with one word," commanded the examiner. "You are doing fine, Minnie. Now, 'Monday.'"

"Wash day."

"'Alone.'"

The girl was a few seconds in answering.

"It ain't that I don't get a quick idea," she told Thomas, "but I can't put it in one word. The first thing I thought of was hanging around here to answer the phone when Miss Trent's out in the car, or at the theater."

"Very well. Now 'jewelry.'"

"Rings-necklaces-bracelets."

Again the inquisitor shot a meaning glance at Miss Trent. That young woman was leaning forward in her chair, quite absorbed in the proceedings.

Thomas resumed: "'Gentleman friend.'"

Miss Minnie colored. "His name's Bill Phillips. He's the guy that stepped on my dress——"

"Exactly. Now, 'diamond rings.'"

"Bill——" The girl abruptly ceased. She stared from the man to Miss Trent, and a look of suspicion came into her eyes. It almost instantly vanished. "My gent'm'n fr'en' is saving up to get me one," she defiantly said. "There hasn't been no date set, and I ain't figuring on leaving, Miss Trent. I hope I don't lose my job for talking my head off like that, and letting it out that some time I'll get married and quit. I——"

Her mistress hastened to reassure her. "I am perfectly well aware that maids do not remain forever. They are almost certain to marry, especially when they are as good looking as you are. The knowledge that you may leave some time shall not influence me in the least, now. Please answer Mr. Thomas' questions."

"Yes'm," said Minnie, apparently easy in her mind once again.

The man immediately pronounced the words: "'Diamond-and-pearl necklace.'"

Like a flash, the maid spoke: "Bill——" She flushed deeply and tightly closed her lips.

Young Thomas leaned back in his chair and eyed her narrowly. "Minnie," he said, "do you know what you have done?"

No answer.

"Do you realize what you have said?" insisted the lawyer. The maid dropped her eyes.

"I said 'Bill,'" she answered.

Miss Trent interposed. "You are impertinent," said she.

"But," insisted Minnie, "I ain't going to tell my private affairs, even if your fr'en' does want to experiment on me. I may be what he says I am, which I don't understand at all, but I guess I have some rights. I guess I don't have to tell all about me and Bill."

"You have told enough about that

man and you," the attorney assured her, in a grave tone, "to make me positive that Miss Trent should know more. You, of course, have no idea that you have been subjected to a scientific third degree——"

"A what?" gasped the maid.

"A third degree. My questions had a significance which I shall presently explain. In the meantime, you might as well confess your connection with a certain irregular transaction which has recently occurred in this house. I believe that you have been a cat's-paw; and I shall advise Miss Trent to deal leniently with you in case you tell all you know, and incriminate the real crook."

An expression of consternation had come into the maid's eyes.

"Crook?" she exclaimed. "Who's a crook?"

"Bill Phillips," shortly answered Thomas. "He's the man who put you up to stealing."

Minnie stared, wild-eyed, from Thomas to Miss Trent. She began to tremble violently.

"I never stole a thing in my life," she declared. "Nobody ever charged anything like that against me. And why you're doing it now is more than I can make out. I never stole anything, and I want it understood that I didn't."

The attorney smiled indulgently.

"Minnie," he said, "Miss Trent came to me about a theft which has been committed in this house. She asked my assistance in locating the criminal, because she did not care for the notoriety which would result from calling in the police. If she had brought them in, you would now be under arrest. There is small doubt that you are guilty. You see, I suggested a number of words to you, several of which were calculated to make you betray yourself. And you did it. You associated your friend, Bill Phillips, with the words 'ring' and 'necklace.' You recall that, do you not?"

The maid stared sullenly. "There ain't any reason why I shouldn't have done it," she asserted.

"It was natural enough," agreed Thomas. "Scientific men have demonstrated that the mind subconsciously brings together the important elements in events. To explain, I will say that if I should suggest the word 'bank note' to a counterfeiter, his mind would instantly associate it with 'die' or 'plate.' I mentioned 'necklace' to you, and you at once spoke the name of Bill Phillips, your man friend."

"Well," asked Minnie, "why shouldn't I?"

"If you hadn't been caught off your guard," said Thomas, "you wouldn't have made that break. You see, it tells a story. It tells me that two persons were involved in a robbery. One of them stole an article and passed it on to another, logically an intimate acquaintance. It is all very well, Minnie, and I advise you to confess. I believe that Miss Trent will not prosecute you if you furnish the evidence which will land the big criminal behind the bars and tend toward the recovery of her property. Am I not correct, Miss Trent?"

"Yes," replied the young woman. "I am sure that Minnie was unduly influenced—that she was inveigled into her part in the robbery by her affection for the man, perhaps."

The maid now began to exhibit astonishment. Her consternation, her sullenness, her aggressiveness had vanished, and she questioned curiously.

"I don't even know what's been stolen," she told them. "What has been?"

"Isn't it wasting words to inform you?" Thomas asked. "You were alone in the house last night."

"Sure I was."

"And you had access to Miss Trent's jewel case. There were three diamond rings and a diamond-and-pearl necklace in it."

"That's true enough," Minnie admitted. "I helped to dress Miss Trent, and I know what she wore and what she left."

"The jewel case and contents were stolen," solemnly declared Mr. Thomas.

"They weren't, either," contradicted Minnie. "Or, if they were, it didn't

happen while I was awake. And I stayed up till after she got home, only snatching a bit of a nap now and then. I'm just as sure as I ever was of anything that Miss Trent's jewel case was safe when she went to bed. She took off her other jewelry and laid it on the dresser—didn't you, Miss Trent?"

The young woman slowly answered "Yes" to the question. A look of confusion came into her face.

"I remember doing it," she said. "I was tired. I left the things I was wearing just where Minnie said I did; carelessly, I admit."

"You didn't lock them up in the jewel box?" questioned Thomas.

"I usually do, but I didn't last night. They were on the dresser this morning, but the jewel box was gone. I couldn't find it anywhere."

"Because," explained the maid reprovingly, "I saw how careless you'd left it laying round after you'd gone. It didn't seem right to me to have all those pretty things right in plain sight. Somebody might have broke in the house, and hit me on the head, and got away with them. So I put them away."

"Put them away?" queried Miss Trent.

"Of course. Wasn't I the only person in the house, and responsible, as you might say? Sure I was. And so, when I saw those things on the dressing table, I says to myself: 'It ain't no place for them.' So I locked the box—and having rheumatism in two of my fingers, it wasn't easy at all to turn the key. But I got it fastened tight, all right, and then I looked round for a place to hide it. There was that little hole in the wall with the combination lock on it where the jewelry is always kept. That was the place, sure; but I didn't know how to work the little knob. I'd never been showed. So it was up to me to find another place that was safe——"

"I looked in my wall safe," Miss Trent told Thomas. "It was empty. Please go on, Minnie."

"Well, ma'am," continued the girl, "I looked and looked, and thought and thought. After a while, I remembered that you had a big leather hatbox in the closet. I knew that, even if somebody did bust in the house and bat me over the head, they wouldn't think of looking in that thing for jewelry. So I put the jewel case in it and slapped in one of your hats, just for luck. I'd have told you where things were if you'd asked. But you didn't, and I was that busy——" She paused and smiled apologetically at Thomas and the young woman. "I didn't know I was scaring up all this trouble," she concluded.

"But are the jewels there now?" anxiously questioned Miss Trent.

A sudden frightened expression passed into Minnie's face.

"Why—why," she stammered, "I—I—guess so. Why, my gosh! I'm a ruined girl if they ain't! Gee!" She clasped her hands to her breast. "I'm just beginning to see what a awful hole I'm in if anything's happened to those things. Come on; I guess the thing to do is to go and have a look."

Without awaiting the consent of her mistress, the girl rushed from the room. Thomas and Miss Trent immediately followed, and brought up at the doorway of Miss Trent's sleeping room, just as Minnie was emerging from the closet with the big, square hatbox. She flopped it down in the middle of the floor and nervously opened it. First she produced a large, befeathered hat. And then, from the bottom of the box, she drew forth a small black case. This she handed to Miss Trent.

"The key's in the top drawer of the dresser," she quavered. "For goodness' sake, ma'am, open that thing and let me find out where I'm at!"

Miss Trent did so. The key was quickly produced, and the case opened. And there, nestling against the black velvet lining, were the rings and the necklace.

When the maid saw them, she gasped and sat down hard on the floor.

"I'm a saved lady," she cried, "but the scare I've had would kill a party that didn't have a strong constitution!" Then to Thomas: "That detective system of yours is good like a bad egg. The idea of trying to blame a burglary

on a girl by the foolish-question route is——"

"Minnie!" cautioned Miss Trent.

"Well," protested the maid, a sobby gasp coming into her voice, "I don't care if he is a fr'en' of yours. He had me charged up with highway robbery and gosh knows what, just because he could ask a lot of questions, or remember a few words to say. I guess it was natural for me to think of Bill when this party, here, says 'diamond ring.' I guess it was natural."

"Why?" asked Thomas, in an abashed, yet unconvinced, voice.

"Because Bill has paid the first installment on a ring for me, and I'll be wearing it on the third finger of my left hand as soon as it's fixed a little different."

"But the necklace?" persisted Thomas. "Why did you associate necklace with Bill Phillips?"

"That's easy," Minnie said. "Bill is going to make a barrel of money some time, he says. He don't know just how, but he says he sure will; and then he'll buy me a diamond necklace, he says, and that ain't all."

"Well?"

"If you'd mentioned automobiles, I'd have said 'Bill.' You see, Bill is some promiser. When we're married, I'm going to have a auto, and a set of furs, and a trip to Europe—provided Bill makes good on grabbing a million. He gets fifteen a week, now, driving a delivery wagon, but he's young and ambitious, and he won't be driving that cart all his life. That's all I got to say." She put her hands to her face and began to sob softly.

Miss Trent went to her and placed a hand on her shoulder.

"It's all right, Minnie," she soothed. "It's all right."

Young Mr. Thomas withdrew.

"I must beg to be excused," he said. "You see, I have an important conference with a client——" He walked away.

"I suppose," wailed Miss Minnie, "that you're going to ask some more foolish questions!"

SOME ENGLISH

A MAN, who was indisputably a farmer, a farmer far out in the country, took his wife to Chicago for a visit.

"Now," said the farmer to his wife the first morning after they had arrived, "it makes a big impression on these hotel people if you telephone down to the head waiter what you want for breakfast, and tell him to have it prepared and on the table for you by the time you get down."

He did the telephoning, but the wife broke up the whole show in the dining room because he had ordered something which she did not like. Drawing herself up very erect, she exclaimed in a shrill, angry voice:

"Are these our breakfast?"

NATIONAL BATHS

HE was a gentleman who was in Washington as a minister representing Honduras. Diplomats, according to the popular conception, never say the wrong thing. They are believed to be the delicacy of language and the finesse of vocabulary.

This particular diplomat entered an uptown barber shop in Washington, and got a shave after he had explained what he wanted in words which were more full of accent than of fluency.

"Now, sir," said the barber briskly, "can't we give you a Turkish bath?"

"No-o-o," replied the man from Honduras, with some hesitation. "You see, I'm no—no Turk."

A Chat With You

THE story of a happy, painless life is rarely an interesting one. Without shadows to set off the high lights, a picture is impossible. If we meet with unexpected reverses, if one misfortune after another overtakes us, we may, at least, console ourselves with the fact that we are furnishing thereby a more interesting and picturesque spectacle for those who witness our vicissitudes. A young man comes to New York alone and without friends. By dint of his own ability and advantage of opportunity he rises, first slowly, then faster, to be a power in the world, an owner of railroads and steamship lines, a man to be consulted by financiers. A panic wipes his fortune out, but brings him worse than poverty. He is accused of business irregularities, he is tried and convicted. Ruined in every sense, he is sentenced to a term in a Federal prison. And there he sickens, the doctors who examine him say that he has but a short time to live. His fortunes are, indeed, at the lowest possible ebb, when he is pardoned in order that he may die out of jail. But the wheel of fortune, which has carried him so low, is already swinging him up again toward the heights and the sunlight. His health returns, he gathers what is left of his business—a few scattered ends—together. These scattered ends would be of little use to many, but to this man they are the lever with which to work again. His brain has not lost its cunning, his personality its force. A few years later he is again on the throne, ruling railroads and steamship lines.

YOU probably know his name, but his is not such an exceptional case as it might look at first. Barring the prison sentence there are few who have accomplished much in the world who have not passed through just such strange vicissitudes. We all know about David in the cave of Adullam, and Robert Bruce and the spider. When Lord Nelson first went to sea it was feared that he would not last a single voyage, so frail was his constitution and so delicate his health, yet he lived to be the greatest of the kings of the sea, and to die, literally, "with his boots on." Napoleon, an underofficer of artillery, emaciated and ill-fed, had his lean years and was mocked by silly girls, long before he became emperor of the French. Julius Cæsar, who ruled all the world there was to rule in his day, was in great disfavor in his youth. At one time he was the captive of pirates without the means to pay his ransom. At the age of thirty he was a sufferer from epileptic fits, owed about a million dollars, and had a very bad name as a dissipated young man Can you imagine a worst start in life?

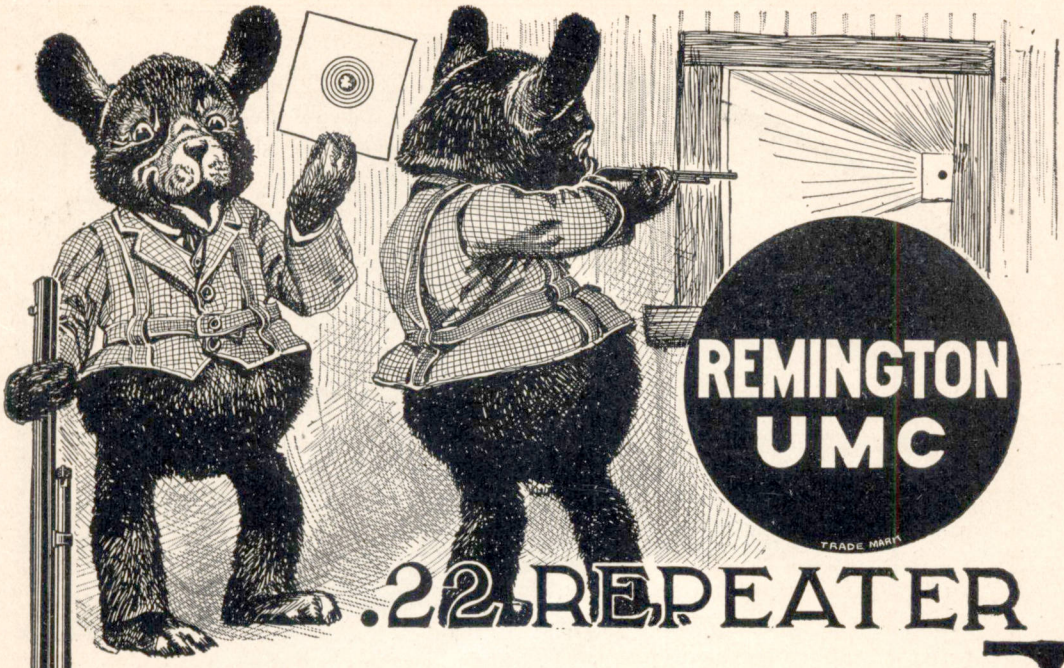
WE could multiply the instances of those who rose to high estate from small beginnings, and what is still more interesting, perhaps, of those, who, after being apparently ruined, recovered all they had lost, and more beside. Goethe, despondent and on the verge of insanity; Frederick the Great, with the vial of poison in his pocket, contemplating suicide; Washington during the evil months at Valley Forge; the Wrights

after a dozen dismal failures in their effort to learn the secrets of the air—there are dozens of such examples familiar to all who think and remember. If they indicate anything at all, if there is any definite direction in which they all point, it means that the real elements of success are in the man himself, not in the circumstances that surround him. The fortune is sure to come to the financier, and the army to the born leader. We think, also, that the really successful people are never so interesting and worthy of note as when at the very lowest ebb of their fortune. It is then that they seem most human and familiar. When a man is down and out he is wholly himself. He has neither time nor taste for affectation and pretense, and there is nothing to hide from us the real man.

IT is at such a moment in his career that the hero of the complete novel, which opens the next issue of THE POPULAR, is introduced to us. We don't know much about his past; we know that he has some ability and no money, and more than all, we know, when we meet him marching along the country road, that he is no ordinary tramp, but a character worth watching. A suit of clothes marks the turning point in his career. He finds it draped over a post at the side of the road—frock coat, shoes, linen, even the tall, silk hat. All these things are indisputably the outward badges of respectability, and when he dons them, the hero assumes the inward and spiritual grace they are supposed to typify. He is a tramp no longer, but a business man, and he finds the business waiting him at the next little town. The novel is called "Money Has Legs," and is by Holman Day, who wrote "The Red Lane" and "Sand Locked." As a story, it is whimsical, surprising, exciting. It is a tale of big business, of mining claims, and Western life. It is filled with a breezy and rollicking sort of humor, and through its pages strut and swagger half a dozen characters a great deal more lifelike and interesting than many of the people we meet in the flesh from day to day. Like everything Day writes it has a strong vein of originality. We haven't read a better yarn in many a day.

ANOTHER story of business, in the same issue of the magazine, is "Cold Potatoes and Ten Dollars," by William H. Hamby. This is a tale of love, adventure, and the real-estate business. It contains among other things the outline of a perfectly practical and feasible plan for making a good living on real estate with the small initial capital of ten dollars. It is a simple plan, any one with industry, address, and good sense can execute it, yet so few do carry it out, and so many are hunting for a better job. This feature in the story alone ought to make it worth more than the price of the magazine. Just read the story, and see if it is not all we say it is.

IN the next number of THE POPULAR there is one of the best short stories Robert V. Carr ever wrote. It is called "That Perfect Confidence," and, we think, marks a distinct advance on anything Carr has done in the past. Also there is a novelette of the sea, "Johnny Shark," by Theodore Goodridge Roberts, and a baseball story by Charles E. Van Loan. In addition to this there is the first of a new series by Hesketh Prichard, brilliant installments of the two great serials by B. M. Bower and Howard Fielding, and stories by George Pattullo, Henry M. Hyde, and Charles R. Barnes.



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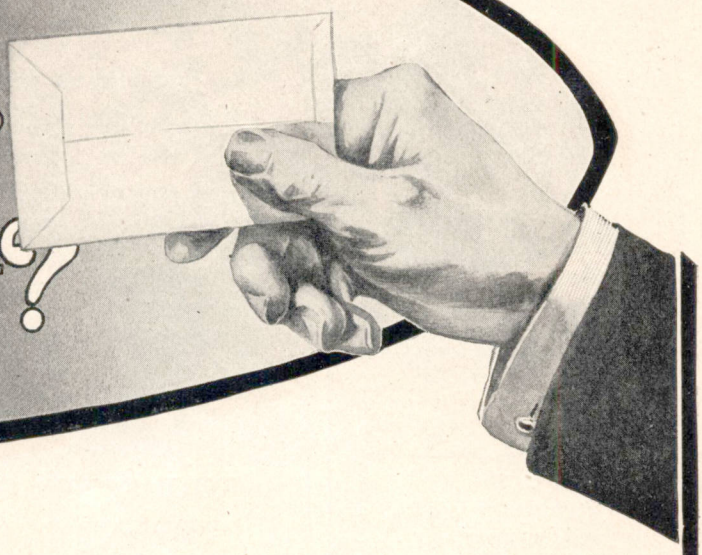

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Building Contractor	Advertising
Architectural Draftsman	Commercial Illustrating
Structural Engineer	Industrial Designing
Concrete Construction	Commercial Law
Mechan. Engineer	Automobile Running
Mechanical Draftsman	Teacher
Refrigeration Engineer	English Branches
Civil Engineer	Good English for Every One
Surveyor	Agriculture
Mine Superintendent	Poultry Farming
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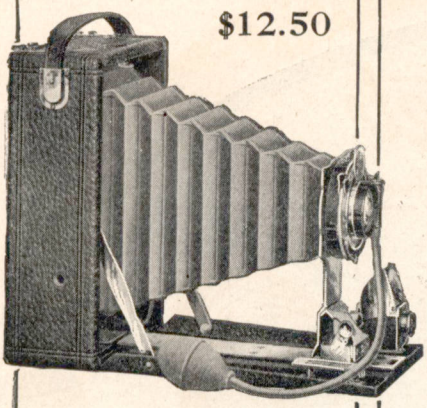

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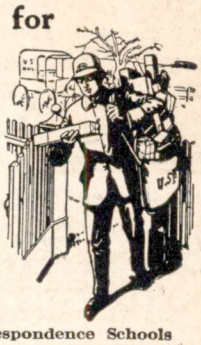

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Statement of the ownership, management, etc., of FLYNN'S, published weekly at New York, N. Y., for October 1st, 1924. Required by the Act of Congress of August 24th, 1912.

State of NEW YORK } s.s. :
County of NEW YORK }

Before me, a Notary Public, in and for the State and County aforesaid, personally appeared WM. T. DEWART, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the Business Manager of THE RED STAR NEWS COMPANY, Publishers of FLYNN'S, and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24th, 1912, embodied in section 443, Postal Laws and Regulations. To wit:

That the names and addresses of the Publisher, Editor, Managing Editor, and Business Manager are:

Publishers—THE RED STAR NEWS COMPANY, 280 Broadway, New York, N. Y.

Editor — WILLIAM J. FLYNN, 280 Broadway, New York, N. Y.

Managing Editor—ALBERT BRITT, 280 Broadway, New York, N. Y.

Business Manager—WM. T. DEWART, 280 Broadway, New York, N. Y.

That the Owners are: (If a corporation give its name and the names and addresses of stockholders owning or holding 1 per cent or more of the total amount of stock.)

THE RED STAR NEWS COMPANY, 280 Broadway, New York, N. Y.

THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY, 280 Broadway, New York, N. Y.

FRANK A. MUNSEY, 280 Broadway, New York, N. Y.

That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders, owning or holding 1 per cent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are:

There are no bonds, mortgages, or other securities against THE RED STAR NEWS COMPANY.

That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders, and security holders, if any, contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company, but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting is given; also that the said two paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of bona fide owner; and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest direct or indirect in the said stock, bonds, or other securities than as so stated by him.

WM. T. DEWART, Business Manager.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 1st day of October, 1924.

(SEAL)

A. V. KASS, Notary Public.
New York County, No. 34.
New York Register No. 6060.
Term expires March 30th 1926.

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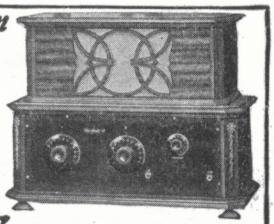

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